COPYRIGHT AND USE OF THIS THESIS

This thesis must be used in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

Reproduction of material protected by copyright may be an infringement of copyright and copyright owners may be entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright.

Section 51 (2) of the Copyright Act permits an authorized officer of a university library or archives to provide a copy (by communication or otherwise) of an unpublished thesis kept in the library or archives, to a person who satisfies the authorized officer that he or she requires the reproduction for the purposes of research or study.

The Copyright Act grants the creator of a work a number of moral rights, specifically the right of attribution, the right against false attribution and the right of integrity.

You may infringe the author’s moral rights if you:

- fail to acknowledge the author of this thesis if you quote sections from the work
- attribute this thesis to another author
- subject this thesis to derogatory treatment which may prejudice the author’s reputation

For further information contact the University’s Copyright Service.

sydney.edu.au/copyright
Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican Schools

Michaela Miles

A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education)

Sydney Conservatorium of Music
University of Sydney

2015
Declaration

I, Michaela Miles, hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that it contains no material previously published. This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of a higher degree.

Ethical approval has been granted for the study presented in this thesis from The University Human Ethics Committee. Participants were required to read and to sign an information document. Informed consent was given individually prior to the collection of data.

Signed: _________________________________ Date: ___________
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr Jennifer Rowley for her the knowledge, guidance, patience and gentle encouragement throughout the years of research and writing. I also share deep gratitude for her care and understanding of the challenges of balancing research, work and family. I would also like to acknowledge my initial supervisor, Dr James Renwick for showing a belief in my research idea, assisting in refining the focus and inspiring the title. Thank you to Dr Michael Webb for inspiring the link to juvenlization and Phil Nanlohy for motivating the connection to resistance theory.

Thank you to the schools, conductors and students who participated in this research, whose willingness to take part in this study gave me something to report. I am also grateful to the Headmasters for allowing me to approach the conductors and students within their schools.

To my Mum I must say thank you for organising so many aspects of family life throughout this time, for looking after the children, for keeping me company whilst driving to schools and throughout periods of writing, and reading my work. To my Dad for showing great interest in my research and for reading my drafts, thank you. To Greg, Angus, Charlie and Maisie-Rose, with much love I say thank you for the encouragement, patience, understanding and inspiration throughout.
Abstract

Singing is an important component of music education programmes with schools regularly incorporating some form of group singing through the compulsory years. Some may also have extra curricula ensembles. The agenda of choral conductors is often to select repertoire that they believe students enjoy; including music the conductors have a passion for and feel will motivate students to sing and participate.

The aim of the study was to find out whether, and if so to what extent, conductors of school vocal or choral ensembles consulted students regarding repertoire choice for these ensembles. It provided the participants with an opportunity to discuss their experiences and repertoire preferences in an interview setting. The importance of the study, apart from providing suggestions for the future of singing in schools, was to find out what repertoire the students wanted in order to assist choral conductors in their repertoire choices. It also allowed an opportunity to discover to what extent, if any, the constructivist trend in education was being applied to the school choral ensemble. Further, the study sought to discover how teachers and students perceived the influence of choral programmes on television—in particular, Glee—as a phenomenon, on school choral singing.

The study engaged a qualitative phenomenological methodology in five Anglican schools in the Sydney Diocese. The method of data collection involved interviews with twenty school students, who were members of five different school vocal ensembles, as well as with the conductors of each of these ensembles. The interviews were analysed,
data was grouped thematically, and the findings are discussed in the context of the relevant literature.

The findings indicate that group singing in schools is in a strong position in terms of popularity among students, and that conductors are not solely responsible for motivating students to participate. The study also found that often students wanted to sing more traditional repertoire, instead of the popular music programmed by conductors, and would like to be consulted regarding repertoire choices. The popular “student-led” approach to education could be applied to a school choral ensemble, initially through student involvement in the selection of repertoire. Some students reported an increase in their performance anxiety when they were required to sing popular music, as there was a fear that the audience would expect a known version of the song, rather than the choral arrangement they were performing.

This study reports on a small sample of Anglican schools in one Diocese; however, it does provide implications for conductors of group singing ensembles in other schools, whether religious or not. Results revealed that for a number of reasons, it could be advantageous for conductors to consult their students, particularly on issues surrounding repertoire choice. Alongside the development of choral artistry through the inclusion of traditional repertoire and music composed or skilfully arranged for student voices, the conductor is in a position to facilitate confidence-building techniques for students involved in group singing ensembles.
# Table of Contents

1 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Statement of Problem ........................................................................................................ 2

1.2 Rationale for the study ...................................................................................................... 3

1.3 Research Aim .................................................................................................................. 5

1.4 Overview of the study ....................................................................................................... 6

1.5 Definition of terms ........................................................................................................... 7

2 Literature Review .................................................................................................................. 11

2.1 Singing in Schools ............................................................................................................ 11

2.1.1 Programming for group singing in schools ............................................................ 11

2.1.2 The skills and benefits of group singing ............................................................... 12

2.1.3 The benefits of participation ....................................................................................... 15

2.2 The conductor .................................................................................................................. 18

2.2.1 Creating a positive rehearsal ...................................................................................... 18

2.2.2 Constructivism and student-centred learning in a group singing setting .............. 24

2.2.3 Repertoire .................................................................................................................. 27

2.2.4 Expressive Performance ............................................................................................. 30

2.3 Membership of group singing ensembles ......................................................................... 33

2.3.1 Motivation .................................................................................................................... 33

2.3.2 Agendas ....................................................................................................................... 36

2.3.3 Performance anxiety .................................................................................................. 38

2.4 The media ......................................................................................................................... 40

2.4.1 The influence of the media ......................................................................................... 40

2.4.2 Glee ............................................................................................................................. 42
5.3 Implications .............................................................................................................. 107
5.4 Limitations ............................................................................................................. 109
5.5 Further research .................................................................................................... 110
References .................................................................................................................... 112
Tables

Table 1: Choral expectations of schools ................................................................. 52
Table 2: Demographic details of student participants ........................................... 54
Table 3: Data analysis themes .............................................................................. 57
Table 4: Titles of themes used in findings ............................................................. 60
Table 5: Motivating factors for student involvement in group singing ensembles ......66
Appendices

APPENDIX A: Ethics approval .................................................................................. 116
APPENDIX B: Letter of invitation ............................................................................. 118
APPENDIX C: Participant information statements and consent forms .................. 119
APPENDIX D: Interview questions ........................................................................... 127
1 Introduction

To the school music teacher the role of singing in schools can be anecdotally observed in many settings. In the compulsory years of music education, singing features in general classroom teaching, specialised music lessons and in extra-curricular group singing ensembles. Students in many Sydney Anglican Schools, through extra-curricular participation, can become members of a group singing ensemble. The repertoire performed may include traditional hymn tunes or contemporary church music reflecting the Anglican school ethos and may also feature other chorus or ensemble arrangements.

With the different styles of music from popular culture now incorporated into church services, upbeat church arrangements have been composed for school choirs. This introduction, to the more traditional school choir format, does create questions about performance, with popular songs sung in a choir style arrangement, without the addition of features such as scoops and vibrato usually associated with solo singing in this style. A similar influence has also occurred with the influence of the media, television singing competitions and the programme Glee, on the selection of repertoire for school group singing ensemble performances.

Conductors of group singing ensembles may often draw on their own experience as participants in a choir when programming repertoire and performances for the ensemble they are conducting. The conductors, most commonly trained classroom music teachers, can also carry their own agenda into the programming, and have expectations of
developing high levels of musical literacy, through their choral direction. Conductors may possibly select music for reasons including their own passion for a composer or style, what they believe students enjoy, and what will motivate students to sing and participate.

Within the Sydney Anglican Diocese, there are different schools providing a variety of group singing and instrumental ensemble opportunities for students. The Sydney Anglican School Corporation (SASC) lists 19 schools and higher learning centres developed in the past twenty years (Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, 2015). This development has included the construction of new SASC facilities in recently built suburbs. There are also in the region for twenty-one established Anglican schools within the Diocese with many years of music education traditions (Sydney Anglicans, 2015).

1.1 Statement of Problem

The problem identified in this research study, though anecdotal and observed over many years as a music educator, is that conductors and students don’t discuss repertoire. Conductors guess what students like and favour the popularity of contemporary choices (e.g. music influenced by the rise of television singing competitions and programmes like Glee). Group singing repertoire has seen an increase in the use of popular compositions and arrangements of songs from Glee included in school performances and eisteddfod competitions.
Conductors may believe that they are responsible for motivating students to participate in group singing ensembles and assume the inclusion of more popular music will result in motivated students and increased participant numbers. However, if conductors were to consider the students’ reasons for participation they may find a different agenda. The students may participate for a variety of reasons other than the choice of repertoire but students would possibly like the opportunity to have input into the planning and selection of music.

1.2 Rationale for the study

As a high school music teacher I have been involved in running school choirs for many years. My experience included spending nine years in a Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation school in the North-western region of Sydney. The school did not have an established choir and I was charged with the role of developing a choral group singing ensemble programme. The directive for this was to include repertoire with a large focus on traditional style hymn tunes, four-part singing and the psalms of the Anglican Church. This came from the Chairman of the College Council and the Headmaster, both of whom had interests in this style of choral singing and wanted to see the students exposed to this tradition.

The Chairman and members of the College Board considered the choral programme a success because the students were involved in a large-scale tour of England, performing in sixteen cathedrals over an 18-day tour. Following this tour the school experienced significant personnel changes with the Headmaster moving to a different school and the Chairman of Council retiring. The new leadership did not have the same choral vision
for the school. At the same time the television programme *Glee* began airing, introducing Australian audiences to American show choirs. Possibly influenced by the change in school leadership and the new television programme, the students began to voice their ideas about repertoire.

It was clear that my understanding of the *Glee* style (i.e. the portrayal of a singing group in a high school) was different from the students’ perception. Each episode includes ensemble arrangements of popular songs performed by members of the group with choralography. The usual format of the show is a soloist accompanied by the group performing backing vocals in harmony. As a conductor I was critical of the show’s choice of repertoire and the use of soloists taking the lead melody. However, believing my students enjoyed the programme I felt obligated to include an arrangement from the programme in the repertoire to be performed at the final assembly of the school year. The arrangement didn’t translate well to the school ensemble setting, especially with limited rehearsal time, and did not have the motivating effect I was expecting. Students were divided in their support for this song choice and it did not make a difference in participant numbers of the ensemble.

After having selected repertoire from *Glee*, and hearing much talk about the programme in the school playground, I wondered if other conductors had also selected repertoire from the programme, or a similar popular arrangement. The research study was devised to discover what other conductors were experiencing, the appropriateness of repertoire with regard to students’ vocal development needs and what students want to sing as members of a school choir in Sydney Anglican schools.
1.3 Research Aim

Morton (2008) asked this question, “Who is actually conducting my choir?” (p. 2) His answer, “Make sure it is you, and that significant decisions that are important in the choral process are not being made by administrators, management, choir committees, school parents or, God forbid, the singers themselves.” (p. 2) In SASC it would be appropriate for administrators to play a role, ensuring the Anglican ethos is supported by the choice of repertoire. However, what is the role of the conductor and, though they may not be conducting, are the singers allowed an opinion about the many aspects of the choir including repertoire?

The study sought to discover the agenda of the conductors and what students wanted from participation in a group singing ensemble. This included discovering the current role of group singing, establishing students’ and conductors’ perceptions and agendas, and exploring the influence of Glee and other media in different schools throughout the Sydney Anglican Diocese.

The research questions for this study were:

1. What are the aims of the teachers when directing their choir in an established (traditional) school or newer (SASC) school?

2. What role do students and teachers play in the selection of repertoire to be performed by group singing ensembles?

3. What effect is the media influence (particularly Glee) having on the style of group singing?
4. What is the current role of group singing in Anglican schools (traditional and SASC) in the Sydney Anglican Diocese?

1.4 Overview of the study

The study, using a qualitative phenomenological methodology, involved visiting five Anglican schools in the Sydney Diocese. Data was collected in interviews with twenty school students who were members of school group singing ensembles and their conductors. The interviews were analysed, grouped thematically, and findings discussed with reference to supporting literature.

Chapter 2 critically reviews literature relevant to the research questions and develops a context. The literature discussed includes an outline of group singing in schools and research reporting benefits of participation. Current trends towards constructivism in education and the literature reporting this approach to the learning of music is also reviewed. Further literature describing the role of the conductor is explored including the conductor’s part in creating positive group singing ensemble rehearsals, developing successful ensembles, repertoire choices and agenda. Chapter 2 concludes with discussions about performance anxiety and the influence of the media before a final summary of the literature.

Chapter 3 introduces the research paradigm and the methodology used. This chapter describes the conductors, student participants and different schools involved in the
research, giving background information and setting the context. Information about the data collection (including interview methods) are described in this chapter.

The findings determined from the data collected are reported in Chapter 4. This chapter includes descriptions of interview data and thematic analysis. A discussion, supported by literature, is included in this chapter.

The final chapter presents answers to the research questions, conclusions and research implications for the high school group singing conductor, as this study highlighted further opportunities for research in the high school ensemble setting. Suggestions for further exploration of these research opportunities are presented to conclude the chapter.

### 1.5 Definition of terms

**Anglican schools**

Anglican schools are educational facilities provided by the Anglican Church of Australia. The Anglican Diocese of Sydney lists 40 Anglican schools within the diocese. These church affiliated schools include both low-fee schools of the SASC and high-fee schools with a long history of educational services. SASC administers 19 schools, most with a low-fee structure, described as having “a respect for history and tradition as well as a strong commitment to the future” (Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, 2014, para. 2). Two schools in this study are SASC schools. Anglican schools in the Sydney Diocese teach the requirements of the NSW Board of Studies and are “free to provide an ‘Anglican’ ethos and Christian education” (Anglican education
in Australia, 2014, para. 8). Three schools in this study represent the more established Anglican schools, those with a tradition (in some cases of a century) of education in Sydney.

**Repertoire**

The whole body of choir compositions that are rehearsed and performed by the group singing ensemble for the various events in the school calendar.

**Glee**

*Glee* is the title of a US television series that features cover songs performed by the characters in a choreographed choral performance. The repertoire largely consists of chart hits and show tunes with more emphasis on Top 40 songs. Each episode allows a different member of the group singing ensemble to take a leading role in the performance. The arrangements are written for soloist and ensemble harmony not the two, three or four-part harmony performed by most group singing ensembles in schools.

**School Choir**

*Traditional Choir*: a group singing ensemble that performs music specifically written for the combination of parts. Traditional group singing ensembles in school may sing music written for young voices in either two, three or four-parts.

*Show Choir*: a group singing ensemble that performs arrangements of popular song tunes with choreography used to enhance the lyrics or tell a story through movement. The show choir often performs in costume and often features a solo performer and harmonic backing accents performed in two or three parts. Experienced show choirs
may perform polyphonic music but the school show choir will usually feature a soloist and simple harmonies.

**Conductor**

The conductor is the person who rehearses and directs the school group singing ensemble in performances. The conductor of a school group singing ensemble is often a trained Music teacher (4 participants in this study) who may have had a semester of learning to conduct as part of an undergraduate Music Education degree. In some cases a conductor may be a composer (1 participant in this study), experienced singer or performer employed for the sole purpose of directing the group singing ensemble.

**Motivation**

In the context of this research the term is used to describe reasons a student chooses to participate in a group singing ensemble and, once in the ensemble, what are the reasons to remain a member of the ensemble.

**Student focused**

This, in the context of this research, refers to decisions about repertoire and activities for the ensemble made by the conductor with student’s interests the priority for the decision.

**Student-led**

In terms of who makes decisions about repertoire and the activities of a group singing ensemble, student-led refers to students playing the key role.
**Juvenilization**

This is a term used by Bergler (2012) to describe the process of juvenilizing Christianity by applying the trends of teenagers and youth leaders to adult aspects of church. This includes the use of popular music and the repurposing of traditional songs into contemporary pop or rock styles. It suggests an immature version of faith that comes with adults who still want to think of their relationship with Jesus as being some kind of romantic relationship as described in the lyrics of some contemporary church music.

**Choral artistry**

This describes the performing of choral music that has traditional foundations of composition and requires a high level of vocal skill to sing.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Singing in Schools

2.1.1 Programming for group singing in schools

Singing is an important component of education programmes, with schools regularly incorporating some form of group singing, from the Preparatory and Kindergarten levels through to the end of primary school. Group singing may also be included in the compulsory Music component of high school, but as the term performance is used in the NSW Board of Studies Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2003) to describe all aspects of making music, it is possible that singing, when grouped under the single umbrella term of performance, is not regularly incorporated into teaching programmes. This is despite the Strategic direction R.9 of The National Review of School Music Education (2005) that specifically supports vocal music stating, “every Australian student participates and engages in initial vocal music programmes; and, students with identified interest and talent in vocal music are provided with sustained vocal music programmes” (p. xxi).

In the Music Years 7 – 10 Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2003) the outcome of the development of performance skills states “students will develop knowledge, understanding and skills in the musical concepts, through performing as a means of self-expression, interpreting music symbols and developing solo and/ or ensemble technique” (p. 23). As this outcome does not specifically refer to singing as a performance skill, students who have been exposed to group singing in their primary
school education may not experience group singing in the high school classroom and it may only be in the voluntary capacity of membership of a group singing ensemble that students are able to experience singing. The National Review of School Music Education (2005) does, however, recommend that schools provide performance opportunities for vocal music. Many schools have strong traditions of choral singing and some newer schools have tried to develop a tradition in their early years with a view that the choir becomes a feature for which a school is known within the community.

Research has shown that through singing we can shape who we are personally, culturally and nationally (Durrant, 2005a; Welch, Himonides, Howard, & Brereton, 2004), musically, intellectually, physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually (Elliott, 1993). Rao (2005) suggested that singing is a form of personal awareness and mindfulness and it has the added benefits of deep listening and well-being. These, and other benefits of group singing will be discussed in the next section.

2.1.2 The skills and benefits of group singing

Music is an important part of development and learning from a very young age, “central to the cultural practices and circumstances of many young children’s experience of the ‘everyday’” (Barrett, 2009 p. 116). Barrett (2009), in a narrative inquiry study of ‘everyday’ music engagement of a young child described the child’s musical engagement as “singer, song-maker, and music-maker” (p.116). As a child developed, singing became a feature of much of the music learning students undertook in formal settings such as pre-school and primary school “as the singing voice has traditionally been an accessible instrument for musical learning” (Hughes, 2008 p. 131). Established thinking, supported by music teachers and researchers, is that children have the ability
to learn to sing and that singing should be a skill that is taught in classroom music settings (Phillips, 1992). However, by the time students reach high school the importance of singing may change and it is often, sadly used only as a voluntary activity in the setting of a choir or vocal ensemble.

Welch (1994) described the intricacies of singing as “a complex web of interacting factors embracing perception, cognition, physical development, maturation, society, culture, history and intentionality” (p. 3). Durrant (2005a) supports the interacting factors by describing singing “as a socialising agent, and as a symbol or vehicle for expressing emotions and patriotism, religious feeling or fraternity” (p. 96). Durrant (2005a), in a qualitative study of choirs and conductors in Sweden confirmed, “that singing has a strong social function as well as a musical function” (p. 92). Other factors including the physical, emotional and cognitive benefits of singing in a group have been explored in a variety of studies. Davidson and Bailey (2005) investigated the benefits of singing in a group and the effects membership of an ensemble had on the lives of the members. The participants of the study were from three distinct groups: a choir specifically for homeless men; a mixed choir for people living in marginalised situations (including homelessness and drug dependence); and a choir of people considered to be from the middle-class. Benefits of membership of the choir were assessed according to clinical factors, group process, choir/ audience relationships and mental stimulation. Interviews with choir members indicated a sense of emotional balance, created by a feeling of freedom to let out frustrations, and a feeling of being able to step away from the problems of everyday life (Davidson & Bailey, 2005). For the members of the middle-class choir, membership was important for positive
emotional health providing a state of relaxation, increased energy and enhanced mood (Davidson & Bailey, 2005).

Other benefits of membership in the different choirs included a sense of belonging, membership of a social support system, a sense of fellowship with others and working together to create good music. A positive experience for members of the marginalised choir was a feeling that singing for an audience provided a sense of acceptance as they were lifted beyond their own existence (Davidson & Bailey, 2005). Cognitive stimulation was considered to benefit behaviour as well as providing challenges, improving musical skills and increasing knowledge (Davidson & Bailey, 2005).

Another group singing study involved one set of participants singing and one set of listening to the singing group. The analysis of data based on a Profile of Mood State questionnaire confirmed that singing can in fact change the mood of the participant. The listening group was also found to have an increased mood but mood changes of those singing was considered to be statistically significant when compared to the rate of change in mood of the listening group (Davis, Unwin, & Kenny, 2002).

Further to the improvement of music skills, valuing music characterises the deepest levels of musical experiences and enhances musical knowledge (Swanwick, 2002). This deep level of valuing music can be experienced through singing and involvement in a choir, as is seen in participants in Davidson and Bailey (2005) who were placed in a position in which personal awareness was achieved.
This summary of research literature into the benefits of singing indicates more than just an emotional response to music. Additionally, cognitive development, as well as the social and cultural aspects alone, would be a valid reason for including singing activities in a school setting. For example, music to enhance mood suggests that singing can benefit schools when programmed as a regular activity. This requires a commitment from a teacher or conductor to develop a rehearsal environment in which the singers’ perception, cognition, physical development, maturity, social and cultural awareness is nurtured. Through participation in group singing activities a student can experience these and other benefits to be discussed in the next section.

2.1.3 The benefits of participation

Research into participation in ensembles has shown that reasons may include enjoyment and interest as well as more detailed aspects such as the amount of practice time, music programmes, parental influence and conductor attitudes (Humphreys, May, & Nelson, 1992). Durrant (2005b) suggests that learning and feelings are connected and when something is enjoyed it is pleasurable, and can be applied to involvement in group singing ensembles. The habits of musicality and involvement in ensembles can be established in primary school and Mizener (1993), confirms, the overall participation of primary school children in choral programmes is considerably higher when compared with the number of high school students.

Mizener (1993) highlights a number of factors that music teachers and conductors use to be effective in influencing positive participation numbers in choral programmes. One aspect influencing students to participate is if students consider themselves to possess
good singing skills. It is seen that an improvement in singing skills will lead to greater enjoyment of the activity and this will lead to a positive attitude, therefore greater numbers participating. In Mizener’s (1993) study of students in grades three to six, results indicated that most students liked to sing in some form although participation in school music singing activities declined as students progressed through the primary school classes. For teachers, this knowledge may assist the way they choose to introduce singing activities to students commencing high school and what strategies may be implemented to encourage continued involvement in choir. One outcome of the study indicated that a large number of grade six students liked to sing along with the radio, so the implication for the music teacher or conductor might be to select appropriate music from this popular genre to form part of the repertoire used for primary school singing activities. This contributes to a higher level of students’ singing enjoyment and greater participation that can lead to learning more challenging repertoire resulting in a higher level of enjoyment and thus the cycle continues.

Another important aspect of participation for conductors is to consider the sense of belonging. In an action research study in a college in the USA, Parker (2010) found that students in her choral programme felt a sense of belonging and this informed their own desire to participate. It was reported that the high school choir can be seen as a community within the school and as the ensemble is voluntary, the participants chose to be part of the community as they sought to develop relationships (Parker, 2010). Parker (2010) identified that the participants viewed the choir as an even playing field with each member of the team responsible for contributing to achievement of the ensemble. From the experiences described by participants in the choir, Parker (2010) used
sectional rehearsal time as an opportunity to further develop relationships within each section. This process has implications for choral directors and conductors as the programming for sectional rehearsals adds time pressure to already busy schedules; however, if it assists in creating positive participation it should not be excluded from programming.

In the Parker (2010) study, the choir was preparing for and undertook an overseas tour during the research. The tour was described by Parker (2010) as a ‘pivotal bonding experience’ (p. 348). This positive experience for students is generally not an annual activity, limited by extensive costs and interruption to school timetables, and therefore should not be seen as something that needs to take place just to increase participation.

A number of studies of musical participation recorded by Humphreys et al. (1992) indicated that ensemble membership contributes to a positive attitude to music. They found that joining an ensemble may also assist in development of self-esteem. The results of several studies reported by Humphreys et al. (1992) indicated that ensemble participation also contributes to higher musical perception skills and students can develop musical discrimination skills.

It is possible that some schools may find the development of an intergenerational choir programme for special events enhances participation rates. The choir could include members of school staff, parents and participants from the local community. Research by Conway and Hodgman (2008) into an intergenerational choral project showed that the different groups involved, college students and adults, reported positive benefits of
the project. The students enjoyed working with, and learning from the older members and the strength of sound created by combining with mature voices. One student involved in the project reported a musical and emotional energy created by the combination of voices and the conductor reported an improved balance to the choral sound. This type of activity brings different age groups together by bridging generational differences and providing a forum for developing positive relationships between different generations. The next section will discuss literature about the rehearsal environment created by the conductor.

2.2 The conductor

2.2.1 Creating a positive rehearsal

Although group singing activities do not necessarily need to be led by a conductor to be both positive and successful for the individuals involved, the conductor has the opportunity to create a positive rehearsal atmosphere. In a dynamic rehearsal, students are nourished and music is made in a safe, positive and affirming manner (Jordan, 2009). The role of conductor is, in this formal setting, “fundamental to the nurturing of the singing in choirs” (Durrant, 2005a, p. 95) and the conductor needs to “respect those they conduct” (p. 85). The success of a choral programme can be attributed to the characteristics and passion of its’ director (Davidson & Bailey, 2005). The choir conductor in a school programme can assist in creating a positive rehearsal environment and also affect participation rates of the choir. Different aspects of teaching and learning within an ensemble have been researched particularly in terms of delivery of
instructions and the role that the teacher (or conductor) plays in developing perceptual and conceptualization skills (Humphreys et al., 1992).

The conductor should “essentially be a good teacher” (Durrant, 2005a, p.95) and, in order to be considered effective, a conductor must master a number of skills. This may also require the conductor to have a strong belief in their skills and self-efficacy. The term self-efficacy, a personal belief in one’s abilities to perform successfully, in a number of studies (Bandura, 1986; Matthews & Kitsantas, 2012; McPherson & McCormick, 2006; Ritchie & Williamon, 2007), has been applied to both the approach of the conductor and the personal sense of achievement of the members of a ensemble. By contrast, in a negative situation, these skills may place the conductor in a position of power over the singers (O'Toole, 2005) or “dictator mode” (Durrant, 2005b, p. 84); however, in a positive situation it may not be power but leadership efficacy. Leadership efficacy can include the skills of communication and direction including the ability of the conductor to use all forms of nonverbal communication (Chemers, Watson, & May, 2000; Van Weelden, 2002), and being capable of “getting a group to give of its best” (Chemers et al., 2002, p. 273).

The level of the conductors’ experience is an important factor in ensemble development and regardless of the level of ensemble performance, the difference between expert and novice teaching of an ensemble is noticeable (Johnson, 2009). Matthews and Kitsantas (2012) determined that the mastery of a conductor in setting a goal orientation had a positive influence on the collective beliefs of efficacy within an ensemble. It can be suggested, therefore, that there is a need for teachers to take responsibility for helping
Students develop competence in their performance skills, including addressing aspects of vocal health, and building their confidence as a performer (McPherson & McCormick, 2006). A conductor needs to connect in a positive manner and assist ensemble members to develop confidence. The conductor should avoid making the rehearsal seem daunting, negative, or full of jargon as that has the potential to make students feel inadequate or unable to fulfil their role in the ensemble (Durrant, 2005b).

Many different methods of instruction are used in a choral music instructional setting, each with a different level of effectiveness in assisting students to perform with expression. A study examining the use of four different treatments, vocal instruction by means of descriptions, vocal modelling, physical methods for experiencing emotion and audio-visual imagery representing emotions found that all methods were effective in assisting students to perform with emotion (Ebie, 2004). The use of simple phrases such as “sing the second phrase softly” or “sing the second phrase loudly” were effective instructions in achieving sudden dynamic contrasts (Skadsem, 1997). Humphreys et al. (1992) also found that teacher modelling combined with music reading had a positive effect on the development of aural and kinaesthetic skills in young students. The summary of teaching and rehearsal strategies in Humphreys et al. (1992) suggests skills developed through an ensemble programme include improvement in sight-reading, enhanced attitudes to school music lessons, confirmation that teacher modelling assists in improving musicianship, and positive reinforcement resulting in improved student performance. Positive reinforcement or approval reinforcement is a positive teaching tool both in general classroom teaching and in choral rehearsals. The use of affirmation is an effective way to describe the positive reinforcement that a conductor can provide.
in order to empower individuals in the choir (Jordan, 2009). In a study evaluating teaching in choral rehearsals, Yarbrough and Madsen (1998) established that a positive teacher was someone who confidently used eye contact both with the group and with individuals.

The effective group singing ensemble teacher also conducted in an expressive and gestural manner and used dynamic facial expressions. The teacher was also considered effective if a rehearsal was fast-paced and exciting with instructions delivered in a brief and pointed manner. In Yarbrough and Madsen (1998), the ratings given to time use, enthusiasm, pacing, personality and overall effectiveness indicated that students saw these skills as important to the success of rehearsals. An effective conductor is able to emphasise relaxation in rehearsals and the “encouragement of healthy singing and making the singers feel confident and comfortable” (Durrant, 2005a; p.93). Durrant (2005a) investigated the promotion and directorial aspects of choral music and the effect of relationships between conductors and singers. The results indicated three attributes; (i) philosophical principles (Why am I a conductor?), Musical-technical skills and Interpersonal skills. The interpersonal skills described by Durrant (2005a, p. 90) refer to the communication used by the conductor. These include:

- the capacity to create a positive non-threatening environment,
- the capacity to communicate clearly and unambiguously,
- the desire to encourage healthy singing,
- the capacity to enable choral and vocal development,
- the ability to make singers feel confident and comfortable,
- the skill to pace rehearsals effectively,
the expectation of the highest standards possible (p. 90).

Durrant (2005a) found that should the conductor possess these interpersonal skills, teaching students in a respectful manner, it is possible to give singers in a group singing ensemble an opportunity “for personal and collective development” (p. 97).

The effectiveness of pace in rehearsals is the focus of a study of 33 choral conductors and their rehearsal technique undertaken by Brendell (1996). The most effective rehearsals were those in which the conductor moved to rehearsing music within the first 15 minutes of rehearsal time, following a quickly executed set-up and warm-up time (Brendell, 1996). The ‘off-task’ time recorded in this study was mostly found to occur during set-up, warm-up, and conductor instruction before the rehearsal of music commenced. Brendell (1996) reported that time constraints for teachers is a factor as “teachers beginning up to several minutes after the bell were observed passing out materials, completing business matters, or interacting with students” (p. 11). The suggestion is that the teacher is responsible for ensuring organisation occurs before the rehearsal in order for a rehearsal to run smoothly, thus allowing the conductor more teaching time so most value can be obtained during the rehearsal. The study by Brendell (1996) indicated that conductors limiting organisational activities and quickly moving to the rehearsal of music are likely to have more effective and valuable rehearsals. Awareness of studies such as Brendell (1996) may also assist conductors in creating rehearsal environments in which students are likely to have positive experiences, something that can have an effect on student participation (Sichivitsa, 2003). This should also, in turn, improve students’ attitude towards the activity, encouraging further participation.
A challenge for conductors is eye contact in rehearsal and performance settings (Skadsem, 1997; Van Weelden, 2002). High school students are less likely to make eye contact with the conductor despite the fact that high school conductors are more likely to watch members of their choir intently. This is an attempt to have singers perform with greater expression and accuracy by watching the conductor for cues and instructions. Skadsem (1997) found that high school students responded most to concise verbal instructions and were able to “perform with great musical sensitivity when given appropriate instruction and encouragement” (p. 517).

The conductor can play a very important role in the development of a choir. The conductor can provide musical inspiration and create an environment in which sharing of ideas can take place. There are opportunities for communicating the expressive character of music and the sense of purpose and enjoyment (Durrant, 2005a). Therefore, the role of conductors, as shown in this summary of literature, is important as they can create a positive and safe learning environment for students who participate in group singing ensembles. In a positive environment the conductor is able “to encourage people to feel good about themselves, to provide the opportunities to express emotions” (Durrant, 2005a, p. 96).

The literature reviewed indicates that the personal benefits of improvement in singing skills and self-esteem are important outcomes of participation in a group singing ensemble. To create an effective choral singing programme, the conductor must be aware that improving singing skills results in a higher level of enjoyment, which in turn
creates a greater level of participation. The key aspect holding each stage of this cycle together is the selection of repertoire and in order to determine who should be involved in choosing music an understanding constructivism in education follows in the next section.

2.2.2 Constructivism and student-centred learning in a group singing setting

The popularity of constructivist and student-led approaches to learning is becoming a regular feature of music classrooms. Constructivism allows the learner to play an active role in their learning with importance placed on meaning-making (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002). This includes student-centred instruction, “a form of active learning where students are engaged and involved in what they are studying” (Brown, 2008, p. 30). The application of this model to a group singing setting could be valuable to understanding a student’s prior knowledge of ensemble participation, their preconceptions of the role undertaken as a member and their own ideas of repertoire. Within literature, the terms constructivism and constructionism are used interchangeably, and although there are some differences, both relate “to the belief that learning is “constructed” by learners (individually or socially) rather than simply being received from an instructor or other source” (Kim, 2001, p. 5).

When a student joins a group singing ensemble they will have preconceived ideas based on prior experiences from either participating in a primary school choir or having watched choral performances at school, on TV or at another venue. This exposure will provide a student with an initial feeling for performance and some knowledge of choral
repertoire and, from this, the conductor will be able to “build on these concepts during instruction” (Jones & Brader-Araje, 2002, p. 4). Preconception allows reflection and an opportunity to find out a student’s knowledge of traditional choral music or if their experience has been largely influenced by popular culture. Further to this, a preconceived idea may have an effect on performance anxiety, especially if something new has not been adequately developed through building onto prior knowledge.

There is efficacy in the constructivist approach when applied to a music education classroom setting and to take this approach when conducting a group singing ensemble may be beneficial to learning choral music. Students can be encouraged to bring their own analytic awareness to learning repertoire and the processes of music performance (Scott, 2011). For a conductor, being sensitive to the ideals of a constructivist approach may assist in a greater awareness of the students’ roles as learners (Scott, 2011) and lead to an understanding of their students’ motivation to participate in the ensemble. Given constructivist theory is the foundation of all good pedagogy, a constructivist approach to teaching choir would encourage student discussion and creative thinking.

Brown (2008) describes the use of Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance, a model in which a conductor leading an ensemble prepares, presents and facilitates the student-centred learning. Brown (2008) suggests the conductor ask the following questions: “What do I want my ensemble to learn? What is the ability level of my ensemble? How will this piece fit into our concert programme? How will this piece benefit my students?” (p. 31). Once this has been established and students are actively engaged in the music, student discussion is encouraged throughout rehearsals. Once
students are comfortable the student-centred learning becomes an active and engaging approach to ensemble rehearsals. Brown (2008) says, “I am often amazed at the wealth of wonderful teaching strategies that come from my students. Teachers so often forget to look at the ensemble they are teaching for ideas to teach!” (p. 32).

Some of the literature discussed in a later section makes reference to the autonomous decision making and instructional methods of the conductor. This is in contrast with the constructivist approach of encouraging students to initiate discussions (Scott, 2011). This method could be considered valuable to the development of group singing ensembles as “through the analysis and evaluation that accompanies group questioning and problem solving, students and teachers collectively participate in learning more about music and refine their skills in performance” (Scott, 2011, p. 193). By leading an ensemble in this way, a conductor can be a role model, “reflecting on and responding to” (Scott, 2011, p. 193) the ideas of the students.

Kim (2001) describes the social constructivist as someone who “views learning as a social process” (p. 3). Within the realms of social constructionism the concept of self is considered. The student may have self-relevant information that is important when learning new skills (Davidson, 1999). Within self-relevance, there may be “issues connected to self worth” (Davidson, 1999, p. 31) that can have an effect, positively on motivation but also, troublingly on anxiety in performance.

Whether or not the use of constructivism or student-centred learning is the right method for a school group singing ensemble will probably remain unanswered as it does rely on
the direction or approach of the conductor. However, advocating for this approach in a school ensemble setting, Brown (2008) says, “by realising that through student-centred learning, students become self-sufficient, creative thinkers and people who appreciate and value the subject being taught” (p. 33). Brown (2008) continues and describes the role of ensemble conductors is to, “instil a love of music and a quizzical mind that stays with each student throughout life” (p.33).

Through reviewing literature describing the use of a constructivism model in teaching a group singing ensemble, reference has been made to the selection and teaching of repertoire. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Repertoire

Do not forget that young people today are problem solvers perhaps like never before. They readily accept challenges, like taking risks, and are stimulated by the opportunity to explore and discover new things. Does the contemporary repertoire we give them match this capacity for progressive, forward thinking? (Morton, 2008, p. 4)

When selecting repertoire for a choir the conductor may consider how to teach, rehearse, manage vocal health of their students, encourage musical growth and support the maturing of students within through performance of the chosen repertoire (Jordan, 2008). The repertoire must therefore be selected for the appropriateness of vocal ranges of members of the ensemble. Individual pieces of music should provide objectives for vocal development and musical learning and feature appropriate texts (Ward-Steinman, 2010). Musical objectives can include teaching and reinforcement of skills such as legato, staccato, marcato, leaps, crescendo/ decrescendo (Jordan, 2008). Holt (2008b)
suggests consideration should be given to style with the selection of music being based on quality, a term that Holt (2008b) applies to aspects of vocal range, ensuring that music is age appropriate in terms of vocal range and lyrics. The “developmental appropriateness” of repertoire was highlighted, in a survey of 32 schools in a US school district, as the most important factor in the planning of a choral programme, the second was “personal preference” (Hamann, 2007, p. 68). In selecting repertoire for ensembles, conductors may have their own favourite styles of music. They may also have chosen compositions they considered acceptable for choral performance. The recommendation, in The National Review of School Music Education (2005), is that school vocal programmes “provide vocal and choral tuition for all students that reflects the breadth of music in contemporary society and meet the needs of students” (p. 128). This statement concurs with Hamann (2007) who suggested that there is “no consensus as to what is appropriate middle level choral music education” (p. 64) and the result is teachers are left to navigate the repertoire without a suggested model. By developing a model to follow, teachers will no longer be left to develop their own, given time constraints are a crucial issue in schools. With a model where “environment in which the learning is taking place and the physical capabilities of the children” (p. 13) are the first points considered, choice of repertoire is “critical to the growth of any music programme” (Harrison, 2006, p. 13).

The many contemporary influences on students, such as popular music viewed or heard through the different media forms of television, Internet and radio can make the choosing repertoire challenging for conductors. Access to music is a part of society and the choice of music made by students for listening, playing and singing could be
something the conductor may consider when selecting repertoire. The school may also have a role in the selection of repertoire and in some schools (such as Anglican schools) music supporting a religious viewpoint will be included. The influence of rock music on youth culture of the 1960s has had some influence on music in churches, which may also be an influence on music selection in schools. Bergler (2012) describes an address in 1967 by a Youth for Christ leader in which he acknowledged the influence of rock music on youth and adults. Bergler (2012) suggested the 1967 prediction that teenagers would bring their Christian rock music with them when they continued in worship as adults is now a reality in contemporary churches. This influence in the churches, considered by Bergler (2012) to be a form of juvenilization of Christianity may also be evident in the choice of repertoire for Christian services in schools. There is a danger in students being exposed to only pop music because it will stunt their choral and musical growth.

By contrast, in the traditional sense of choral music, the most important aspect for selecting repertoire is teaching choral artistry, placing the art of music at the centre of curriculum developed through the repertoire (Head, 2008). To ascertain the artistry of music is to determine musical features of harmonic diversity, musical destination and compositional devices used in compositions and the appropriateness of these features for the musical and vocal development of students in a choir. Morton (2008) further suggests that it is best to select repertoire written specifically for children, “music originally composed, or skilfully arranged, for choir” (p. 4). He also challenges the conductor to consider the current choral diet of the children in a choir:
Students play Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, and Prokofiev, and at the same time we expect them to sing High School Musical and the Lion King. The Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, and Prokofiev that they play now, they will still play in 60 years. Is their current choral diet equally sustainable over 60 years? (p. 4)

The literature suggests that the development of a repertoire guideline for conductors would be useful to ensure the appropriateness of selections for a school choir. A conductor should seek repertoire that has been specifically written or arranged for a choir as this has greater future sustainability. Further to this, repertoire that enables the teaching of choral artistry, such as expressive performance, is recommended.

2.2.4 Expressive Performance

“Singers are engaging in their emotional lives and expressing feelings when they enter into vocal and choral activity” (Durrant, 2005b, p. 84). The successfully expressive performance may be considered to be the ‘optimal’ performance. In a study involving high-level classical performers the ‘optimal’ performance was described as a performance in which an intention to communicate was clearly observable. When a performer was emotionally engaged with the music and believed audience members experienced the communication of expression, an ‘optimal’ performance was achieved (Juslin & Timmers, 2010).

To describe conductors’ use of expression in music the research literature suggests a number of aspects including communication. Communication in music is made up of two parts, the intention of the performer to express an emotion and the recognition of the emotion by the listener (Juslin & Timmers, 2010). Communicating music is a
process by which a meaning is transmitted from one person, the performer, to another person, the listener (Juslin, 2005). The meaning of the music is to be received and ‘decoded’ by the listener. Juslin (2005) describes a chain of events in creating musical communication. The first link in the chain is the composer’s expressive intention. The performer’s expressive intention is the second link and this involves interpretation and usually planned expressivity in order to develop and yet individualise the composer’s expressive intention. The third link takes into account acoustic performance parameters or acoustic features of the music. The final links (four and five) in the chain of communication are the listener’s perception that requires ‘decoding’ of information in order for the listener to experience an affective response. Within this chain there are several levels by which communication and expression may occur. Should all five links be involved in the chain then it can be considered that a performance with effective expression and communication has occurred. Lehmann (2007) suggests that expressivity and interpretation of expressive emotions in a composition exist in order that something is communicated from performer to listener.

Performers can express emotions through performance and students involved in a choral programme may experience singing as an outlet for emotions (Arasi, 2008). Singing is sometimes “seen as an important attribute of identity in relation to the need for expression in today’s complex world” (Durrant, 2005a, p.93). However, the teaching of expressive performance is one skill area that conductors may consider. A performance, if it is to achieve a level of audience satisfaction, must place expressive performance in a prominent role amidst all the other aspects of performance including balance, technical skill and music creativity (Broomhead, 2001). From the viewpoint of the
listener it is not necessary to feel; however, recognition and an understanding of implied emotion is considered adequate communication of expression.

As a member of an ensemble, a musician can develop skills that will assist them to become better solo performers. Such skills can include rehearsal technique, technical skills and performance confidence. The ensemble can also assist in developing understanding and ability to perform with expressive considerations. The NSW Board of Studies Music Syllabus (Board of Studies NSW, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009) documents for the various stages of development only mention expressive performance skills from Year 7-12 in terms of self-expression. Although this terminology is included in the objectives for each syllabus, outcomes to measure student achievement only refer to performance in a range of styles, genres, and the interpretation of stylistic features. Some students may demonstrate musical skills including an ability to perform with self-expression but it is still important for teachers to assist students in developing skills to share the expressive power of music with an audience.

Broomhead (2001) suggested there is something unique about the experience of choral singing or the way in which expressive performance instruction is given in a choral setting that affects student’s ability to perform expressively in solo performance. There is evidence to show that instructions given to singers in a choral setting can assist in teaching expressive techniques such as dynamic contrast and it has been shown that both male and female high school students are able to perform the emotions of happiness, sadness, and fear (Ebie, 2004). The study undertaken by Skadsem (1997) was found to be most effective in achieving dynamic contrasts with high school choirs.
This suggests high school age students can learn to perform in a musically sensitive manner when given the appropriate expressive performance instructions.

For students learning an instrument, taking drama or dance classes, the ability to incorporate expressive techniques into their performance is very important. The communication of expression from performer to listener can make an emotional connection and a performance memorable for the listener. The research evidence suggests expressive performance can be effectively taught in the choral setting, giving students an opportunity to develop this performance skill. Other aspects of motivation will be considered in the next section.

2.3 Membership of group singing ensembles

2.3.1 Motivation

A high school choir conductor is faced with many challenges but nothing seems more difficult at times than maintaining membership numbers and encouraging rehearsal attendance; the key aspect of which is motivation. Motivation strategies are similar to some of the most important features of an effective rehearsal. Limiting the amount of time spent off-task and increasing the teaching of music assists in maintaining student motivation to learn more and want to return for more learning and music making opportunities (Holt, 2008a). Other teaching can assist in maintaining interest during rehearsal time such as music theory skills, including music history in the presentation of new material and providing listening examples for further musical development.
Students may experience personal motivation if they see a value in the activity. The perceived outcome of an activity can result in a greater effort by the participant to succeed (Sichivitsa, 2003), and a students’ goal orientation can influence their motivation through how they respond to experiences of success (Elliot, 2005; Matthews & Kitsantas, 2012). This is a very individual response and conductors are challenged with making all individuals in the choir see this as important for the entire group.

From the study by Matthews and Kitsantas (2012) the use of expressive performance cues by the conductor can possibly assist in improved learning. This in turn enhances motivation for both individuals and the collective ensemble. Though not necessarily advocating a need to audition members of a group singing ensemble, Parker (2010) suggested that open enrolment in an ensemble can “create a sense of equality” while “the elective [auditioned] nature of the ensemble contributes to a sense of group purpose” (p. 345). This is a goal orientation that may contribute further to student motivation to participate in an auditioned group singing ensemble.

Another study into students’ personal motivation investigated self-efficacy as a contributing factor to learning a musical instrument. McPherson and McCormick (2006) confirmed that a predictor of a student’s performance result in a solo instrumental examination was self-efficacy. Likewise, in a choral setting, a student’s self-efficacy is an important contributing factor to their motivation to perform as a member of a group singing ensemble. Research has indicated that extra-musical activities, such as
participation in group singing ensembles, demonstrated the relevance of self-efficacy in the lives of young people (Ritchie & Williamon, 2011). In a high school choir, students who have parental support for their choice of ensemble participation were more likely to experience levels of satisfaction and remain positive to long-term achievements of the ensemble (Sichivitsa, 2003). Sichivitsa (2003) also indicated that the value placed on music as a result of parental support and the musical intentions of a student are indicators of student motivation to continue performing with an ensemble. A goal-oriented approach by a conductor and the support network of school and community may promote motivation that in the long-term will produce high-quality ensemble involvement (Ames, 1992). One of the most obvious factors for a conductor is to remember “when learners find something interesting and deeply pleasurable, they are more likely to return to the activity to re-experience the sense of achievement and well-being” (Durrant, 2005b, p. 85).

Research suggests the most important aspect for encouraging student participation in a group singing ensemble is for a conductor to maintain effective rehearsals by limiting off-task issues and creating a well-paced rehearsal including a variety of learning experiences. In turn, a student will see value and remain motivated. Both conductors and students taking a goal-oriented approach to the direction and participation in singing respectively will provide a positive and successful learning environment. It is important, when considering the goal-oriented approach of the conductor and the students, to establish an understanding of agenda.
2.3.2 Agendas

The exposure to cultural factors for the current generation of school students is one of media through radio, television and the Internet. This is also the same for teachers and they too also have influences from their teacher training and own ensemble experiences shaping their agenda. The idea that some form of agenda may be attributed to a school choir can be likened to educational theory of resistance. Resistance theory originated as class-based student resistance in education (McGrew, 2011). Cultural dominance involves actions that passively or actively oppose the dominant culture preserving the students’ or teachers’ sense of autonomy and identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In resistance theory, “educators are trying to develop a closer fit between students’ home cultures and the culture of the school” (Brown, 2007, p. 57). Although the theory is usually applied to general classroom education, in applying this theory to a school group singing programme it may be seen that both students and teachers are involved in creating a sense of their autonomy and identity. The media and the students’ experience of the music of their generation may influence their involvement in choral programmes. It may also encourage them and enhance their expectations in terms of the role and repertoire of an ensemble. The students may, either passively or actively, be influencing change by challenging tradition.

Teachers are also recognised as being involved in resistance, exploring their own sense of autonomy and identity. They may have their own ideas for the role and repertoire of the ensemble. Teachers may draw on their own traditional choral involvement in school and beyond their training at university level, or simply need to maintain a sense of autonomy and identity in order to develop a choral programme as directed by the
school. The impact of resistance by students can also be further complicated for conductors as students are not developing the skills to focus their listening. Conductors may have their own thoughts about music that is culturally relevant to students through their own focused listening, while the reality of culture is that students are exposed to so much music.

The task of attending to music seems to be difficult to teach, as most people and especially adolescents are continuously being bathed in sound without regard to active, focused listening (Madsen, Geringer, & Madsen, 2009, p. 22).

Resistance theory may be useful as it not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept, and affirm, their cultural identity, while developing critical perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The application of this theory to a study of group singing ensembles may be appropriate depending upon the schools that have volunteered for inclusion in this research. The schools could be examined as they may differ in traditions and socio-economic aspects. Seeking to determine if differences in school locations and fee prices may have effects on the students approach to education, and influences students may have on the repertoire and type of group singing activity of an ensemble will form an analysis of agenda.

Parker (2010), in the study of student participation and belonging, suggested “teachers and administrators can benefit by better understanding how teachers support student belonging in order to best identify teaching practices” (p. 341). This could be connected to culturally responsive teachers as in resistance theory (Brown, 2007).

In contrast, Morton (2008) warns against allowing the handing over of some of a choir’s tasks,
“So a question to ask while reflecting on one’s conducting is ‘who is actually conducting my choir?’ Make sure it is you, and that significant decisions that are important in the choral process are not being made by administrators, management, choir committees, school parents or, God forbid, the singers themselves” (p. 2)

This refers to the idea of autonomy within resistance theory. Morton (2008) suggested conductors are in charge of the decision making process of group singing ensembles. In school group singing ensembles, there may be several influences from different levels of the school and, Morton (2008) warns against allowing any decision making to be done by anyone other than the conductor. Further reinforcing the autonomy of the conductor he also warned against allowing resistance to occur by giving students an opportunity to be involved in decision making.

There may be both positive and negative reasons for allowing the students in a group singing ensemble to take part in choosing repertoire. However, the literature reviewed tends toward only the conductor making choices for the group singing ensemble. Whilst traditional conductors would like to remain autonomous in selecting music, allowing for some student input will not necessarily encourage the students to expect an autonomous control over repertoire but will give them an opportunity to have some input. This may assist in motivation and overcoming the effects of performance anxiety.

2.3.3 Performance anxiety

Performance anxiety in a group singing ensemble setting can affect individual members of the ensemble and may have a collective affect on the group. The form of performance anxiety specific to musicians, as well as children and adolescents who perform in group
singing ensembles, can be defined as a recurring anxious apprehension relating to a musical performance. The effect of musical performance anxiety may not define an overall outcome of a performance or the musical accomplishments of individual performers, but conductors should be aware of the possible effects (Kenny, 2010; Thomas & Nettelbeck, 2013). There may be occasions where, in the event that musical performance anxiety occurs, it could result in a lowered performance quality (Ryan & Andrews, 2009).

The conductor may also play a significant part in elevating or reducing the affect of performance anxiety, being linked to the students’ overall performance readiness, by assisting in reducing performance anxiety. Ryan & Andrews (2009), found that eighty-four per cent of the participants (group singing ensemble members) in their study felt that the conductor influenced their level of performance anxiety. The participants reported that the anxiety of the conductor was a contributing factor to their performance anxiety as was a negative attitude or bad mood, weak rehearsal skills, unclear conducting, lack of respect for the choir and “that the singling out of individuals for criticism was particularly stressful” (p. 115).

Practice is important for the development of self-efficacy or task efficacy; however, practice “may not play as significant a role in the reduction of musical performance anxiety” (Thomas & Nettelbeck, 2013, p. 9). Ryan & Andrews (2009) found a strong link between the role of conductor and performance anxiety. It is imperative that conductors are aware of their role in the preparation of performers in an attempt to reduce the possibility and effect of performance anxiety. A conductor must ensure that a
task is not daunting or negative and that students involved are able to feel they can fulfil the task of performing with the ensemble (Durrant, 2005b).

Through musical performances, “feelings are likely to be set in motion by achievement of emotionally significant goals” (Durrant, 2005b, p. 84). By this, conductors are challenged to ensure students are well-rehearsed, with attention paid to performance skills, thus reducing performance anxiety. The choice of repertoire may also contribute to performance anxiety as students are influenced by popular culture through radio, film and television. Performers and audience members can be influenced by a particular style of singing or an artist and anxiety occurs when a student or group singing ensemble is not able to perform in the same manner as the known song. The next section explores literature about the influence of the media and effects this may have on students in group singing ensembles.

2.4 The media

2.4.1 The influence of the media

Radio, television and the cultural transmission of music are a feature of our society and use of the Internet as a form of media ensures that students have access to music in so many different forums. Through the Internet we have experienced websites devoted to television portrayals of music classrooms, been able to join blogs and share our thoughts on the popularity of television portrayals through Facebook and Twitter etc. For music educators, the media has been particularly influential in shaping the expectations of school age children through the portrayal of a music teaching
programme such as *Glee* and films like *School of Rock* and *Rock School*. In these films and television programmes, the premise is that of a classroom music programme. Through these programmes, popular media portrayals of music teachers within the context of music education is being broadly circulated (Webb, 2007). Wicks (2013) suggests that in programmes such as Australian Idol, X-Factor, Battle of the Choirs and The Voice, as well as attracting high television ratings, “anecdotal evidence suggests that children are more interested in singing as a result of its profile in the media” (p.13).

There are both positives and negatives to be derived from the influence of media on education. The radio, as the original form of media influence to youth during the 1950s, was considered by religious commentators to be a spiritual danger as youth became aware of the secular songs in the charts and, even more concerning, were the religious songs that made it on to the secular charts (Bergler, 2012). Evangelical Christians feared rock music because of its association with antisocial behaviour, sex and violence. The influence of television was also a cause for concern, although, television was considered acceptable provided the viewer allowed their Christian faith to guide and determine the programmes to be viewed. Bergler (2012) suggested that some television, some movies and some music were more acceptable than others if a Christian message could be communicated.

Other learning can occur through watching television and other media. A positive aspect demonstrated by Marsh (2008) is that although media influences are seen in the use of proper nouns and names of known artists in children’s playground games, the games are still creative and use much of the established playground literature. The musical
preferences of students can be seen in their playground performance, sometimes derived through the appropriation of styles portrayed in the media (Marsh, 2008). Marsh (2008) reported that television, radio, CDs and the Internet were all influences for learning songs for use in playground activities. In contrast, Wicks (2013) reported “some educators also feel that the vocal models provided by segments of popular culture are poor and that the media encourages a passive, rather than active interest in singing” (p13). This more passive influence may be through programmes such as *Glee*, a television show that has sparked much debate about the ensemble singing skills shown as part of the story. This will be further examined in the next section.

**2.4.2 Glee**

Webb (2007) offers a positive, suggesting popular media portrayals of music education have the potential to provide insight and pedagogical innovation. The idea that the programmes and films can provide insight is also suggested in a study of the teaching practices in Season 1 of *Glee*. The point here is that the programme is about the dynamics and relationships of music students and teachers. A positive aspect of the programme is the portrayal of a music classroom as a place offering social sanctuary for students who may be marginalised in other settings within a school (Talbot & Millman, 2011).

The social hierarchy experienced in school can be explored in the portrayal of a music choral programme in *Glee*; however, the television programme does not set out to accurately depict a group singing ensemble where membership is voluntary. There is a
demonstration that success for the vocal ensemble will depend upon the recruitment of talent and that developing of students’ abilities is not a focus of the education process (Talbot & Millman, 2011). The students need to be good enough to be part of the group singing ensemble and, as singing is the focus of the ensemble, no further educational aspects are explored. Although many Australian schools and educational institutions offer varying levels of choir or performance ensemble, with some groups involving auditioned places, the recruitment of talent in order to make a successful ensemble is not encouraged.

Voluntary involvement should be encouraged in the development of school choral programmes. Talbot and Millman (2011), suggested that the television programme Glee is a “demonstration of music education as a product valuing enterprise, rather than a process valuing enterprise” (p. 17). In terms of the agenda of conductors, students or schools, consideration of whether the product or the process or both is the desired outcome of a group singing ensemble may need to be made.

In this literature review, given that the media influence has been highlighted, it is worth exploring some recent Internet blogs. The US National Association for Music Education (NAfME) ran a poll on their website titled TV Singing: What You Think giving participants an opportunity to comment on scripted television programmes such as Glee and non-scripted shows like American Idol. The poll received 180 respondents with 58% of participants reporting that scripted programmes like Glee had good and not so good qualities; and only 37% believing the programme was good for music education
(Rarus, 2011). The online poll included an opportunity for participants to make comments about the television programmes.

Rarus (2011) reports the following negatives:

- Showcase unhealthy vocalisation styles/technique;
- Portray unflattering stereotypes of people, music programmes;
- Convey an incomplete/poor image of music education;
- Set up unrealistic expectations about what can and cannot be achieved in school music;
- Show unrealistic models of what it takes to become a successful performer;
- Represent a limited scope of vocal repertoire;
- Omit the real effort required to learn and perform music well. (p. 1)

The positive comments, although less in number, certainly provide some encouragement. The fact that the programme brings music into the forefront and into conversations is seen as a positive. This may also encourage students to talk, become interested in and engaged about music. One comment suggested that the programme “serves as a tool” (Rarus, 2010, p. 1) to discuss technique, assessment, critique what makes success and what really goes into a performance. This could be seen as an opportunity to develop pedagogy in a choral educational setting.

Talbot and Millman (2011), in concluding the study on the discourses of the representation of a school music programme in Glee suggested that further research could examine if Glee or other representations of a music-learning environment had an
impact on the enrolment, attitude and expectations of show choir or glee club participants. One response in the NAfME poll gives a positive reaction and encouragement by stating, “when these shows motivate students to enrol and engage in a music performance class, that is a good thing. These shows also provide teachable topics for class discussions such as vocal technique and repertoire” (p.1).

Both the negative and positive comments in the online poll hosted on the NAfME website provided some insight into the thoughts of music educators in the USA. While the education system in the USA is different to the Australian system, with the US system being largely based on performance classes and the Australian education system based on a more regulated classroom programme, it will be important to establish the effects of such television programmes on a voluntary ensemble such as a choir.

2.5 Summary of literature

In reviewing the literature relevant to this study of group singing ensembles in Anglican schools in the Sydney Diocese, this chapter has presented an overview of the research, from different parts of the world, that is relevant to the role of group singing in schools and the community, the experiences of members of group singing ensembles and the role of conductors. The literature indicates that there is a large body of research available for conductors when determining their role in leading a group singing ensemble; however, there is not a specific model or clear recommendations for selection of repertoire.
The literature does give some indication as to why students participate in group singing ensembles, their experiences of positive performance preparations and of anxiety, but there is little evidence of the opinions and experiences of students with respect to the repertoire selected for performance. The reality is that students are exposed to many influences, particularly from the media, and although there is some research into the effect and possible benefits of media influences, there is relatively little to suggest student opinions or experiences. Currently it is difficult to ascertain (a) why some students continually participate in choral music programmes; (b) others drop out; (c) how students feel about the repertoire of their ensemble and (d) the performance programmes and experiences of students in Anglican schools in Sydney.

Humphreys et al. (1992) stated that it is unclear whether the role the conductor plays in directing an ensemble has an effect on the participation rates of an ensemble. The task for the conductor is to nurture a music making experience for students to develop a life-long enjoyment for choral singing. The conductor can use research that includes the emotional, behavioural and cognitive benefits of choral singing to encourage and nurture the students.

The research literature mentioned the effectiveness of teacher modelling as an instructional method. This aspect is most important for all conductors; no matter whether they are new to conducting high school choirs or if they are experienced. Modelling, by conductors, should be incorporated into rehearsals, by singing to
students, using recorded examples and could also include guest conductors and singers assisting in modelling the music.

Although music still maintains a reasonable appeal to students in learning to play instruments and participating in a variety of ensembles, the traditional choral music form is influenced by the media with the popularity of television programmes such as *Glee*. Media and popular music may have a significant effect on the future of choirs in Australian high schools. Assessing the influences of the media may include such aspects as understanding if there are changes occurring in choir programmes in schools, the effects on participation rates and the suitability of repertoire selected.

The next chapter presents the methodology of the study.
3 Methodology

The purpose of this investigation was to discover the current role of group singing in Anglican schools in the Sydney Anglican Diocese through examining the aims of teachers, who plays a role in selecting repertoire and whether the media has had an influencing effect. The schools, all of varying ages of establishment, had choir programmes that differed in the length of time the ensemble had been a feature of school. While the main feature of the investigation was to explore how group singing is featured in the schools, the influence the media may have had on established choral music programmes was also explored. Data was collected through interviews with teachers and students involved in school group singing activities.

3.1 The research paradigm

The research required a qualitative approach, allowing the researcher to explore the reality of the participants’ experience (Burns, 2000), by developing an understanding of the participants’ involvement in group singing programmes and the influences of popular culture on the lives of the student participants. An ethnographic study sought to understand the culture of the participants, and a phenomenological study explored the experiences of the participants (Tuckman, 1999). The research was conceived as a descriptive and interpretive study.

The phenomenological perspective, which examines subjective human experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004), was studied on three levels; examining the characteristics of choral programming preferred by schools, teachers and students. The study also
explored the different roles of group singing in five Anglican schools, including two contexts, schools with an established tradition and newer low-fee paying schools. The study also sought to discover how teachers and students perceived the influence of television and other media, particularly the television programme *Glee* as a phenomenon, on choral singing.

Through structured and semi-structured interviews in which participants were asked questions to initiate the discussion of their experience in a group singing ensemble, the data collection and subsequent data analysis used a form of narrative research (Ollerenshaw, 2002). Narrative Inquiry seeks an intuitive understanding through the analysis of the experiences of the participants involved. The procedures for implementing the research consisted of studying the choral directors and student members of each choir as individuals and gathering data through their descriptions of their experience (Creswell, 2007; Lopez & Willis, 2004).

If we are to consider that effective leadership of a choir is a form of artistry then the study sought the experience of learning through the artistry of the conductor. From the examination of this, the ability of the conductor to handle indeterminate zones of practice and an analysis of how the conductors can renew themselves was established and explored. The opportunity provided by the semi-structured interview allowed the student participants to engage in reflection of the experiences of membership of a choir. The process allowed the participants to internally examine any issues or experiences which create meaning and provide clarification and perspective (Boyd & Fales, 1983). The use of reflection as a research method has benefits for participants. Those involved
benefit from reflecting on their learning and being able to develop future learning actions as a result of this reflection (Tomkins, 2009).

Through reporting the individual experiences and ordering the meaning of those experiences, themes that occurred formed the narrative analysis (Creswell, 2007). The role of the researcher was to select a series of questions to stimulate discussion about the participants’ experiences as members of a choir. It was then necessary to determine the relationships through the narrative analysis and tabling of discussions to discover similarities and frequently occurring words and ideas to form the themes. Further themes were developed through the differences between individual responses.

The study both established the phenomenon of group singing in schools and explored the effect of popular culture on choirs through the phenomenon of the television programme *Glee*. Membership of a group singing activity in school can be viewed as a phenomenon following the inquiry and the collection of data from the people who have experienced the phenomenon. A description of the essence of the experience was then formed, discovering what the individuals experienced and how they experienced it (Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon or the abiding concern (van Manen, 1997) in the study was the current role of group singing in Sydney Anglican schools and the influence of a second phenomenon, the popular culture portrayed in the media. The phenomenon was reported through description and an interpretation of the experiences of the participants.
3.2 Selection of participants

The initial stage, following ethics approval (Appendix A), was to approach a substantial number of Anglican schools, requesting their participation in the research. A letter of invitation (Appendix B) detailing the nature of the research and the potential part the school could play in the research was sent to the Headmaster, Head Mistress or Principal of each school. Eighteen schools were approached with five schools volunteering to take part in the research. The Head of Music or the Choral Director then contacted the researcher and arrangements were made for a visit to a choir rehearsal to introduce the research and distribute Participant Information Statements and Consent Forms (Appendix C). A second visit was arranged to interview the student participants, observe a choir rehearsal and interview the Choral Director. Within each school, the participants are the Choral Director and a number of students from the school choir with the exception of one school in which school time constraints made it too difficult to arrange an interview time with the students, however, the teacher participated by responding to the same interview questions via email (Appendix D).

As the schools are church-affiliated, it was necessary to create names that did not identify the school in any way. The schools in this study have been labelled from A to E. A regional description is necessary as there is some evidence to suggest that the results vary according to region.
The schools in the study are:

**School A:** a co-educational school in Northern Sydney,

**School B:** a co-educational school located on the NSW South Coast,

**School C:** a co-educational school in Western Sydney,

**School D:** a girls’ school in Eastern Sydney and

**School E:** an established boys school in the Inner-West of Sydney.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>No. choirs</th>
<th>Auditioned choirs</th>
<th>Used in chapel</th>
<th>In school events</th>
<th>Out of school events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This information was not directly answered by the participants but covered in discussions.

The criterion for the inclusion of a school in the study was that a choral director/ teacher was involved in programming and conducting choral programmes and that the students are participating in choral programmes within the school. The age range of the student participants was 12 – 18 and the teachers were all over 18 years of age.

The Participant Information Statement detailed the process for maintaining the participants’ privacy. This was reiterated at the beginning of each interview. The study involved five adult participants, Choral Directors in the participating schools. The Choral Directors were given the title Conductor A – E according to the school in which the participant was the director of the group singing ensemble.
The conductors are:

**Conductor A:** A male conductor new to the position in the year the research was undertaken. He had extensive experience in the church choir tradition in both the UK and Australia.

**Conductor B:** A female conductor with experience in local community choirs as both a member of the ensemble and in directing. Also experienced in European choir traditions as a postgraduate student studying in Europe. In the role of conductor at School B for more than five years.

**Conductor C:** A female conductor with experience as a member of local community and Salvation Army church choirs. Prior to the year in which the research was undertaken the participant had been conductor of the group singing ensemble for two years.

**Conductor D:** A male conductor, new to the position in the year in which the research was undertaken. He had experience directing other school and community choirs, performing in adult choirs and is an experienced composer.

**Conductor E:** A male conductor who had been in the position for a number of years and had therefore been involved in the established tradition of choral singing in this school for a significant amount of time. This participant is also an experienced solo and church choral singer.

All the student participants are represented in this document by the title Participant 1 – 20. The individual details of the student participants are shown in Table 1.
Table 2: Demographic details of student participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>YC</th>
<th>YOC</th>
<th>School Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant 1</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 2</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 3</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 4</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 5</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 6</td>
<td>27-03-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 7</td>
<td>29-05-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>SSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 8</td>
<td>29-05-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>SSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 9</td>
<td>29-05-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 10</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 11</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 12</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 13</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 14</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 15</td>
<td>14-06-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 16</td>
<td>12-09-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>CEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 17</td>
<td>12-09-12</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>CEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 18</td>
<td>12-09-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 19</td>
<td>12-09-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>CEE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant 20</td>
<td>12-09-12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>CEE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: G – Gender, Y C – Number of years in this choir (including current year), YOC – Number of years in primary school choirs, CEE – Co-educational Established School, SSE – Single Sex Established School, CEN – Co-educational New School, SSN – Single Sex New School

* Participant had joined the choir two weeks before the interview took place.
3.3 Data collection

Data was collected through interviews with teachers and in semi-structured group interviews with students who participated in group singing activities in schools. A combination of questions were asked, direct and indirect, specific and non-specific. Throughout the interview process it was important to maintain an openness to the opinions of the participants (Tuckman, 1999) and provide the participants with the opportunity to reflect on their experience (Creswell, 2007). In this study the teachers were asked to offer information regarding the repertoire expectations of the school, the motivation of students, the role of the group within the school and the effect of external influences on the expectations and participation of students in group singing activities. The students were asked to offer information regarding their feelings about the choice of repertoire, the role of the group within the school, the positive aspects of performing with the group, and the effect of the external influences of the media on the group. The interviews were conducted at school in a classroom used for choir rehearsals. The interviews took place either directly before or immediately after a choir rehearsal in which the researcher was an observer. This emphasised the method of narrative inquiry and the importance of learning from participants in a setting (Ollerenshaw, 2002).

Bresler (1992) suggests that the use of a phenomenological perspective allows for the interpretation of the thoughts of the participant and the experiences of the writer. It also provides an opportunity for validation of the research through triangulation. Triangulation in qualitative research is used to measure the scientific validity of the research findings. Three different methods of data collection have been employed: an individual interview with each Choral Director, semi-structured group interviews with
students and observational data collected, by the researcher, at choir rehearsals. Using the three different methods of data collection has provided a significant amount of data for triangulation and within method triangulation (Burns, 2000), achieved through the interviews with a number of participants in a number of schools. The research required self-reflection by the researcher, particularly upon the dimensions in which the inquiry has been conducted. This action is the informing and further self-reflective action of the researcher in the role of conductor in a school setting. Further validity occurs as the study is replicable using the same interview questions in different Anglican schools; however, as it is narrative inquiry, the resulting data could be significantly different as a result of different school locations and more recent media influences.

The collection of data included audio recordings and the taking of notes during interviews. The audio recordings were transcribed for coding purposes. Field notes were also made during observational attendance at rehearsals.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The methods of data analysis involved selecting the most revealing information from the interviews and composing narratives from the experiences of participants in each school (Bresler & Stake, 1992). The analysis of the narratives involved creating tables, coding and identifying relationships between the different experiences of the participants, categorising and finding meaning (Blom & Nygren, 2010) in order to identify themes. The data analysis themes are displayed in Table 3.
Table 3: Data analysis themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conductors</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group singing ensembles in the school</td>
<td>Benefits and motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance opportunities and events</td>
<td>The ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repertoire</td>
<td>Repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda</td>
<td>The conductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glee</td>
<td>Glee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process of analysis of the themes involved comparing each of the themes for similarities and differences, discovering that some experiences were very similar while others stood out as different (Riley & Hawe, 2005). These similarities and differences formed the basis for the application of literature in determining answers to the research questions. This is essential for the determination of validity as it is essential to make sufficient links back to empirical data (Riley & Hawe, 2005).

As the researcher may have identified with some of the experiences of the participants it was necessary to avoid showing bias when reporting the findings following data collection and analysis. As the coding, analysing and interpreting of data required a large amount of time, the researcher was able to realistically confront their own opinions and it is likely that bias was not shown in the final reporting of findings (Burns, 2000). However, there was some element of self-reflection and empathetic
understanding of the researcher while working with the research which allowed for further validation of the research through transactional validity (Cho & Trent, 2006).

The findings from the data collected by narrative inquiry are reported in Chapter 4.
4 Findings

This chapter explores the participants’ understanding of their agenda in membership of group singing activities, discussing both the thoughts behind the conductors’ methods of selecting or encouraging student participation and the students’ own motivation to participate. This exploratory study revealed that the major issues concerning group singing in Anglican schools in the Sydney Anglican Diocese is the agenda of each conductor and the agendas of the students who participate in group singing activities. The conductor of a choir has a role to play in encouraging students to participate in group singing ensembles.

The findings are divided into four sections. *Motivation* reports the conductors’ and students’ thoughts on the motivating factors that encourage student participation. *The group singing ensemble* discusses the performance opportunities of the ensembles and the image of the group within the school. This section also describes the students’ responses to a conductor’s personality and the influence this may have on students. The third section, *Agenda, repertoire and performance* discusses these factors from the conductors’ view, the school’s agenda influences and the students’ view. This section highlights the choice of repertoire of the conductors and the repertoire to which the students would like to be exposed. Also discussed in this section is the role of the school in influencing repertoire. This is an important factor as the executive administrators in the schools, as in Anglican Schools participating in this study, do have significant influence in the conductor’s choice of repertoire. The final section presents first the
opinions of the conductors’ and then those of the students’ to the Media and the Glee influence.

By dividing the chapter into sections according to the themes that emerged in analysis of the data, these themes are then divided into two sections, the thoughts and considerations of the conductors and the thoughts and considerations of the students. The themes are interwoven in order to draw together similarities and make comparisons between the considerations of each group of participants.

The sections are:

Table 4: Titles of themes used in findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conductors considering</th>
<th>Students considering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student motivation and participation</td>
<td>Their motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance opportunities</td>
<td>The image of the ensemble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agenda and repertoire</td>
<td>The personality of the conductor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School agenda, repertoire and performances</td>
<td>Agenda and repertoire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glee influence</td>
<td>The Glee influence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes discussed in the results report the data derived from interviews with the Conductors from Schools A – E and the student participants 1 – 20.

4.1 Motivation

4.1.1 Conductors considering student motivation and participation

I want to be a positive agent for singing… I see that as my mantle where the kids, the kids tend to warm to me, I feel privileged and I feel that’s a bit of a responsibility that you know, great that I can build rapport with
the kids but how am I going to, what am I going to do with that influence that is then afforded, so I mean we don’t put up posters advertising, or that kind of thing (Interview: Conductor C, 27th March 2012).

The initial analysis suggested two factors; a) what the conductors do and b) how the students feel about how the conductors present themselves to the ensemble. To further develop this analysis, what the conductors do is largely based on a personal belief about themselves, their role and their selection of repertoire. The conductors used words such as positive, warm, uplifting, inclusive, commitment to describe their approach to their ensemble and suggested they felt strongly that this was the motivating force behind student participation in the group singing ensemble.

Whilst each conductor had an idea about how they encouraged students to participate in group singing activities, the above comment summarised the general feeling of conductors. The conductors believed the students’ motivation was as a result of their positive approach to conducting the group and the relationships developed through other aspects of their teaching role in the school (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). In all cases the conductors were self-assured and Conductor C, as quoted above, was proud of her role in developing relationships that lead to student motivation. Jordan (2009) uses the word positive to describe the rehearsal environment the conductor can create and describes an environment in which the student can feel nourished, similar to the ideas of feeling warmth and being uplifted as suggested by the participants. Jordan (2009) also supports the idea of inclusiveness by describing the rehearsal environment as a place in which music is made in a safe affirming manner.
There is also a sense of self-efficacy (Elliot, 2005) in that as a conductor they feel good about their skills and ability to lead a group singing ensemble and that they, maybe, had a positive experience as a student and wished to emulate this for their students (Kelly, 2003; Madsen & Kelly, 2002). It is the conductors’ capacity to create a positive non-threatening environment in a ‘safe’ atmosphere that can be seen as strength in interpersonal skills (Durrant, 2005a). A conductor’s strong belief in their own skills, along with their self-assured approach to directing an ensemble, supports this idea where the interpersonal skills shapes both theirs and ensemble members’ identity within the group. The conductors may believe their own commitment to the ensemble creates student motivation. Durrant (2005a) described this interpersonal skill as “the expectation of the highest standards possible” (p. 90). It could be considered that conductors use their role as the leader of the group singing ensemble to create a sense of autonomy and identity within the school (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This is possibly more evident when the conductor is also a classroom Music teacher, educating only a small portion of students but able to create an identity amongst the greater school population through leadership of a widely seen performance ensemble.

According to the conductors, the motivation of students is also as a result of the tradition of the school. Those schools with long traditions may feel it wasn’t really something that concerned the conductors’ planning despite one of the conductors in a traditional school feeling there was some need to encourage or make suggestions to particular students. In both the established and newer schools there was acknowledgement that some individual encouragement of students did occur. The conductors from School E and School A relied partly on the established tradition; “the
This reliance on tradition, established by the school, suggests the conductor also uses or relies on traditional teaching methods for the choir (Green, 2002).

There was, in some of the schools, an amount of encouraging students to participate in the ensembles. Although the students in School A were required to audition, the conductor acknowledged there was some encouraging of the students to audition. The conductor from School C also encouraged individuals to participate in their ensemble,

> If I’m hearing a child, if I have a relationship with a kid in my year 7 or year 8 whatever, and I hear them singing… I will say ‘have you thought about coming to choir? Why don’t you come along?’ (Interview: Conductor C, 27th March 2012).

This school had previously required students to audition to participate in the group singing ensembles. The result was a small choir with consistent attendance. A recent change in personnel had resulted in a change of conductor and a different approach. Auditioning is no longer required as the conductor described her view on singing in the comment,

> I want singing to be a positive, uplifting, inclusive experience. That’s probably my foundational premise which is why I deliberately don’t audition” (Interview: Conductor C, 27th March 2012).

At School B the conductor also encouraged individual students to participate;

> I’ll single particular individual kids out, I teach singing so [if] I know that they have a good voice, I’ll encourage them to join (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).
A final comment by a conductor who was not involved in other aspects of the school music programme returned to the idea that the conductor must have a belief in their own skills and that this is a motivating force for the students;

Student motivation comes from a commitment to the ensemble and to performance excellence (email: Conductor D, 27th November, 2012).

This supports the notion that the provision of an appropriate emotional environment for creativity (Odena & Welch, 2007), the social, personal and cultural development (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003) of the student is taken care of by the commitment of the conductor. Should this happen, performance excellence will be the likely result.

While this section has explored the view of student motivation from the conductor’s perspective, the next section will explore the student’s own motivation.

### 4.1.2 Students considering their motivation

There was a general feeling amongst the conductors that the reason for student participation in the group singing ensemble in their school was (i) as a result of the positive approach to conducting the group and, (ii) the relationships the conductor developed through other aspects of their teaching role in the school. The view that students are motivated by the tradition of the school, the commitment or the interpersonal skills of the conductor was dispelled by the student participants’ response to the enjoyment of singing which formed their main motivation. They reported that their own enjoyment was the motivation for taking part and the social aspect, coupled with the sense of achievement when performing with others, enhanced enjoyment and in turn enhanced mood (Davidson & Bailey, 2005; Davis et al., 2002; Froehlich, 1992). By
encouraging the students to reflect on their motivation to participate in group-singing activities only one student considered the initial encouragement for his involvement came from another student’s recommendation to join the ensemble based on the conductor’s approach;

Pretty much the first time I knew there was a vocal ensemble was because my friend joined it and she was like ‘it’s so fun, it’s so pumped’, so she like pretty much dragged me in Year 7 and I was like ‘oh yeah’ (Interview: Participant 14, 14th June, 2012).

The students, described singing and their involvement using passionate phrases such as,

Well I love to sing…yeah and I really enjoy singing with other people as well (Interview: Participant 3, 27th March, 2012),

I just really like singing and thought it would be good to do it here (Interview: Participant 7, 29th May, 2012),

I joined because I love singing, it’s one of the passions I have, I really love it (Interview: Participant 12, 14th June, 2012),
I love music; it’s just another way to get involved in music I guess (Interview: Participant 18, 12th September, 2012).

Other motivating factors also contributed to the reasons the students maintained a commitment to the ensemble. Table 5 shows a number of motivating factors highlighted by the student participants and the supporting comments made in the semi-structured interviews.
Table 5: Motivating factors for student involvement in group singing ensembles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivating Factor</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Music camp</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Music camp, we have camp at the beginning of every year where you know all the music ensembles come together and everyone’s just casual, you’re all in mufti.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Musical</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>I wanted to be in the musical but I was kind of worried that I don’t sing very good so that I’m not going to get a very good part or anything so I would just kind of be in the background and um so I went to my mum and she was just like um ‘do you still want to do the musical’ and so I said yeah and she was just like ‘well I signed you up for vocal ensemble’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tours/ conferences</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>We get to go and sing at the conference and at various other things, you get to see lots of different places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social benefits</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>I think as well for the social aspect, it’s just really a kind of a sense of achievement when you’ve done it with other people as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music making in a group</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>I just really like the sound of it. I really like singing by myself but I like more singing with other people, like singing harmonies and things like that cause I don’t know...I just like the sounds of a full choir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to a varied repertoire</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>I went and the songs were incredible cause we did a lot of classical songs and international songs like Russian and Italian sort of operas and cannons and stuff so hearing them it was new music that I was fascinated by.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of achievement</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>[Being in the choir] gives you something to present at the end of the day and there’s like a really big sense of achievement once you all come out of a performance of something, you just feel really good and everyone is really happy and it’s also such a nice experience I guess to have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal improvement</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>It kind of helps you with your singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical development</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>It really helps to develop your ear and helps you learn to sing in harmony and it’s really good for your musical abilities I’ve found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>I’ve learnt from being in a choir, other skills which you can’t get when you just stay with a teacher, so harmonising in a group and blending and making sure you’re not too loud.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The students were not motivated by the possibility of creating a sense of their autonomy and identity (Ladson-Billings, 1995); however, the responses of 17 of the 20 participants showed a clear feeling of self-efficacy or self-worth (Davidson, 1999) as a result of their involvement in the ensemble, the experience was clearly goal-oriented and this promoted a motivational pattern (Ames, 1992). The students’ reflections demonstrated the many different benefits of participation in a group singing ensemble in their school and their comments suggested that the confidence gained by participation is the most important aspect for them;

I think choir is a way of building my confidence to perform, choir’s another thing cause sometimes [on my own] my nerves get in the way” (Interview: Participant 3, 27th March 2012).

The choir setting, through the provision of an environment that allows for creativity (Odena & Welch, 2007), gives the students a place to enjoy their love for singing and a chance to develop the many skills identified by the students.

4.2 The group singing ensemble

4.2.1 Conductors considering performance opportunities

When considering the performance opportunities that were important in their school, three of the five participating conductors agreed there needed to be activities that encouraged the students to participate. As music camp, the annual school musical and the opportunities to take part in tours and other activities such as conferences were important to the students; the conductors also highlighted the motivational effect of specialised performance opportunities;
It’s got a history of winning and doing competitions and touring and people like to be part of ensembles like that (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012).

Touring is a regular feature of three of the schools and one school had recently undertaken a tour for the first time, important to the conductors as they felt touring played a significant part in motivating students to participate in the ensemble (Parker, 2010). There is a strong sense of community developed amongst a group of students when spending so much time in preparation for a tour and then the bonding experience that occurs when visiting and performing in another place. When a performance opportunity created a sense of community it became a motivating factor and resulted in student commitment to maintaining their involvement in the ensemble. The conductors valued this as the motivation and commitment from students assisted the development of the ensemble and created further opportunities for repertoire and more performances.

Similar motivational activity is a camp. Both School A and School C hold annual camps for the learning of repertoire. These take place at designated campsites featuring appropriate facilities for students to rehearse in both large and small rooms and enjoy the company of their fellow ensemble members. Conductor C (Interview, 27th March, 2012) in her description of activities said, “Camp makes anything attractive.” Even a local event can be motivational; “they like to be going out of school and doing things for other people” (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).

At School B, the conductor considered that the students were motivated to participate in the group singing ensemble in order to improve their skills and better their chances of a role in the annual school musical; “vocal ensemble is a good way of keeping the senior
kids singing so that when we do a musical they have been working on part singing and just using their voices” (Interview, Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).

The conductors played a role in creating performance opportunities that both motivated students to participate and encouraged continued participation once they had become a member of the ensemble. Some of the events in which School A participated each year included eisteddfods, visiting churches to take part in a service, and festivals. The conductor felt that festival participation was beneficial and he clearly enjoyed the experience; “festivals I like, I love it when lots of schools get together” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012). The experiences when a large group of students meet together for a festival has a feel-good factor (Durrant, 2005a). The conductor interviewed also felt that more specialised performances for the group singing ensembles was necessary to enhance the programme, motivate student participation and develop a high level of performance skill, “I'd like to do more actual specialist choral concert giving...and we're going to give them a choral specialist concert and expect them to sing in an informed manner” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012). This would give students from all levels in the high school an opportunity to sing together and required a number of adult members of the school to work with the students providing a mixed age experience (Conway & Hodgman, 2008).

In this comment, Conductor A was referring to a planned performance for the following year in which the choir would sing a large Baroque composition with String Orchestra. Although acknowledgement was made to the many opportunities the students are able to experience through the group singing ensemble, the idea of singing “in an informed
manner” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012) seemed reserved to compositions from the western tonal tradition of composition, whereas the other compositions, songs for festivals, musical theatre, repertoire for tours, is used to motivate and maintain interest in the ensemble. This supports the notion that the choice of repertoire does play a significant role in the growth of a music programme (Harrison, 2006) and that performances of western tonal tradition are reserved to special events when students can sing “in an informed manner” as reported by Conductor A (Interview, 12th September, 2012).

4.2.2 The image of the ensemble

When the students reflected about the image of the group singing ensemble, and their perceptions about how other students in the school viewed the ensemble, there was a general consensus that the ensemble was seen as a positive part of the school. As each group singing ensemble was well supported by members who were not concerned by the perceptions of the school body, this comment from Participant 5 (Interview, 27th March, 2012) provided one view; “I know that traditionally like the choir wouldn’t be the coolest part of the school but I don’t think a lot of people at our school really care.”

One of the participants from School B had only joined the group singing ensemble two weeks prior to the interview. He was able to make a considered response to the ensemble, having recently been an observer of the ensemble and now a member, feeling that his previous view had been inaccurate and in reality the ensemble was a very welcoming group; “When I actually came here I got a better feeling for it and I felt much more happy and welcomed when I got into the vocal ensemble” (Interview:
Participant 15, 14th June, 2012). There was a strong sense of belonging in this group (Parker, 2010). The make-up of the ensemble was considered to be a positive aspect of the membership of the group singing ensemble in School A and, therefore, the ability of the ensemble to make a connection with a school audience:

I think in our choir what makes it really good is that we’ve got people from all aspects of the school like we’ve got some people who are in first rugby, we’ve got some people who do drama, we’ve got some people who are in the Crusaders Christian group and so I think that also, maybe it’s, we’ve found that it’s unique to our year as well but also you know generally if you’ve got a diverse number of people within the choir you’re more likely to get a, for example, a better applause at the end of your performance if you perform in assembly because it’s a more welcome reception (Interview: Participant 19, 12th September, 2012).

The students’ reflections on their role in the group singing ensemble and their perception of the image of the ensemble by their wider school communities was positive even in the smaller ensembles. In one of the schools, School B, in which the ensemble was a relatively small group in a reasonably well populated school, the students did not show any concerns about the size and felt that they were all in the ensemble with a clear idea of their motivation and what it was they wished to gain from their membership. The students had a clear awareness of the relevance of self-efficacy (McPherson & McCormick, 2006; Ritchie & Williamon, 2011) in their decision to be in the ensemble and how it made them feel. In the larger ensembles the opportunity to have students from a variety of school groups was definitely welcomed by the students and further contributed to the students’ positive feelings about the school view of the group singing ensemble. The ensemble had a sense of equality and purpose (Parker, 2010) despite the different personalities involved that provided a feel-good element to being a member (Holt, 2008a).
The conductor as teacher

The role of the conductor of a group singing ensemble can provide an opportunity for motivating and encouraging students in a number of ways, but it is the personality of the conductor as observed by the students’ in this study that is important to discuss. There were both positive and negative aspects of the personality of the conductor discussed by the students, and particularly by students who had experienced more than one conductor during their high school membership of a group singing ensemble.

So I think a negative could be that a lot of the choir’s attitude depends on the director’s attitude. You know if he’s this kind of guy that’s not 100% there or he’s got a different personality that kind of doesn’t mesh with us then a lot of like for example when we joined, when the girls came in year 10 the ‘yeah girls joining in year 10’ so the choir was like 100 strong it was less than half because they felt that you know they had come from schools where the choir directors were typical choir directors and they were all you know happy and musical and then they came to this school and they were kind of let down by a guy who, he just had different personality you know. (Interview: Participant 20, 12th September, 2012)

The student experienced a negative experience from a conductor that was not nurturing, respectful of the students or a good teacher (Durrant, 2005a).

When discussing the personality of the conductor, the student participants in Schools A, C and D were very encouraging of the change of personnel that had recently occurred. Participant 20 outlined this when he suggested that the previous experiences had not always been positive for the students. In contrast, Participant 19 (Interview: 12th September, 2012) described the experience with a new conductor; “We got a new Director of Choral Programmes and he is much more laissez faire about it all, he’s very
relaxed.” And in the other school in which the conductor was new to the position, “Personally I think it has been good. Yeah I like that he sort of revitalised it a bit” (Interview: Participant 9, 29th May, 2012). The idea of revitalisation can also be seen in the students’ perception of the conductors’ ability to energise and motivate the students, “Bringing energy up is really important as well” (Interview: Participant 5, 27th March, 2012). By energising and revitalising the rehearsals the conductor had created a positive rehearsal environment that is beneficial to participation and leads to a goal oriented-approach (Brendell, 1996; Sichivitsa, 2003). The conductor had been encouraging and provided an environment for sharing with purpose but also enjoyment (Durrant, 2005a). This goal-oriented approach reflected in the participation of students from different areas of the school community which should maintain long-term motivation (Ames, 1992). Long-term motivation and the personality of the conductor, when created by a sense of community, can further assist the development of the ensemble and allow for the learning of more challenging repertoire.

Two clear issues were highlighted by Participants 3, 4, and 5 from School C, the personality of a conductor and the difference between auditioned ensembles and groups where students voluntarily took part. They believed it was the personality of the conductor that determined the atmosphere of the group singing ensemble as they had experienced a conductor that preferred an auditioned choir and were now members of a choir directed by a conductor who chose not to audition. There was the exclusive choir, an auditioned ensemble with a capped maximum size and the inclusive choir, a non-auditioned ensemble with a varying number of members. Participant 5 (Interview: 27th March, 2012) felt that this change was not necessarily the best option for the members.
as “people looked up at it [the auditioned choir] and were sort of amazed by the talent that was in there, the nature of it has definitely changed”. In this ensemble, the student participants were divided in their reflections on the auditioned and non-auditioned ensembles are summarised in five points.

1) some students did not favour an auditioned choir as the audition process made them feel uncomfortable,
2) a non-auditioned choir removed the discomfort of the audition process and opens the choir to more students; however,
3) the non-auditioned choir was approached differently by the student members and allowed for infrequent attendance which in turn,
4) effected the learning of the repertoire, and
5) was annoying to the participants who regularly attended.

This summary of the students’ thoughts, having experienced both choir formats, was not reflected in the other schools involved in the study as each had a non-auditioned choir, and one also had an auditioned ensemble. The students from School A were members of both the non-auditioned and auditioned choir, where both ensembles had a reputation for positive attendance. As a result, the students interviewed were not of the same opinion as the participants from School C.

This is best summarised by Participant 3:

I think like the reason it would be difficult to have some different kinds of music or some different things would be hard when there’s like there’s a lot of people who don’t come every week and there’s probably, ah I don’t know if my judgement would be correct but I’d say like maybe half the choir that’s there pretty much every week and then another half that kind of changes a lot and so I think then for the people that are there regularly it can get a little tedious to do the same song over and over and over and you’re always going over things that you already know for the sake of the people who don’t come every week. That can get like a bit annoying because the people that do go every week or go you know, know it so. (Interview: 27th March, 2012)
The non-auditioned choir had allowed a larger number of students from all years of the high school to take part in the ensemble allowing a small mixed-age (Year 7 students mixing with Year 12 students etc.) ensemble with some positive effects (Conway & Hodgman, 2008) although the consistency of attendance was still a problem. Students in two schools highlighted the effects of irregular attendance, particularly the need to cover repertoire for several rehearsals and the fact “it can get a little tedious to do the same song over and over and over and you’re always going over things that you already know....” (Interview: Participant 3, 27th March, 2012). Brendell (1996) confirms that effective rehearsals are fast paced and there is little ‘off-task’ time. Participant 5 (Interview: 27th March, 2012) referred to ‘off-task’ time in discussing pacing and the effect of students ‘coming to muck around’ (Holt, 2008a, 2008b). This is also supported in the findings of Sichivitsa (2003) where the conductor can create a rehearsal environment where students are likely to have positive experiences which then, in turn, may have an effect on student participation.

The results discussed in this section indicated that the student participants considered that the personality of the conductor, likewise the respectful interpersonal manner, did play a significant role in quality of performance that was possible when learning repertoire. Someone who led the ensemble with energy and brought a revitalising effect impressed the student participants and this personality trait was motivating in assisting students to make the decision to attend. However, the students also felt that a regular attendance pattern, as some had experienced in a structured, well-attended ensemble, would allow for a wider, more challenging programme of repertoire.
4.3 Agenda, repertoire and performance

4.3.1 The conductors’ view

In considering the agenda of the conductor the choice of repertoire selected for the ensemble is a key feature. In each school the conductor was responsible for selecting the music and they felt very strongly about their repertoire choice in four of the five participating schools; however, the conductor from School B was a little unsure of her role stating; “I think ultimately I choose it” (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012). The results that emerged showed that the choice of repertoire by the conductors was student-focused in three of the schools and conductor centred in two schools. This suggested that music chosen by the conductor might be for two purposes; either a) to get the students’ attention of the ensemble or b) to indulge the conductors’ passion for certain styles of music.

The main student-focused (not to be confused with student-centred) purpose of the choice of repertoire was to encourage students to participate and provide motivation to continue with the group for a significant period of time. A student-centred approach would allow the students an opportunity to play a role in the selection of music. This differed from what was observed in the participating schools. The choral director from School B who had been unsure of her role in the selection of repertoire reflected further and suggested that her choice of repertoire was very important for assisting the students’ to feel comfortable amongst their peers.

I think that the choir wouldn’t have kept going, we’ve been going probably, this group maybe six years, five years, and it would have
folded already again by now had we not been careful about what repertoire we did and what performances, what performance opportunities and that kind of thing too I think and I’m always conscious of trying to let them do things or work on things with them where they’re going to feel good about that in front of their peers and the rest of the school. (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).

Whilst the selections may have been with an awareness of the emotional needs of the students, the music was still conductor chosen with a student focus, and with the longevity of the ensemble at the heart of her repertoire choices. This could be indicative of other school situations and may make conductors more aware of a student-focused approach for future development of a group singing ensemble as the choice of repertoire in this situation seemed relevant to the growth of the music programme (Harrison, 2006).

Two other conductors felt strongly that repertoire selection did play a part in the students’ participation and motivation. Conductor A (Interview: 12th September, 2012) said; “Providing that you also give them some stuff to let their hair down, sometimes it’s just the enjoyment factor, you need the piece with the punch.” The idea of music that places student preferences at the forefront of repertoire choice suggested that although the conductor may feel in control, there is some degree of influence from students. However, in each school there was a misinterpretation by the conductor. For example, although the idea of the “piece with the punch” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012) was included in annual repertoire in School A, and also shown to be the case in School B, in each case music was chosen by the conductor and not really student-led. A student-led selection would have allowed a student (or group of students) to choose a performance piece.
There is a clash between developmental appropriateness and personal preference when a conductor makes choices but thinks it is a student-focused approach (Hamann, 2007). Research has demonstrated that group singing provides self-efficacy in the lives of young people (Ritchie & Williamon, 2011) but this does not necessarily mean a popular song is the only option when considering student needs. The idea that a “piece with the punch” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012) was a popular song was the first reference to media (and the television programme Glee) as an influencing factor. A positive aspect of choosing popular repertoire does make reference to the breadth of music in contemporary society meeting the needs of students (National Review of School Music Education, 2005).

The three choral directors, by suggesting that repertoire was selected with consideration of the students’ enjoyment and preferred choice of music, were in contrast with the two choral directors who felt that the repertoire selected should not be chosen with the students’ preferences at the forefront of programming. The choral director at School D, also a composer, was very clear that his preferred repertoire was music composed specifically for a choir, not music arranged for a choir. This allowed for the teaching of choral artistry (Head, 2008). He said,

[Students should have] exposure to a variety of quality repertoire. I don’t think it’s [repertoire influence on participation] particularly influential. I am mindful of choosing music that is relevant and also enjoyable, as there is plenty of great choral music available, both sacred and secular (Email: Conductor D, 27th November, 2012).

The choral director from School E was very sure that his selection of repertoire was quite different from the other three conductors; “[repertoire has] no influence whatsoever, it is not what is taught, but how it is taught and the expectations that
create momentum” (Email: Conductor E, 5th November, 2012). By using the terms ‘not what but how’, Conductor E has implied mastery as a conductor (Matthews & Kitsantas, 2012). The reference to created momentum as a result of the expectation alludes to both self-efficacy of the conductor and influences from the school that will be discussed in the next section.

4.3.2 The school agenda

In considering the school agenda regarding repertoire and performances, two aspects were clear, (i) the school did have some influence in choice of repertoire, and (ii) the school agenda, is inseparable from, and had an influence on the role of the group singing ensemble within the school and wider community. When asked to consider this, the conductors were not keen to admit the school agenda was so strongly influential (Morton, 2008); however, four acknowledged that the repertoire selection did require some consideration regarding suitability of the music. At both School A and School E, the choral directors acknowledged that the repertoire was chosen to suit a particular purpose. Conductor E (email: 5th November, 2012) said; “[the repertoire selected] needs to fit themes should this be appropriate to concerts”.

Each of the schools held annual events in which the group singing ensemble was expected to perform. Aside from services, the groups may perform at a Year 12 Leaving Concert, a Music Dinner, Speech/Presentation Night and special assemblies. The agenda of the school can be seen in the expected school events that required consideration when selecting repertoire that was most suitable for each event. There
were also times when a group singing ensemble may be called to perform with limited notice and, this too, required a school-focused selection of repertoire. Conductor A (Interview: 12th September, 2012) was certain that his choice of repertoire for a year needed to be balanced with options for any event, something student-focused and something school-focused. He said,

“You look ahead at what the school has to do and you find music accordingly so you don’t find yourself short of a big punchy number for a show concert or you don’t find yourself without anything religious when you’ve got services coming up” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012).

At School B the choral director also selected music to suit different service events throughout the year,

things that I think are particularly suitable for an occasion, for instance, we might have to perform at ANZAC day so we’ve got to find something that is suitable for that or for an Easter chapel it’s got to be something that fits in with the theme for that chapel or at least is Easter themed (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).

There is value in the activity (Sichivitsa, 2003) created by the choice of repertoire representing a theme. At this school there was also a school’s agenda in the form of an executive expectation for the vocal ensemble to take part in a number of community marketing events (Drummond, 2001),

The principal is keen for us to think that we’re advertising the school. I think that, I suppose, he likes us to do it (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June, 2012).

Although this could be an example of the principal’s autonomy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), this also bridges a gap between the classroom, school and community (Brown, 2007) and creates experiences of success (Elliot, 2005; Matthews & Kitsantas, 2012).
A further comment on the role of the group singing ensemble in the wider community was the expectation of the school executive at School D, as described by Conductor D (email: 27th November, 2012), “[the expectation is to] develop a culture or choral excellence”. This was similarly supported at School A where the conductor described the school agenda as a corporate mentality in which the students play their part, “the kids here are part of a corporate mentality which just goes ‘well it’s got to be done’ and they’ll do it” (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012). This corporate mentality shows the school leadership is autonomous in the expectations of the performance repertoire (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and it is not the conductor alone conducting the choir (Morton, 2008).

Despite some conductors acknowledging students should be consulted when asked to reflect further on their agenda, their comments indicated repertoire choice was solely their responsibility, own choice and likely to remain so. Through this results section and the previous section, it is evident that the selection of repertoire is school-focused and student-focused, with both trying to be autonomous, and may not be as personal as the conductors felt. The next section reports the students’ considerations of agenda and repertoire and will give further evidence to support the result that conductors’ may be less in control than they think.

### 4.3.3 The students’ view

The student participants, in the semi-formal interviews, were asked to consider the repertoire selected for performance. Through this small yet significant study it was possible to show trends such as if the conductor, the school or the students in the group
singing ensemble determine the agenda. The initial considerations for the students were to name compositions or styles of composition that were representative of the group singing ensemble’s repertoire. The students responses were categorised into three categories, religious repertoire – music that was used for services or was specifically written as sacred or worship music; traditional or known repertoire – music of a traditional culture, music of the western tonal tradition, or music the students considered to be ‘classical’ (any music not religious, from musical theatre or contemporary pop music); contemporary or popular music – choral compositions by Australian composers, repertoire from musical theatre, popular music and jazz.

In the religious repertoire category the choice of music was determined mostly by the event. In two of the traditional schools, School A and School D, there were regular chapel services where all students in the school were expected to sing a traditional hymn meaning all students were exposed to traditional hymn tunes and took part in group singing. The Chapel Choir at School A featured in special services in which the repertoire was selected to show consideration to the Anglican Tradition. Participant 17 (Interview: 12th September, 2012) described the role of the chapel choir; “We have like a formal chapel or something, we’ll do Anglican music, kind of church music, we do Psalms, we do hymns.” The result of this interview indicated students in the group singing ensemble at School A were familiar with traditional church compositions such as hymns and the role of music in religious settings. The choice of repertoire was traditional and allowed for the development of choral artistry (Head, 2008). Hymns and Psalms representative of Anglican tradition performed in this school were in contrast with the contemporary church music discussed in Bergler (2012).
In contrast, the only religious work the students of School D could think of was a composition titled *Blessing*, used as part of a general performance programme, not a specifically religious work used for chapel. A further contrast in styles of religious repertoire was used at School B and School C where music represented newer evangelical compositions of contemporary worship, noted by the students as being an indication of the executive expectation for music presented by the ensemble (Bergler, 2012). Participant 11 (Interview, 14th June, 2012) said; “It really has to go with the ethos of the school really.” This shows the repertoire choices of the conductors are to be appropriate to the nature of the school. As the schools are Anglican, the school’s ethos was to support the Anglican Church thinking and, when selecting repertoire, this was to be considered. While this was acknowledged by student participants, the reality was that in School A the music was traditionally religious, in Schools B and C the repertoire included evangelical contemporary worship music, and in Schools D and E there was a vaguely Christian message. Despite the variation in religious music all conductors’, and student participants, believed they were supporting the ethos of the individual schools. Given all the schools are within the same Diocese, this indicated a very broad interpretation of both religious music and each school’s ethos, not demonstrating a commonality amongst schools.

In describing the traditional or known repertoire of the group singing ensemble, students in each school used the term ‘classical’ to describe music of a more lyrical style of composition from popular or contemporary music. In an attempt to describe classical music in reference to a known composer, two students, one from School B and the other
from School C mentioned singing Mozart. Participant 5 (Interview: 27\textsuperscript{th} March, 2012) said; “We did a Mozart canon once, yeah that was the only one I can remember,” and Participant 10 (Interview: 14\textsuperscript{th} June, 2012) said, “we did like parts of Mozart’s requiem with another choir.” Participant 4 (Interview: 27\textsuperscript{th} March, 2012) also from School C felt the choir had not, other than the one exposure to Mozart as mentioned by Participant 5, been exposed to any classical music through the religious music sung in the school. She said; “I actually don’t think I’ve ever done like a classical hymn in the choir so even we’ve done like modern takes on classic hymns but I don’t think we’ve ever done traditional choral hymns.” She felt she did have some authority to understand the term classical as she had some choral experience from outside school, “I’ve done a little bit in opera choruses as well and I really enjoy that kind of music.” (Interview: Participant 4, 27\textsuperscript{th} March, 2012)

In contrast, the students from School A considered they had significant experience of classical repertoire. Participant 19 (Interview: 12\textsuperscript{th} September, 2012) in reference to the repertoire selected by the previous choral director said; “We were very heavily classical.” Participant 18 (Interview: 12\textsuperscript{th} September, 2012) added that it was similar with the new choral director; “Classical music? And we still do to an extent.” Participant 16 (Interview: 12\textsuperscript{th} September, 2012), felt there were expectations from the school to cover a large selection of classical music in the repertoire; “sometimes like we’ll do more classical stuff like we’ve done Bach and stuff and they’ll have Christian lyrics to it so yep.” School A, as described by the students, was the only school in which the repertoire exposed the students to traditional choral music such as compositions by Bach and Mozart. This suggests that the student-focused (conductors
selecting music they think will motivate students) or school-focused (selecting repertoire for specific performances) approach of School B and School C, to the selection of repertoire, is limiting the students’ exposure to this style of composition. The students expressed a desire to learn music of the western tonal tradition as they were aware of the choral artistry skills that could be developed through exposure to this music (Head, 2008).

The students at School D also reported a desire to sing more traditional music, further supporting the suggestion that students are limited, by the choral diet provided, in their exposure to traditional choral compositions (Morton, 2008). The students felt it was a choral technique (Head, 2008) they would like to experience. However, when questioned further about this it was a reference to their past performance experiences that had prompted the response. When asked, “You are wanting to do more traditional choir technique than the pop technique?”, student responses indicated it was not just because there was a desire to sing this repertoire but as a result of performance experience. Participant 8 (Interview: 29th May, 2012) responded with;

Yeah I think it’s easier because if when you’re performing to an audience if everyone knows the song there’s kind of a bit more like they recognise it whereas if you’re doing a traditional one and you perform it for the first time you get like a, they’re sort of intent on listening.

This response made reference to the ability of the performers to make a connection with the audience through the emotive material that is possible to develop in a performance of a traditional work (Broomhead, 2001). There is also a suggestion, in the comment above, that the student performer in a group singing ensemble is less able to make the emotional connection when a popular song is well known by an audience. This student’s description of the audience’s intent listening, when exposed to more
traditional repertoire choices, was emotionally significant to the student performing (Durrant, 2005b). Making a connection through performance takes the achievement of an ensemble to another level. The students, should they be able to have some input into repertoire choices, could have some student-centred learning experiences that may result in improved performance skills (Brown, 2008), stronger emotional connections with an audience (Broomhead, 2001), and the alleviation of some performance anxiety (Durrant, 2005b).

In the third category of composition reported by the students, contemporary or popular, three styles were featured, (i) musical theatre, (ii) popular music, and (iii) contemporary Australian composition. It was in this category that the repertoire selection indicated a conductor choice rather than a student-focused or school-focused choice. In both School B and School C much of the repertoire featured arrangements from musical theatre, both schools having included excerpts from Wicked and Les Miserables in their recent programmes. At School C the repertoire that was rehearsed on the date of data collection featured only arrangements of compositions from musical theatre. The choral conductor did defend this repertoire saying,

> We do do a bit of a mixture of things. They were pieces that I came across, and so, I mean it sounded like that today because we were doing one from Rent and one from Wicked. We did, for instance, at Presentation Night last year we did an Avril Lavigne, so pop song, Keep Holding On. The year before that the themes was ‘Home’ for Presentation Night so I did an arrangement of Buble, Michael Buble Home so that’s more pop stuff but set for choir, arranged for choir…So no not just music theatre but certainly contemporary. (Interview: Conductor C, 27th March, 2012)

At School B both the students and the choral director identified that the use of arrangements of compositions from musical theatre was important in preparing students
for the annual school musical. There was an influence, in the choice of repertoire, described in the above quote, of a *Glee*-style performance repertoire on musical theatre (Talbot & Millman, 2011). This style is known as popular element in performances of school group singing ensembles. A student participant responded,

> [In choir] you sing a lot of musical kind of songs and it kind of helps you get into that musical feeling before the musical actually happens for the school (Interview: Participant 15, 14th June, 2012).

The choral director also confirmed that the repertoire of the group singing ensemble assisted in preparing the students for the school musical, although her comment was also about the value of part singing as learnt in the vocal ensemble, using the contemporary or musical theatre arrangements as a teaching tool (Rarus, 2010);

> Vocal ensemble is a good way of keeping the senior kids singing so that when we do a musical they have been working on part singing and just using their voices (Interview: Conductor B, 14th June 2012).

The influence of contemporary and popular music on the repertoire at School A did seem important to student participation, supporting the idea that Conductor A had suggested something for “*the enjoyment factor*” or “*the piece with the punch.*” Participant 19 (Interview: 12th September, 2012) said,

> A lot of people don’t want to sing like any classical or anything like that, they just want to sing contemporary stuff so it appeals to them I think and they want to sing stuff that they know that’s new like the Queen song and like Bohemian Rhapsody, it’s fun to sing and they know it and it’s kind of like I think that affects the choir choice a little but not to the extent where people only come if they sing that sort of stuff.

The use of contemporary music described by this student suggested a “product valuing” approach to the group singing ensemble (Talbot & Millman, 2011, p. 17).
Similarly to School C in which the students felt the teacher had a preference to musical theatre, School D had a recent change of choral director and the students had noticed a difference in the repertoire of the choir, particularly favouring contemporary art music compositions specifically written for choir (Head, 2008; Morton, 2008). The choral director, who is also a known Australian composer, was responsible for the selection of the repertoire and Participant 9 (Interview: 29\textsuperscript{th} May, 2012) described the choice of repertoire; “The move is to contemporary Australian, very Australian specifically.” In this school the students did also feel this was a positive move as it alleviated some of the performance anxiety, that may result in a lowered performance quality (Ryan & Andrews, 2009), the students felt was a problem for the choir, “I think that the choir already struggles a bit with performance anxiety and having that sort of pop people tend to get embarrassed and it doesn’t help during the performance if the performers are embarrassed.” (Interview: Participant 9, 29\textsuperscript{th} May, 2012). Whether or not a conductor is aware of the link between popular repertoire and performance anxiety, in this school, this was avoided by mostly including contemporary choral compositions featuring more traditional choral singing.

In contrast, the students at School B felt they did not sing much contemporary or popular music. Participant 12 (Interview: 14\textsuperscript{th} June, 2012) said; “Yeah we haven’t really done much popular,” and Participant 11 (Interview: 14\textsuperscript{th} June, 2012) said; “I don’t think we really have the voices to do contemporary, like the strength.” This was the first reference to the students’ understanding of the difficulties of singing popular music and to Glee. This will be discussed in the next section.
4.4 Media and the *Glee* Influence

4.4.1 The conductors’ opinions

I think they’re making a positive difference because it shows that singing can be good and relevant. (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September 2012)

When considering the television programme *Glee* and the influence it may or may not have on students’ participation in group singing activities, there was a division amongst the choral directors as to the relevance or use of this style of singing in their group singing ensembles. Three choral directors, including Conductor A (quoted above), felt that it had some positive impacts on group singing ensembles. One of the positive influences was the feeling of freedom to join the group; “*I think it makes kids feel that they’re more free to join*” (Interview: Conductor C, 27th March, 2012) and Conductor B (Interview: 14th June, 2012) said; “*I think for some kids, particularly girls and particularly of a particular age of girls, it became a real influence in wanting to sing at all, so that’s positive.*” The influence of *Glee* placed singing in the forefront for the students described here by the conductor and may have been a motivation to join the group singing ensemble (Rarus, 2010).

Conductor B (Interview, 14th June, 2012) also considered the potential of the programme to expose students to popular songs from different decades;

> It’s opened them up to the possibility of doing lots of songs which they might have thought were daggy before, cause it’s really interesting that you know, it’s a song that been around for ‘a hundred years’ but they don’t realise that and they think that it’s the most cool, up to date thing ever and they want to sing that song.
This is in contrast to the suggestion that it provides limited scope of vocal repertoire (Rarus, 2010) and may lack choral artistry (Morton, 2008).

With the idea of incorporating some of the aspects of the television programme to encourage students, two of the choirs had used music from the programme. One school had used a *Glee* arrangement and simplified the four-part arrangement to suit the two-part and sometimes three-part choir as the arrangement was not specifically written for a school choir (Morton, 2008) and the other choral director had used a song featured in the programme, arranging the music specifically for the vocal ensemble.

Another choral director, although not using the music of *Glee* in the school group singing ensembles, was supportive of the programme but felt it was covered in other aspects of the school; “*Glee is fine but this type of performance is covered through musicals and cabaret presentations and should be an adjunct to a successful choral programme.*” (Email: Conductor E, 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2012). This reinforced the notion that choral artistry (Head, 2008) was taught through the choice of choral repertoire but also supported the use of *Glee*-style repertoire for other events.

The three choral directors who made positive comments about the television programme also felt there were negative aspects that needed to be considered. Conductor A (Interview: 12<sup>th</sup> September, 2012) was particularly frustrated with the use of choreography in a choir and the problems the school choir had encountered in a recent choral competition as a result of the repertoire performed in the competition section,
My anger about choralography is that it seems now you have to move otherwise you don’t win competitions. I don’t like choral competitions, by choice I wouldn’t enter them, I disagree entirely with the idea of competition music, it just doesn’t work for me at all. The end grading I think is just so subjective you know and I still can’t work out how an eisteddfod for example, how you can gauge a 4-part, relatively adult school Chamber Choir against a Junior School singing Bohemian Rhapsody. How do you do it? I think those TV programmes have given a slightly skewed viewpoint, a) because there’s no school in the world could produce Glee on a regular basis on no rehearsal but also there’s this thing that you must move if you sing and, there’s a place for it, absolutely a place but there’s also a place for standing still and letting music speak for itself and the pendulum is too far in that direction at the moment for me. I think it will swing back (Interview: Conductor A, 12th September, 2012).

This made reference to the comments in Rarus (2010) that Glee gave an unrealistic model that is not always appropriate and this may need to be addressed in future eisteddfod events. It appears conductors must decide to aim for a high competition placement based on popular choice or, if it is still acceptable in an eisteddfod competition, aim for a performance showcasing choral artistry with traditional repertoire or music composed specifically for choir. Further to this, the programme for the Sydney Eisteddfod 2015 featured a section to address this, Choir Choreographed.

Two of the choral directors commented on the division they felt the television programme seemed to create and they felt this was a warning to not feel obligated to use repertoire from the programme. Conductor B (Interview: 14th June, 2012) had noticed the division amongst members of the school vocal ensemble;

You get the kids that really hate it because it’s really popular probably or because they just think that they just believe that it’s naff and so then they don’t want to be involved because it is.

She also felt it was important to be truthful when students had shown an interest in joining the vocal ensemble if there were to be songs from Glee included in the repertoire. She said she responded to students with,
Well yeah sometime we do but we do other things too and so if you join you will, we’ll do a bit of that but we’ll do other things, so that yeah, I’m not giving them a false impression and luring them in.”

The use of *Glee* could serve as a tool to lead to the teaching of other repertoire and choral artistry techniques (Head, 2008; Rarus, 2010).

In contrast, the conductor at School D, where repertoire was mostly contemporary Australian choral compositions, was not particularly supportive of the television show or the music of the programme, although he had previously experienced some pressure to include this repertoire in his choral programming.

I was initially under pressure when commencing as choral director at other schools to do *Glee* style music. The students stopped wanting to do it as soon as we attempted one, as they rarely translate well in an unamplified choral scenario – lack of autotune, production values and a rhythm section doesn’t help. I generally find the most popular repertoire becomes the Australian choral music we perform that was written specifically for high school-aged singers, not dumbed-down pop song arrangements. (Email: Conductor D, 27th November, 2012).

By stating that the style of music does not translate into a choral setting indicated the repertoire provided limited scope for performance (Rarus, 2010). Students choosing not to continue with this style of composition suggested the students’ realised that their interest in singing, when influenced by the programme, was more passive than active (Wicks, 2013) and that active involvement in repertoire specifically composed for high school group singing ensembles (Morton, 2008) would lead to choral artistry (Head, 2008).

It would seem that the conductors’ were both interested in trying *Glee* style repertoire and at the same time rather determined not to have the style effect what they considered
to be the best repertoire for their ensemble. The description of ‘dumbed-down pop songs’ and the belief that ‘perfectly good music should speak for itself’ summarised the strength of the belief from the conductors that they felt there was pressure to include this repertoire and a determination to stand firm in their own beliefs, against the Glee influence, when considering their own repertoire.

4.4.2 The students’ opinions

When asked to discuss their thoughts about the television programme Glee, the students, though not all fans of the programme, were definitely passionate about wanting their opinion heard. From a fan of the programme came this response:

Participant 12: She went and bought Don’t Stop Believing.
Participant 15: Aww I can’t believe I missed out on that, Glee does definitely help. (Interview: 14th July, 2012)

In the interviews with the students in each school it became clear, during discussions about the television programme Glee, that the choral repertoire depicted created divisiveness amongst the students, some wanted to experience Glee arrangements and others were not so keen. Participant 15 had recently joined the school Vocal Ensemble. He had been attracted by the forthcoming school musical and wanted to use vocal ensemble experience to assist him as he prepared to audition for a solo role in the school musical. In his case, Glee had been an influence and he was disappointed not to have been in the choir when the song Don’t Stop Believing had been included in the repertoire. For this student Glee had been a positive influence and encouraged him to pursue his musical interests (Rarus, 2010; Webb, 2007; Wicks, 2013).
Participants 12 and 15 were students in one of the newer coeducational Anglican schools. Their experiences of other repertoire from *Glee* included arrangements, described as *Glee* inspired, of *Don’t Rain on my Parade* and *Defying Gravity* from *Wicked*. Though they had enjoyed the experience, they were realistic about the degree of difficulty present in the music (Rarus, 2010), having performed simplified versions where a part or sections were edited from the arrangement during rehearsal.

The descriptions of *Glee* style repertoire from students in two of the established schools were in contrast to the newer school. In one of the established schools the students had learnt a *Glee* version of *Lean on Me*; however, it should be noted that it was in this school that the new choral director was not keen on including this style of music in the repertoire. Participants in the two schools had opposing opinions. In the newer school the students were keen to experience the repertoire from the television programme and disappointed that they had not followed through with including choralography,

Participant 11: We wanted to do a lot of stuff like *Glee* and we wanted to put like movement in it and stuff as well and costumes.

In the established school the students had some experience of repertoire from *Glee*, having learnt *Lean On Me*, although the students were not as pleased with this style of music. Participant 9 (Interview: 29th May, 2012) felt it had been included in the repertoire as the previous choral director had selected this arrangement to encourage students, “I suppose they think that’s what might appeal.” She then continued to offer her opinion, “Personally I didn’t enjoy it.” In comparing School B and School D, the participants’ contribution may indicate that the different demographic could be the
reason for the contrast between the participants’ opinion of the programme and the inclusion of repertoire from *Glee* in the school choral programme.

Within other schools there was division between the students. Some participants expressed enjoyment for the television programme and music and wanted to learn repertoire and others were either not interested or did not feel it had affected the students in the choir. Many of the students identified the difficulty level of arrangements and the demanding rehearsal schedule that would be required to perform the repertoire (Talbot & Millman, 2011), “I’d like to try it. I think a lot of people don’t realise just how much effort needs to go into being able to do that sort of thing” (Interview: Participant 5, 27th March, 2012). In contrast, two students in different schools were both opposed to including the repertoire from *Glee* into the school choral programme. Participant 13 (Interview: 14th June, 2012) said, “The Glee stuff, I didn’t really like Glee as much as these people but that’s just like me.” The other student was more vocal about her dislike for the programme, “I’m not really a fan. My opinion is they take really good songs a lot of the time, not always, they take good songs I think and they wreck it sometimes and people just know the Glee version they don’t know the original but anyways, that’s my little rant about Glee” (Interview: Participant 4, 27th March, 2012). Again this suggests the limited scope presented in the repertoire (Rarus, 2010) while also suggesting students would benefit from knowing the different interpretations of songs i.e. the *Glee* version and the original. This would possibly assist students to make informed decisions about the music of the rather than be either swept up in the emotion of the show or adamantly against the musical arrangements.
Two participants in different schools commented on the effect the television programme may have had on the numbers in the choir. In one of the newer schools the choir had originally been auditioned and was now a non-auditioned choir with a large number of student members. Participant 5 (Interview: 27th March, 2012) did feel the television programme had an influence, “There still wasn’t a huge number of people joining until Glee started and I noticed then that like we tripled the numbers or something.” The influence was possibly because the programme had encouraged students to talk, become interested and engaged about music (Rarus, 2010). Participant 20 (Interview: 12th September, 2012), a participant from one of the established schools, suggested that although the programme had not made a difference to the size of the membership of the choir, the current members of the choir did enjoy aspects of the programme, “I don’t think there was like a huge rise in like everyone joining the next day after the season premier of Glee but we do enjoy the occasional choralography.” After having said this, as also reported by Conductor A, the student participants from School A pointed out the effect they felt the television programme may have had in external performance activities such as eisteddfod. Participant 19 (Interview: 12th September, 2012) was negative about the experience of the school Chamber Choir in an eisteddfod competition, “We were robbed at the eisteddfod cause all the other choirs did like a dance routine as well.” Further to this experience, Participant 18 (Interview: 12th September, 2012) showed concerns that the choralography featured in the television programme was not favouring vocal importance (Head, 2008; Morton, 2008) but rather a different, unrealistic (Rarus, 2010) performance style:

So when you go to eisteddfods and to listen to the judges, they’re all starting to look for more than just the vocal aspect of the choir which I guess is good and bad. It kind of takes away from the whole point of what you’re there for but I guess they’re right in the fact that you’ve got media now so there is really sort of a whole performance package rather
than just singing. And the emergence of Glee has had an impact on that as well, it just exaggerates it as well. (Interview: Participant 18, 12th September 2012)

The student participants seemed realistic about the music of the television programme Glee and aware of their own abilities when considering whether it would be suitable music for their choir. Many also felt there was no influence coming from them to include this style of music into the repertoire of the choir and a number of participants felt strongly, as the conductors had, that they too wanted music to speak for itself, not a performance package that included movement and choralography.

In conclusion of this discussion there are four clear findings, (i) what motivates the students, (ii) the repertoire selected by the conductors, (iii) the school agenda, and (iv) Glee. These points provide the following information:

i. The conductors felt they are personally responsible for the motivation of the students; however, the students are motivated by a love of singing and a desire to be in an environment that is conducive to their desire for creativity.

ii. The repertoire selected by conductors in three of the five schools included a large portion of contemporary music; however, the students, whilst enjoying some contemporary music, would like to experience more works from the western tonal tradition of compositions for choir.

iii. The school agenda has a large influence on the use of the group singing ensemble, particularly for marketing the school, and this has implications for the conductors. The students enjoy this aspect as this provides an opportunity to enjoy singing to an outside audience and removes the anxiety of singing to a known audience.

iv. In three of the five schools the conductors have tried Glee arrangements; the students like this but are divided in their enjoyment for the programme and feel that better repertoire options, such as developmentally appropriate rather than
popular choice, may be more suitable and ensure the enjoyment of all members of the group singing ensemble.

The findings indicated group singing in schools is popular and robust. It also showed a positive look at the future of choral ensembles if conductors look to the inclusion of works from the western tonal tradition as well as compositions and arrangements specifically designed for young voices. Further to this, it is recommended that conductors give the students an opportunity to take part in the selection of repertoire as they too have an interest in developing an understanding of music across many genres and learning the ensemble techniques of choral artistry. The implications determined by the findings and the conclusion of the study is described in Chapter 5.
5 Implications and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to find out about group singing ensembles in Anglican schools in the Sydney Anglican Diocese. This chapter provides answers for the research questions and presents some conclusions and implications for further research. This final chapter answers the four Research Questions, makes concluding remarks and suggestions for the implications of the research. Further research possibilities that have emerged from the study are presented.

5.1 Research questions

1. What are the aims of the teachers when directing their choir in an established (traditional) school or newer (SASC) school?

The aims of the conductors were not characterised by the school in which they worked. In both the traditional and newer schools the conductors aimed to create a positive, safe and nourishing environment in which the students were able to sing in an ensemble. The development of singing skills was not an aim of the study nor was it expressed as the conductors’ aim; however, some exposure to learning skills occurred as a result of the interpersonal skills and teaching manner of the conductors.

In one of the traditional schools and the two newer schools, the conductors strongly believed it was their interpersonal skills that allowed development of positive relationships with students that lead to student motivation. In the other two schools, both traditional schools, this was not reported to be important and the tradition of the
school created the expectation to be part of the group singing ensemble. This allowed the conductors to create an expectation of high-level performances.

2. What role do students and teachers play in the selection of repertoire to be performed by group singing ensembles?

In the selection of repertoire for the group singing ensemble, responsibility was with the conductor of the ensemble, though in one school the conductor was unsure of her role and felt that although she ultimately chose music there was some influence from the school executive. There was no mention from the conductors as to the possibility of students influencing repertoire choices.

The students were minimally involved in the selection of repertoire according to the results of this study. The students were not given an opportunity to learn in a constructivist or student-centred model as all repertoire choices, teaching, and decision making was made by the conductor (with some influence from the school). There was majority agreement that repertoire is chosen by the conductors and that students, although wanting an opportunity to suggest repertoire, are either not confident about making suggestions or their previous suggestions have not been accepted. Student responses indicated that they may be interested in learning music from the classical canon than they were being exposed to through the repertoire offered. There was a sense that some popular music provided for light relief but music composed specifically or expertly arranged for choir was more interesting to students. This provided exposure to music other than their popular culture and students were given an opportunity to
perform music without the added pressure of an audience having a perceived performance expectation of a popular song.

This study attempted to draw a connection between resistance theory and teachers managing choral ensembles. This, though only a small part of the findings is still evident in some aspects, particularly the role of the conductors. The conductors, in all schools, aimed to be autonomous in their role by taking control of repertoire selection. This however, within Anglican schools, did also take into account expectations of the school’s governing body, requiring music that was sympathetic to the beliefs of the school. The conductors in one traditional school and the two newer schools made decisions to include music from popular culture in their annual repertoire. This, they hoped, made connections with the students and appeared to be maintaining a link with popular culture. In the two traditional schools in which popular music was not featured, students were exposed to contemporary music from the western tonal tradition of composition. Although not playing a role in repertoire selection, the majority of students were in agreement, particularly in Schools B and C, that they would like the opportunity to suggest music, feeling that they were not adequately exposed to compositions from the western tonal tradition. It is thought, therefore, that some flexibility from the conductors to allow a student-centred approach may be beneficial to students, the conductor, the school and the longevity of the ensemble.

3. What effect is the media influence (particularly Glee) having on the style of group singing?
The media influence through the television programme *Glee*, though not having a significant input, made some appearances in the repertoire selection made by teachers in recent years. The students were divided in their like or dislike of the television programme and were not particularly interested in singing the music as they were aware of the difficulties of this repertoire and arrangements. The students in one of the traditional schools also felt that performing arrangements from the programme created an audience expectation and this lead to performance anxiety within the ensemble.

There was consensus that membership of the group singing ensemble within the school was important to students and they felt a strong sense of belonging in a similar way to the portrayal of the ensemble in *Glee*. They also felt there were positive aspects of music education portrayed and the effect this may have had on their school ensembles. Opinions about the ideal repertoire for the ensemble differed. Where Glee-style music had been sung the conductor had chosen it, students had not requested or influenced the choice.

The conductors also found that the television programme caused division within the choir and it was not necessarily worth including this repertoire in the choir as there were some students who did like it and some who did not. The notion that the music from the television programme, as described by one of the conducting participants, as “dumbed-down pop song arrangements” (Email: Conductor D, 27th November 2012) supports the idea of juvenilization, a pop-obsessed vocal sound, limited quality, and an unsustainable choral diet.
In the newer SASC schools *Glee* arrangements had been included in the repertoire. This choice had been made entirely by the conductor hoping this repertoire would allow them to connect with the ensemble members through identifying with current popular culture trends. In this case the conductors assumed, possibly influenced by the television programme, that this choice of music was what the students wanted.

The conductor in one of the traditional schools felt the arrangements were not suitable to students and was firm in his choice not to include this in his repertoire selection. The conductors in the three traditional schools also identified the music was not suitable for performances as it did not translate well into a formal choir concert setting in which there were limitations with space and amplification. One conductor in a traditional school also identified the effect of the television programme on the performances of choirs in eisteddfods, highlighting the need to continue to perform music in a manner that allowed the music to be the focal point, not actions and choralography. The results of this study raised the question that there might be a possible effect that the art of music, the choral artistry, is in question and music should speak for itself.

4. What is the current role of group singing in Anglican schools in the Sydney Anglican Diocese?

The current role of group singing in Anglican schools in the Sydney Anglican Diocese who participated in this study is one of inclusive, positive and enjoyable music-making through group singing. The five schools featured group singing ensembles, some small ensembles, some very large. The students who participated in the ensembles were
motivated by their love of singing and this was nurtured in a safe environment. The ensembles were well-supported by the greater school community and used for concerts, special events and promotional opportunities. Despite the conductors wanting to be autonomous in their choice of repertoire, it was largely influenced by the schools’ beliefs and exposed students to a variety of religious and popular repertoire. The exposure to music from the classical canon was limited and could be expanded.

5.2 Conclusions

The benefits of participating in a group singing ensemble have been the subject of a number of studies. In this study the common theme for student participation in group singing ensembles was their ‘love’ for singing. Further to this, the participants acknowledged the social aspect and a sense of belonging and achievement experienced through group participation. Coupled with the social aspect was the emotional experience of bonding together and presenting music that became an emotionally uplifting experience. A number of student participants made reference to the skills that developed as a result of the group singing experience including singing harmony, developing aural skills, blending, dynamic variety and balance. All these are examples of higher musical perception discrimination skills.

Although the list of performance opportunities was largely dictated by the school calendar, the opportunity that topped the list in four of the participating schools was the idea of touring, attending music camp or performing with other groups outside the normal school setting as well as community events, festivals and eisteddfods. The tour and camp opportunities provided a bonding experience while the festivals and
performance opportunities created positive mixed-age experiences. The combination of events provided for group singing ensembles in a given year resulted in a positive consensus from student participants about the image of the ensemble within the school community. In only one school did the students feel the group singing ensemble, although well-liked by the wider school community, suffered the pressure of performance anxiety due to members’ lack of confidence. The positive image of the ensembles provided greater motivation for the long-term achievements of the ensemble.

Of the five participating schools, the repertoire selection in one school seemed to stand out for one reason, the students were observed in rehearsal to be singing only show tunes from currently featured Broadway Musicals and popular style Christian songs, to be sung in the students “best choir voices” (Conductor C, 27th March, 2012). When asked to consider if the repertoire played a part in encouraging the students to attend choir the conductor hoped that this was the case. This could be in line with Bergler’s (2012) discussion of juvenilization of Christianity. To ensure that juvenilization if unlikely to occur it is important to incorporate music that is age appropriate and give the opportunity for encouraging musical growth into a Christian school’s group singing experiences.

The use of popular repertoire was acknowledged by two conductors as providing students with an opportunity to express themselves; however, when asked specifically about the television programme Glee there were significant differences of opinion between conductors. There were positive aspects suggested by four of the participating conductors such as encouraging freedom to join the ensemble, making the ensemble
more appealing to teenage girls, allowing the introduction of popular songs from
different eras of pop, and the general feeling from three conductors was that this style of
music was suitable within a well-balanced programme of repertoire (NRSME, 2005). It
was also considered that there was nothing wrong with the television programme *Glee*;
however, other areas of the school music programme such as musicals and cabarets
should cover this style of music.

The current role of group singing ensembles in Anglican schools in the Sydney
Anglican Diocese in this study, using this five-school study as a small representative
sample, can be considered to be an important adjunct to the school music programmes
in each school. The ensemble experience is positive for the members and is considered
by the wider school community to be a feature of the school. The ensembles are
required to perform each calendar year at a number of events within the school, at some
events outside the school and may perform an important role in the marketing of the
school. The aim of the conductors when directing their choir is to develop an ensemble
that can represent their schools interests by adhering to the calendar. The conductors’
also reported that they aimed to boost their portfolio and market themselves through the
role the ensemble plays in the school calendar and through their selection of repertoire.
The conductors’ carried out the repertoire selection and students in this study were not
invited to play a part in choosing music. The students, as they did not feel qualified to
make repertoire suggestions, would have liked the conductor to be responsible for
selecting repertoire that is both appropriate for their vocal development and
representative of the greater classical canon so they may be exposed to a wider variety
of art music forms. The study showed that media influence through the television programme *Glee* is having some effect, both positive and negative, on group singing ensembles. It has given the group singing ensembles a boost in confidence as ensembles are accepted more positively as a part of the school community; however, the inclusion of *Glee* style performances in the eisteddfod/competition setting needs further defining as the artistry of choral music composition may be compromised with additional actions or incorrectly judged against an ensemble featuring movement.

### 5.3 Implications

An implication of this study is the choosing of repertoire for group singing ensembles in high school choirs with a Christian church affiliation. Exposing students to the classical canon through compositions written specifically for or skilfully arranged for ensembles of adolescent voices should be a focus for conductors. It is through the ensemble that students are able to experience this style of composition, music other than that of the current popular culture, including contemporary church music written for rock band rather than group singing ensemble.

It was only in two of the five participating schools, that the vocal health of the students was considered to part of repertoire selection. As this creates momentum for musical growth and the maturing of the students’ voices it should be a key feature of all musical choices including considerations of teaching techniques with attention to the vocal health of the students. This can be supported through appropriately written or arranged compositions, not necessarily popular arrangements such as those featured in the television programme *Glee*. 
Christian schools, including the schools of the Sydney Anglican Diocese in this study, should be aware of juvenilization. While some contemporary church compositions may have appropriate uses within school settings, the traditional choir format is an opportunity for a conductor to expose students to traditional forms of hymn tune compositions, thus avoiding the juvenilization of music.

While it can be appropriate for students to be introduced to the music favoured, or considered acceptable by the conductor, there were limitations in choice of repertoire as observed by students, in contradiction of the suggested exposure to repertoire recommended for school group singing programmes in The National Review of School Music Education (2005). When exposure to traditional choral music is limited some students may seek to experience traditional choral music by other means such as through community ensembles outside the school. Students in one school reported a desire to sing more traditional music, feeling it was a choral technique they would like to try. The conductor could address this, as repertoire selection is important in the development of choral artistry.

Performance anxiety was reported to be a defining factor of the group singing ensemble in one school. The conductors need to be aware of the causes, and methods to ease the problem. Students reported this as an important aspect in their preparation for performances. Selecting appropriate repertoire and addressing performance skills may relieve the performance anxiety felt by members of the group singing ensemble. Further to this, the conductors need to communicate with members of their ensemble about
aspects of repertoire and performance in order to avoid misinterpreting the style of composition to which the students would like exposure. Allowing some student-centred learning within the ensemble will give students an opportunity to suggest repertoire which will also assist in addressing performance anxiety.

5.4 Limitations

This research, as a small-scale study, focused on a small sample size of students and conductors from group singing ensembles in five Anglican schools within the Sydney Anglican Diocese. The methodology used, semi-formal interviews with the conductors and group interviews with a small number of students from each school resulted in some limitations in the data collected. Consequently this may have affected the general applicability of the results to other school types beyond the Anglican School model.

In a group-interview, students were not selected according to personality or ability to communicate in front of their peers. In this setting, some students were comfortable discussing their thoughts while others were reserved. This does have limits for the findings as some participants may not have openly shared their opinion. Further to this, those who were quieter during the interviews may have had their opinion influenced by the more confident students.

The students also came from different group singing backgrounds and two of the schools had more than one choir open to student participation. There were varying degrees of involvement with some students having had primary school group singing experience, some participating in two high school choirs and others in only one. This
wider exposure to repertoire may have an implication on the discussions about the choice of music due to exposure to a larger quantity of compositions.

5.5 Further research

A number of aspects of group singing ensembles in schools require further research such as participation, suggested repertoire and the development of choral artistry. Research into how often students experience modelling may be beneficial in assessing the participation rates, enjoyment and musical achievement of students in high school choirs. A model of appropriately composed music for high school choirs could be developed to assist conductors in repertoire planning, motivation and effective leadership of an ensemble. Further to this, for trained music teachers taking on the role of group singing conductor, suggested teaching priorities from the repertoire will give the music greater validity for the students and allow for the development of choral artistry.

Alongside the development of choral artistry, the conductor is in a position to facilitate confidence-building techniques for students involved in group singing ensembles. The self-efficacy of students performing with instruments in a solo examination situation has been researched extensively, as has the performance anxiety of solo singers; however, further research into the self-efficacy and performance anxiety of students in group singing ensembles would be valuable to both student members and conductors. This would ensure students are well prepared for performances and anxiety could be eased.
The self-efficacy of the conductors in this study suggested that, in the area of music, many teachers are confident in their ability to inspire and enjoy being liked by the students. This appeared to focus on the music teacher’s ego for ‘looking good’ or being well-liked by the students. Further research to explore this could include a cross discipline study covering several subject areas in a high school setting.

The results of this research indicated that the teaching of music was not an important aspect for the conductor of a group singing ensemble. Media attention has been given to the Australian Federal Government’s new initiative to develop the skills of generalist primary school teachers. With this media attention has been the suggestion that the best way for children to learn about music is to sing. Through singing, whether it is in a general primary classroom or through voluntary participation in a group singing ensemble in high school, further research is needed into children learning about music through singing.
References


Holt, M. (2008a). The care and feeding of the high school choir: The main ingredients for an old recipe called "Continued Success". In M. Holt & J. Jordan (Eds.), *The School Choral Program* (pp. 89-110). Chicago, IL: GIA Publications.


Board of Studies. (2003). *Music Mandatory and Elective Course Years 7 – 10*. Sydney: Board of Studies NSW.


APPENDIX A: ETHICS APPLICATION

RESEARCH INTEGRITY
Human Research Ethics Committee
Web: http://sydney.edu.au/ethics/
Email: hr.ethics@sydney.edu.au
Address for all correspondence:
Level 5, Jane Foss Russell Building - G02
The University of Sydney
NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA

MF/PE
11 January 2012

Dr James Renwick
Sydney Conservatorium of Music – C41
The University of Sydney
James.renwick@sydney.edu.au

Dear Dr Renwick

Thank you for your correspondence received 9 and 10 January 2012 addressing comments made to you by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

I am pleased to inform you that with the matters now addressed your protocol entitled “Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican schools” has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Protocol No.: 14375

Approval Date: 11 January 2012

First Annual Report Due: 31 January 2013

Authorised Personnel: Dr James Renwick
Mrs. Michaels Miles

Documents Approved:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Version Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Invitation (Head of School)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12/12/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information Statement – Teachers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12/12/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Information Statement – Students</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10/12/2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Invitation (Teacher)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Consent Form</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental (or Caregiver) Information Sheet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental (or Caregiver) Consent Form</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Protocol – Teacher participants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Protocol – Student group interviews</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/11/2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the approval date stated in this letter and is granted pending the following conditions being met:

Manager Human Ethics
Dr Margaret Gadd
T: +61 2 6022 8176
E: manager.human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

Human Ethics Secretary:
Ms Karen Goor
T: +61 2 6022 8171
E: karen.goor@sydney.edu.au

Ms Patricia Engelmann
T: +61 2 6022 8172
E: patricia.engelmann@sydney.edu.au

Ms Kea Lemon
T: +61 2 6022 8173
E: kea.lemon@sydney.edu.au
**Conditions of Approval**

- Continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans.
- Provision of an annual report on this research to the Human Research Ethics Committee from the approval date and at the completion of the study. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of ethics approval for the project.
- All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours.
- All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
- Any changes to the protocol including changes to research personnel must be approved by the HREC by submitting a Modification Form before the research project can proceed.

**Chief Investigator / Supervisor’s responsibilities:**

1. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms and provide these to the HREC on request.
2. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.

Please do not hesitate to contact Research Integrity (Human Ethics) should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Dr Margaret Fando
Manager, Human Ethics
On behalf of the HREC

cc Miciela Miles
mmi4659@uni.sydney.edu.au

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007), NHMRC and Universities Australia Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (2007) and the CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice.
APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INVITATION

Dear [HEAD OF SCHOOL NAME TO BE INSERTED],

I am writing to ask you to consider allowing your Music Department to participate in a research study titled "Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican schools." The research will be carried out by Michaela Miles, and will form the basis for Michaela’s Master of Music (Music Education) at The University of Sydney.

The aim of the study is to explore the changes that may be occurring in traditional school choirs from influences such as school expectations, teacher repertoire choices, and student motivation. We are interested in how the Anglican tradition influences repertoire and the methods of motivation used to incorporate church music and more contemporary styles into rehearsals and performances.

The role of the staff member involved in the study would be an interview. Michaela would also like briefly to meet with the choir during a rehearsal in order to introduce the study, distribute Participant Information Statements and ask students to consider being involved in a focus group interview to take place during a lunchtime (so as not to interfere with class teaching time). To help contextualise these interviews, Michaela would also observe on rehearsal. The results will be made available to you as a one-page document highlighting the main findings.

I hope you will be able to accommodate this minor intrusion into your school community. Please reply to Michaela Miles by email: mm1406@uni.sydney.edu.au or phone: 0439 962 761. Should you require further information please contact me at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 9351 1334 or by email jrenwick@sydney.edu.au.

Yours sincerely,

James Renwick
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENTS AND CONSENT FORMS

Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican Schools

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT - TEACHERS

(1) What is the study about?
You are invited to participate in a study of group singing in Anglican schools. The aim of the study is to explore any changes in traditional school choirs, investigating the different styles of choir in schools and the influence of school leaders, teachers and students on the repertoire.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?
The study is being conducted by Michaela Miles and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Chair of Music Education.

(3) What does the study involve?
The study will involve (a) an interview with the teacher in charge of the vocal ensemble, (b) the repertoire attending one choir rehearsal and (c) a focus group interview with members of the choir.

Teacher interviews will:
- last no longer than 30 minutes
- be audio recorded
- will take place at the school at a time and location selected by the teacher

You will be invited to provide information about your role in directing group singing, offering your ideas about repertoire, participation, expectations and other influences on your music making.

(4) How much time will the study take?
Interviews should not last longer than 30 minutes. Attendance by the researcher at a choir rehearsal will be for the duration of the scheduled rehearsal.

Vocal Ensembles in Anglican Schools
Version 2, December 10, 2011
(6) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney.

You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefit from the study.

(6) Can I tell other people about the study?

You may tell other people about the study.

(6) What if I require further information about the study or my involvement in it?

When you have read this information, Michaela Mies will be happy to answer any questions via email: mmile695@uni.sydney.edu.au or via telephone: 0439 362 791. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Dr James Renwick at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 9361 1341 or by email: jrenwick@sydney.edu.au.

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 0176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or rhumanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

I, __________________________________________________________________________ [PRINT NAME], agree to participate in the research project Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican schools.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved for my participation in the project have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Information statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researchers.

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary.

4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about me will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice to my relationship with the researcher/s or the University of Sydney or with the school now or in the future.
6. I consent to:
   - Audio-recording YES □ NO □
   - Receiving Feedback YES □ NO □

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: ________________________________

Email: ________________________________

...........................................
Signature of Teacher

...........................................
Please PRINT name

...........................................
Date
Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of vocal ensembles in Sydney Anglican Schools

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT - STUDENTS

(1) What is the study about?

As a member of your school choir, you are invited to participate in a study of group singing in Anglican schools. The aim of the study is to explore the changes in traditional school choirs.

(2) Who is carrying out the study?

The study is being conducted by Michaela Miles and will form the basis for the degree of Master of Music (Music Education) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Chair of Music Education.

(3) What does the study involve?

The study will involve the researcher observing a choir rehearsal and a group interview with members of the choir.

Group interviews will:
- be undertaken in a focus group of 4 – 8 participants
- be audio-recorded

In the group interview you will be invited to provide information about your role in participating in group singing, offering your ideas about music, participation, expectations and other influences.

(4) How much time will the study take?

Interviews should not last longer than 30 minutes. Attendance by the researcher at a choir rehearsal will be for the duration of the scheduled rehearsal.

(5) Can I withdraw from the study?

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent.

If you take part in the focus group and wish to withdraw, as this is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data once the session has commenced.
(6) Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in the report.

(7) Will the study benefit me?

We cannot and do not guarantee or promise that you will receive any benefits from the study.

(8) Can I tell other people about the study?

You are welcome to tell other people about the study.

(9) What if I require further information about the study or my child's involvement?

When you have read this information, Michaela Miles will be happy to answer any questions by email: mmiles@uni.sydney.edu.au or via telephone: 0439 352 781. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Dr James Renwick at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music on 9351 1334 or by email: jrenwick@sydney.edu.au.

(10) What if I have a complaint or any concerns?

Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or re.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).

This information sheet is for you to keep.
PARENTAL (OR CAREGIVER) CONSENT FORM

I, _______________________________ (PRINT NAME), agree to permit _______________________________ (PRINT CHILD’S NAME), who is ___ years old, to participate in the research project Consonant agendas? Priorities of directors and student members of social ensembles in Sydney Anglican schools.

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved for my child’s participation in the project have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. I have read the Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my child’s involvement in the project with the researcher(s).

3. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent to my child’s participation.

4. I understand that my child’s involvement is strictly confidential. I understand that research data gathered from the results of the study may be published however no information about my child nor I will be used in any way that is identifiable.

5. I understand that I can withdraw my child from the study at any time without prejudice to my or my child’s relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney or with the school now or in the future.

6. I understand that my child can withdraw form participation in the focus group at any time if my child or I do not wish for discussions to continue. However, as it is a group discussion it will not be possible to exclude individual data to that point.
7. I consent to:

• Audio-recording  YES □  NO □
• Receiving Feedback  YES □  NO □

If you answered YES to the "Receiving Feedback" question, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

Feedback Option

Address: __________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Email: ____________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Signature of Parent/Caregiver

____________________________________________________________________

Please PRINT name

____________________________________________________________________

Date

____________________________________________________________________

Signature of Child

____________________________________________________________________

Please PRINT name

____________________________________________________________________

Date
ETHICS APPLICATION – MICHAELA MILES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

Introduction: “In this interview notes will be taken and the entire interview will be recorded. The recording will be transcribed for future reference by the researchers only. The questions will seek to learn about your role within the school, your opinions and your philosophy for group singing activities”.

Questions:

1. What are the group singing or choral groups in your school?
2. What is the role of choral or group singing programs in your school?
3. From where does the directive come for the role of the programs in the school? Are you solely responsible or are the directives given from the school executive?
4. How is repertoire selected and who is responsible for the selection?
5. How do you get students to sing in choirs in your school?
6. To what extent does repertoire selection influence the students’ participation in choir?
7. What do you believe is important in a choral program and how do you put this into practice?
8. How do you see the influence of television programs such as ‘Glee’ on students and the flow on effect this may have on your choral programs?
ETHICS APPLICATION – MICHAELA MILES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – STUDENT GROUP INTERVIEWS

The student interviews will be semi-structured allowing for some questioning to initiate discussions and then developing the questions as the conversation flows from student discussion.

Introduction: “In this interview notes will be taken and the entire interview will be recorded. The recording will be transcribed for future reference by the researchers only. The questions will seek to learn about your role within the school, your opinions and your philosophy for group singing activities”.

Questions:

1. How do you see the choral programs in your school? Describe the positives and negatives about the role of the choir in the school.
2. What are the reasons for your participation in the school choir?
3. What are the rewards or benefits you experience by involvement in the choir?
4. What are your experiences of the Anglican music tradition in your school choir?
5. How do you see the influence of television programs like ‘Glee’ on your involvement in group singing activities?
6. What other external influences affect student involvement in choirs?
7. How do students try to influence change?
8. What positive changes have been made as a result of students influencing change?