Exploring Factors that Influence Adolescent Voice Perception

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Abstract

Adolescents come to voice lessons with an already existing musical identity that impacts how they view their voice. The goal of this study is to explore factors that influence adolescent voice perception and how voice instructors incorporate these factors in voice lessons through an interview and observation process. There are two parts of the study: student and voice instructor interviews and lesson observations. It was found that adolescent social relationships like their relationships with their peers, family, and voice instructor all influenced their involvement in music, music preference, and ultimately how they viewed their own voice. The voice teacher teaching philosophies also influenced their students’ voice perceptions and confidence. Findings can be implemented into a classroom setting so teachers can be culturally responsive and address student needs to a larger audience.
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Background

What factors contribute to adolescent voice perception? Popular music is one factor that influences voice perception. However, Christenson (1994) points out the connection between popular music and the voice does not start at adolescence, but rather “evolves over the years from early childhood to adolescence” (p. 136). It all starts with listening to popular music where children learn to make musical choices and construct musical preferences in personal and social situations (Mercier-De Shon, 2012). Children listen to music with parents, with friends, on the radio in the car, electronic devices, and in many more occurrences. By listening to popular music, children decide what timbres, instruments, and styles they like before they are even able to play or sing it. They also create a social identity when they relate to other people who also like the same music. As children get older, adolescents begin to listen to music more closely for qualities that match the musical identity they have been forming since they were young. These musical identities are “socially defined within given cultural roles and musical categories” (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002, p.2) meaning that music can influence or modify personal identities. More specifically, the music an adolescent listens to can influence his or her values as a musician and what constitutes a musician, including what a musician should sound like.

Adolescent voice perception is also “influenced by the responses and values expressed by immediate family members through expectations of musical involvement” (Borthwick & Davidson, 2002, p. 76). There are two ways parents influence their adolescents: “the expression of normative standards for adolescent conduct, or the modeling of behavior that adolescents might imitate” (Biddle, Bank, & Marlin, 1980, p. 1058). Thus parents create the standards for how their adolescent should act and model those standards. These researchers argue “the
adolescent is influenced primarily because he or she internalized another's pressure; thus what was once the parent's pressure has now become an expectation that is accepted by the adolescent for his or her own conduct” (Biddle, Bank, & Marlin, 1980, p. 1059). So, the pressures parents put on their child eventually becomes an expectation that he or she has to act a certain way. For example, if a child’s parents are musical performers, they might expect their child to also be a performer and will encourage performance by getting their child involved in musical productions at a young age. Eventually, participation in musicals becomes an expectation.

In addition to parental influence, peers also play an important role in music preference and involvement. During adolescence, “the positive encouragement of family and friends is certainly important for any developing musician and can change the course of a performer’s perception of him/herself as a musician” Davis, 2013). Adolescents want social acceptance and finding people with the same musical preference or people that are involved in the same musical activities are ways to make friends since peer crowds often center around certain musical preferences (Arnet, 1991; Bennet, 2001; Urberg, Degirmencioğlu, Tolson, & Halliday-Scher, 2000). The Social Identity Theory claims individuals gain a social identity from the groups to which they belong and will therefore adopt similar preferences and habits to those of the individuals in their group in an attempt to foster self-esteem and feelings of belonging (Tajfel, 1978). So, adolescent music preferences and perceptions are influenced by their peers in an attempt to maintain their social group. In a 2009 study that looked at the similarity in music preferences in the formation and discontinuation of friendships over 1 year, researchers found “music similarity is related to mutual friendship formation, but not mutual friendship stability” (Selphout, Branje, Bogt, & Meeus, 2009, p. 105). Hence, once adolescents find others that like
similar type of music it might lead to a friendship, but there is more that impacts whether or not they stay in that friend group other than music preference.

The voice teacher-student relationships also influences adolescent music perception. However, “at any age, development can be supported or hindered by a number of factors, such as the appropriateness of a given singing task set by an adult in relation to current singing capabilities, the expectations of peers, and/or the value placed on singing with the immediate culture” (Welch, 2016, p. 455). Student-voice instructor relationships directly relate to whether or not students are given appropriate singing tasks for their voice which can affect a student’s perception of their voice. In addition, “whenever a teacher demonstrates a concept for a student, that teacher is modeling” (Haston, 2007, p.26). Some music teachers teach musical concepts aurally first before students look at the concept on paper. For example, teachers can play staccato notes on the piano to show students what staccato notes sound like before they see what staccatos look like. Also, music teachers model good and bad tone quality, style, diction, articulation, and phrasing (Dickey, 1992). Since students imitate their teacher’s model, “the student draws on implicit knowledge and shapes the concept (and the result) until it matches that of the model” (Hatson, 2007, p. 26). Therefore, students will perceive their voice differently based off the voice quality model given by the voice instructor.

Since there are several factors that affect voice perception, teachers must incorporate some of these factors in order to make their teaching effective and meaningful. One approach that includes some of these factors, like the music students listen to, is culturally responsive teaching. According to Ladson-Billings (1994) culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (pp. 17–18). For example, voice
instructors can relate vocal skills they are trying to teach to a student’s social or emotional responses they already have to music they listen to. However, an essential part of CRT is maintaining an affirming student-teacher relationship and seeing excellence as a complex standard that takes student diversity and individual difference into account (Paris, 2012). Since voice lessons are one on one, voice instructors have the ability to get to know their students well and refer to their unique interests and talents within the lesson to accomplish vocal “excellence.” By relating student interests to their teaching, voice instructors are making their teaching meaningful and relatable to their student’s outside knowledge which also makes new concepts memorable.

In order to be culturally responsive, voice teachers first have to understand the cultural scripts their students follow. Cultural scripts reflect meaning structures in the head and guide behavioral practices in the world (DiMaggio, 1997). Adolescents’ cultural scripts encode and create meanings and practices which shape how information is perceived. So, if voice instructors consider how their students will perceive the information they teach in lessons, they can plan strategies that are more effective and meaningful. In order to understand their students’ cultural scripts, teachers can observe their students’ behaviors in lessons where scripts are observable to others and become part of the cultural context (Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan, 2010). For example, when students understand a concept, teachers can read their body language and get a sense of how their students perceive information and create meanings. However, voice teachers can also add to their students’ cultural scripts since the human brain is adapted to acquire culture and responds to cultural inputs with marked plasticity, especially early in development (Wexler, 2006). Thus, it is important for voice teachers to teach new musical styles
and techniques so students are challenged to create new musical meanings and practices that add to their previous cultural scripts.

However, “music does not explain things, it has to be explained” (White, 2012, p.210). Therefore, voice teachers need to explain the significance of learning new musical styles to their students because just learning the music itself will not teach the importance of the music relevant to its culture. Yet, “this requires a certain degree of personal and historical effort” (White, 2012, p. 210) on the teacher’s part. Teachers must spend time doing their research on the music they are teaching so the information they teach their students is authentic and not stereotypical otherwise music becomes a problem “when the listener-consumer makes a claim about the world through music without attempting to go beyond the simple projection of a personal listening technique” (White, 2012, p.210). There are many ways White suggests teachers and listeners to listen encounter new music so that they do not make essential assumptions: be aware of clichés, be skeptical of binary oppositions, speak with real human beings, and questions your tastes (2012). By speaking to people who belong to the culture teachers are teaching, becoming aware of their own biases/learned stereotypes, and going beyond binary labels, voice instructors can teach their students in more authentic ways and be able to explain the specifics of the different musical traditions they’ve researched.

Voice instructors also are able to be culturally responsive when they choose their repertoire choices for each student. Learning music “becomes more complex when the music is of an unknown style or from an unfamiliar culture” (Abril, 2006, p. 38). Thus, voice instructors should pick music that builds on the student’s cultural background so that they already have knowledge they can build off of to learn new concepts and techniques. Yet, “educators are expected to infuse the curriculum with music of various styles and from various cultures” (Abril,
However, it is easier to challenge students by introducing new styles of music once they have already gained confidence in their voice because they have previously sung familiar music. The Dock-in Model of Music Culture is one way voice instructors can relate familiar cultural music to a new style of music. Thomas Fritz (2013) proposed the Dock-in Model of Music Culture which describes “music culture as a specific type of perceptual culture, and music universals are a specific type of perceptual universals” (p. 515). Therefore, musical characteristics and perceptions of music can overlap between different cultures. Figure A “suggests that all music cultures contain both universal and culture-specific features. In a 2009 study, Fritz observed two cultures (Mafa and Western participants) and their ability to recognize three basic emotions (happy, sad, scary/fearful). While the Mafa had “no experience decoding [fearfulness and sadness], they were capable of recognizing those expressions when embedded in unfamiliar music” (Fritz, 2013, p.512). Their recognition of these emotions can be explained by a universal ability to recognize nonverbal patterns of emotional expressiveness (Eckerdal & Merker, 2009). Hence, adolescents can perceive the same things in different types of music. They use old knowledge and apply it to a new context (new music) depending on if the two cultures overlap in a music universal.
However, there is an ongoing debate whether music is truly universal. Lortat-Jacob warns listeners who view music as a bridge between different cultures, “The world music ideology presents itself as something universal. This is why it is false, or even dangerous” (2000, White translation). White provides the example:

“In 1999, Putumayo (a well-known world music label) launched a public school education program whose main objective was to illustrate music’s capacity to deepen our understanding of the world through positive, shared experiences… but clearly Putumayo’s presentation of diversity is quite limited” (2012, p.193).

In this case, “Putumayo’s production style, choice of information, and illustrations created the impression of a historical equivalence between the different countries represented” (White, 2012, p.193), but in reality the countries were not treated equally. In this case, Putumayo’s “Music as a Playground” hid historical injustices suffered by some of the countries it covered. Therefore, claiming music as a universal language can be dangerous because the people making these statements and choosing certain repertoire (in this the study’s case: voice teachers) have personal biases that affect how others view the cultural music they are representing.

**Method**

In this study, 9 voice students and 3 voice instructors from suburban Illinois cities participated in an interview and observation process. Voice instructors were recruited through snowball sampling. The researcher asked two contacts if they knew of potential voice instructor participants. One contact was a voice instructor, the other was someone from a school of performing arts. After getting in contact with the person from a school of performing arts, that person led the researcher to two other potential voice instructor participants. After voice
instructors agreed to participate, they suggested student participants. Since the voice students were minors, the parents signed a consent form (see Appendix A), then the students signed an assent form (see Appendix B). The voice instructor also signed a consent form (see Appendix C). All the voice students (ages 12 to 15) and voice instructors were female. Participants received no compensation for their participation.

**Voice student procedure**

Voice students were interviewed individually before or after their lesson observations depending on their availability. During the interview, the participant was asked several questions regarding the amount of time they listen to music a day, why they like that music, and how music influences the confidence they have in their own voice and their social relationships. They were also asked questions regarding how they viewed their voice lessons. Some questions were “Do you feel like your teacher incorporates your interest in music within your voice lesson” and “What do you think you get out of taking voice lessons?” To see the full list of questions, see Appendix D.

**Voice instructor procedure**

Voice instructors were interviewed individually before or after lesson observations depending on their availability. During the interview, the participant was asked several questions regarding their schooling, how it influenced the way they teach, and if they include culturally responsive pedagogy within their lessons. They were also asked questions regarding the relationship between popular/cultural music, the music they sing in lessons, and whether or not it was healthy to mimic the singers students listen to. To see the full list of questions, see Appendix D.
Observation procedure

During the lesson observation, the students and instructors participated in their normal routine and the researcher took field notes about the techniques the voice teacher used and whether or not they were effective. Effectiveness was based off of where the students understood the concept and was able to change her voice to match the teacher’s model. All observations and interviews were audio-taped. The interviews were decoded and transcribed verbatim. Once all interviews were transcribed, the researcher encoded the data.

Participant Description

Table 1
Where instructors went to college and what degree they earned

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice teacher</th>
<th>College name</th>
<th>Degree earned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>University of Eastern Illinois</td>
<td>Masters in Vocal Pedagogy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Madison</td>
<td>Bachelors in Vocal Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
<td>Masters and Doctorate in Vocal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Illinois Wesleyan</td>
<td>Bachelors in Theatre, Minor in music</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Voice student age and level of education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice student</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
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Researcher’s Context

As a music educator, the researcher understands the importance of voice lessons in order to develop the voice and learn proper techniques. Yet, in her personal experience, there was a disconnect between popular and “classical” music sung within the lesson. Popular repertoire was not sung in voice lessons and there was no effort by the voice instructor to relate proper choral technique to music outside of lessons which led to confidence only in the classical voice. Since educators are now becoming more aware of relating material to personal and cultural assets, the researcher is interested to see if voice instructors are now making an effort to sing cultural and popular music in voice lessons in addition to classical music to lead to confidence in the whole voice regardless of musical style. While all the observed instructors are classically trained and teach classical techniques in voice lessons, there are now places voice students can learn contemporary commercial music (CCM). CCM is the term used to describe non-classical music like pop, rock, folk, etc. So, while classical voice lessons used to be the only option of voice lesson students could take, educators are now recognizing and putting value in learning non-classical music as well. CCM is only one way contemporary voice professionals are trying to expanded the classical/non-classical binary. Around the world, there are voice instructors that specialize in other (non-classical) singing techniques.

Results

Family Influence

Adolescents’ music preference is influenced by the music their families listen to. P5’s taste in music was Broadway and older music like the Beatles. When asked why she liked older music, she said “I hear a lot of it group up with a brother who’s 9 years older than me.” Due to exposure growing up, the music siblings listen to can influence music preferences of younger
siblings. P2 and P3 were sisters and also had similar tastes in music: Broadway and older rock/alternative music like Queen and Nirvana. Both sisters sang Broadway songs in voice lessons, but were also in a band together where they sang rock music. The older sister (P3) was more into the older rock music while the younger sister (P2) liked Broadway more, but because of the band and her sister’s influence, P2 also listened to rock music.

Adolescents’ music involvement is also influenced by their families. P5’s mom was a director and admitted her mom “definitely brought [her] more into theatre” because she had always grown up around it. P8’s mom and dad were both professional actors and directors. Her parents got her involved in theatre, dance, and choir from a young age. When asked about how she viewed having her parents involved in the musical activities she participated in, she said “I feel like it affects me in a positive way because that way I know if I have any questions, I can go up to them or ask them.” But she did admit there are challenges because “sometimes people are like oh you only got this role because your parents are the directors which is always kind of tough.” Nonetheless, P8 was “really grateful how [her parents] help with everything.” P8’s cousin, P9, also had parents who were involved in music. P9’s mom was a musical theatre teacher at Columbia College and her dad went to school for directing. She said her parents “played a huge role in [her] life in getting [her] involved in music and acting” and were “very influential in [her] love from music.” Yet, her older brother and sister currently were not involved in musical activities. P9’s parents were supportive of the arts, but they did not force their children to participate in the arts. If their children didn’t “want to do something, then they were like ok, then we don’t have to spend the money on something you don’t want to do.” So, while P9’s parents involved their children in music when they were young, they left it up to them to decide if they wanted to continue with music. If one or both of an adolescent’s parents are
involved in theatre and music, the children were encouraged to be involved in music when young, but all participants also acknowledged that they also wanted to be involved, not that they were forced to. However, the participants are still young adolescents and might have wanted to speak well of their parents and could not separate their families’ likes from their own personal interests as well as an older adolescent might be able to do.

**Peer Influence**

Peers influence adolescents’ involvement in music and their confidence in their voice. Even though P2 was in voice lessons, she decided not to be in her school choir because she didn't “like the choir… and a lot of her friends decided not to do it which was a big part of it.” While all the other participants had friends in their choirs, P2 did not and therefore, did not want to be in choir. P1 compared her voice to her peers. P1 did not want to audition for a solo because “it would be kind of hard to compete because a bunch of her friends are really good singers too.” So, P1 had less confidence in her voice and her ability to get the solo because her competition was her friends. Friends play a role in whether or not adolescents choose to be in choir and the confidence in their voice.

Music is a way people can meet others, create friendships, and influence music preferences. P5 said music makes her “more social with other people she doesn’t know.” Thus, music was an opportunity to meet new people. Many participants said they met friends through being in choir because they shared a common interest (P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9). P9 said “even with pop music, me and my friends listen to the same people.” P7 said she has “met friends within her liking an artist and them also like [the artist].” So, not only do adolescents share the same interest in singing together, but they also like to listen to the same music outside of choir. However, having the same taste in music isn’t a qualifier for friendship. P6 said “my friend
specifically really likes rap music and I don’t like rap music, but I still like to hang out with her.”
Therefore, music is a way to bond in friendships, but there are other important aspects to
friendships as well.

**Voice Teacher Philosophy**

Evidence of each voice teacher’s experience and teaching philosophy was evident in their
students’ responses and lessons. Since VT1 earned a Masters in Vocal Pedagogy, she taught her
students about the physiological aspects of singing and vocal health. P1 knew “screaming can
hurt their voice and I think I would know not to do that” when she was talking about her friends
singing. VT1 teaches “about the design of the larynx and the vocal chords and the breath,” so P2
understood the importance of making sure she took a deep breath before singing. VT1 taught
singing as if there was a certain procedure to it, so all three of her students mentioned how they
use a procedure when singing in voice lessons. P2 and P3 said there’s less procedure when
singing band music though and made a clear distinction between the two different styles of
singing. Because VT1 did not sing much classical music personally and did not get an education
in foreign language diction, she did not do any classical music with her adolescent students
because she did not know how to teach the languages. Finally, VT1 valued performance and said
“if you want to be a singer you can’t be shy.” When her students start voice lessons, they are
required to participate in the biannual recitals in order to get her students used to performing.

VT2 received her undergrad, Masters, and Doctorate in Vocal Performance, so she taught
the importance of classical repertoire alongside other styles students were interested in. She
believed “classical was the nth degree of everything. It’s the most space, most depth, and most of
everything.” Therefore, she taught all beginning singers at least one classical song. P4 said “it
was important for me to learn *Tu Lo Sai*’ (a classical piece) and be comfortable enough with
myself to perform it” because she understood classical music was the foundation to build off of because that’s what her teacher taught her. P5 mentioned VT2 “led her off onto classical and more different things” in lessons and sang ‘Sento Nel Core’ in solo and ensemble. P8 just started taking voice lessons and started with an Italian art song and said “that’s just something she does with all her students when they start off.” Even P9 said classical wasn’t really her “jam”, but she had done one classical song. Also, because of VT2’s experience, she made sure to explain why students do what they do in voice lesson in layman’s terms so they really understood the importance of “tricks.” She said “tricks are great and you have to have them, but you need to know why.” In all her lessons, she used many tricks like kinesthetic movements, exercise bands, and straws to try to get her students to do something that would help them sing better. However, she would first have her students do the trick without telling them why. Then, she would ask them if they felt a difference and ask them what the benefit of the trick was. Lastly, she would either reaffirm what the student said or build off their answer so students always understood the reasons behind their actions. She also believed in spending half of the lesson on warmups so she could focus on the techniques her students could use in all pieces, not just the songs they were currently singing. In all the observed lessons, VT2 spent half or sometimes more than half of the lesson working on building the fundamentals of singing in warmups.

VT3 had a Musical Theatre degree, so she mostly taught musical theatre repertoire and wanted her students to sing in character. Most of her experience was in private coaching, so she didn’t have much experience in teaching technique. Therefore, she focused on phrasing, how the face looked when singing, and telling her students the backstory of the songs they were singing. P5 said her voice teacher tells her “the backstory of the song and… to become the character that’s singing the song.” P6 also mentioned that her voice teacher helps her with audition pieces
and taking voice lessons “make her feel a lot more confidence in her singing ability and getting
the right notes and stuff.” While in lessons, VT3 focused on how P6 sang and whether or not her
voice matched the emotion of the song just like a character would in a musical.

**Benefits of Lessons**

All students said their voice benefited from taking voice lessons. The most common
responses were gaining vocal knowledge and self-awareness (P1, P2, P5, P7, P9) and having a
stronger, more mature voice (P1, P5, P8, P9). Some participants mentioned they had better
breath support (P1, P5, P7) and a bigger range (P2, and P5). Two adolescents (P1 and P5) said
they knew how to take care of their voice now so they wouldn’t damage it in the future.
However, the perception of a healthy voice is cultural. P1 and P5’s perceptions of a healthy voice
reflected their teachers’ favor towards classical singing. Participants from all 3 voice studios said
they gained more confidence in their voice (P2, P4, P6). Lastly, some students liked that they
were challenged to sing new music (P4, P7, P9).

**Singing Along**

Many students claimed singing along to music they listened to gave them confidence in
their own voice, especially if they naturally sounded like them (P1, P2, P6, P7, P8, P9).
However, P8 only listens to music 15 minutes a day and said she would rather sing music herself
than listen to other people sing. P3 said “singing band music gives me confidence because I can
relate to the music I’m singing.” The lyrics she was singing gave her confidence because she
could relate to them. She gave the example of Under Pressure by Queen and “it’s nice to know
people are also under pressure and are doing well.” P4 didn’t sing along to the music she listened
to and claimed “it’s two separate things… it’s almost like an opposite thing.” P4 liked to listen to
musicians that had qualities in the voice that she envied and couldn’t sing yet, so she did not sing
along. She also mentioned a disconnect between the music she listened to and the music she sings in lessons. Hence, she possibly felt less confident singing something she wasn’t trained to do.

Mimicking Music

Each voice teacher had their own opinion on mimicking music and their opinions were reflected in whether or not their students mimicked the music they listened to. VT1 said mimicking popular music is not always good depending on who they are imitating. However, she did admire their “moxy [and that] pop singers can be a useful model (in terms of delivery), but just in terms of vocalism, maybe not so much” which again reinforces her beliefs on what a healthy voice should sound like. VT1 was teaching her students to favor classical voice qualities over popular voice qualities. She suggests level-appropriate YouTube recordings for her students to listen once they have already learned a piece so students can get ideas. Since VT1 never really addressed whether it was healthy to imitate singers they listened to, her student responses regarding mimicking music varied. P1 said “it helps if I sound a little bit like the music.” P2 said the music she listens to “just reflect the confidence she already has,” but didn’t say whether or not she mimicked the music. P3, the oldest of the VT1’s students, did not want to mimic the singers on the radio because she knew it was auto-tuned and compared it to “comparing myself to people in magazine because there’s photo shop.”

Both VT2 and VT3 specifically told their students not to try to sound like someone else and to find their own voice. VT3 said “one of the first things I tell [my student] is don’t ever listen to yourself and don’t every try to make you voice sound like somebody else. Try not to mimic.” However, as an expert in musical theatre, she did say there’s a healthy way to imitate a character without ruining the voice. VT2 said “find your voice. Find your individuality.” Her
student, P5, said listening to music “really just makes me want to sing it in my own way [and] not to sound exactly like it.” When it comes to listening to music for models, VT2 suggested listening to covers of musicians because it shows successful singers who take an original song and make it their own which is what she wants her students to do. In P8’s lesson, VT2 also specifically reminded P8 not to try to sound like her peers since she had a more mature voice and it’s easy to try to make her voice fit in by sounding younger, instead of owning her more mature voice which is less breathy and has a natural vibrato.

**Culturally Responsive Teaching**

All three voice teachers incorporated culturally responsive teaching within their lessons, but none recognized the term. All three let their students choose the repertoire they sang. VT1 let her students choose all the time. VT2 let her students bring in a song or choose from a selection, but also required at least one Classical song. VT3 let her students come to lessons with their chosen song, but did admit to bringing in specific songs to work on technique recently since she moved from voice coaching to voice lessons. Only VT2 had experience with incorporating music from a different country into her lessons. She had one student who also took Indian voice lessons and came to her lessons with a nasal sound that fit Indian music, but not most American music. In order to be culturally responsive for her student, VT2 “would talk about her (student) music and background and how they taught her through that so they could incorporate it into classical technique.” However, it was not mentioned how VT2 learned about the student’s cultural background (i.e talked with an Indian music expert). It also was evident VT2 valued the classical techniques over the Indian singing techniques because of her education and teaching philosophy. VT2 and VT3 emphasized really getting to know the students so they could use metaphors their students would understand and relate to in voice lessons. VT2 gave the sports
example: “if you play basketball, what are you told? The wrist has to follow through so when you are singing you have to start the air and it has to follow through.” VT2’s dedication to getting to know students was shown by the amount of time she took in lessons to listen to her student’s personal stories.

Discussion

The type of music the family of adolescents listen to influences adolescent music preferences. Since “the expression of personal identity and values is the function most closely correlated to music preference (Schafer & Sedlmeier, 2009, p. 290), it makes sense early adolescents listen to the same music their family listens to because their families helped shape their identities and values, especially their parents. P8 and P9’s parents both were involved in theatre and they were involved in musicals at a young age. So, P8 and P9 built their identities around theatre and performance. Therefore, P8 and P9 listened to Broadway music and sang similar music in their voice lessons because it reflected their personal interests which were shaped by their parents’ values. For P2 and P3, the older sister influenced the type of music her younger sister listened to. Since the older sister liked alternative music and older pop rock music, the younger sister listened to similar music, and they both were in a band together where they could sing this type of music. P2 and P3 also listened to Broadway music, so they also could enjoy listening to that music together and going to musicals to hear the music live. However, White pushes teachers and students to reflect on their music preferences further to “question [their] tastes” (2012, p.210) and “compare listening history to that of a friend, colleague, or family member in order to highlight the key elements of patterns of preference” (2012, p.210). Then, music listeners can become aware exactly of how their music preferences are influenced by others.
Music is used to explore, express, and tighten [adolescent] identities and to communicate their personal values, ambitions, beliefs, and perceptions of the world and themselves (North & Hargreaves, 1995; Steele & Brown, 1995; White, 1985). The participants expressed and tightened their musical identities when they created friendships with people who also participated in their musical activities. Within those friends, adolescents were able to tighten their personal values like the type of music they liked and why they liked it (perception). Hence, “meeting others through music also seems to be a crucial factor for music preference” (Schafer & Sedlmeier, 2009, p. 290). White cautions people who “seek to increase the social status of the self by consuming the music of the Other” (2012, p.190). In this study’s case, “music of the Other” refers to the music potential friends listen to. Therefore, an adolescent might choose to listen to a certain type of music in order to become a member of a “higher” social group of friends. Ultimately, the communication of ideas and building of identities within friendships affects how adolescents view their own voice. For example, P2 did not have confidence in her voice when she compared herself to her friends. However, adolescents stopped comparing themselves to their friends’ voices when they got older (evident in the older adolescent’s interviews.

VT2 and VT3 specifically addressed having students find their own voice and not to mimic others (including singers they listened to). This led to adolescents having more confidence in their own voice and not wanting to mimic others. Within lessons, voice teachers were culturally responsive by maintaining and affirming the student-teacher relationship and seeing excellence as a complex standard that takes student diversity and individual difference into account (Paris, 2012). When VT2 specifically told P8 her voice matured faster than others, so she shouldn’t try to sound like a middle school student to fit in with her peers, VT2 recognized
her student’s individuality and pushed her to develop her more mature voice. The participants all said they benefited from voice lessons because they could apply their knowledge to music they learned within the lesson and to outside music. The voice students were able to connect what they were learning in lessons to outside interests because their teachers were culturally responsive. Both teachers also maintained good relationships with their students by always asking them about their week and how they felt at the beginning of the lesson by showing genuine interest. Then, they could get to know their students and learn their unique interests so they could incorporate them into the lesson whether it was repertoire choice or metaphors that built on other interests (i.e. the VT2 sports example).

Lastly, each voice teacher’s philosophy was evident in their students’ responses because “the student draws on implicit knowledge and shapes the concept (and the result) until it matches that of the model” (Hatson, 2007, p. 26). Of course, the model is their voice teacher. So, voice students change their voice and determine what “good” qualities of the voice are based on what their teacher values and models. VT1 valued vocal health and emphasized the correct procedure of how to sing, so her student (P1) knew screaming was bad for the voice. All her students also mentioned the importance of taking a deep breath (part of the singing procedure) when they were singing in their lessons. While the other two voice teachers stayed away from Classical music, VT2 incorporated Classical music into her lessons and her students learned to value Classical music through their teacher’s philosophy. All her students (P4, P5, P8, and P9) sang at least one Classical piece in their lessons and either appreciated the introduction to new music or could identify its value in terms of incorporating many aspects of singing that is applicable to all styles of music. As an actress, VT3 wanted her students to embody the character of the piece. Both her students were in theatre and appreciated the background information about their songs so they
could authentically play the part. VT3 also modeled fluctuations in tempo, volume, and pitch so her students could add more character to the piece they were singing so the song was more conversational than lyrical. P6 specifically said she became more confident when auditioning after taking voice lessons.

**Conclusion**

**What happens next?**

Since this study only focused on teaching strategies voice teachers use one-on-one with students, it would be interesting to see if music teachers who see more than one student at a time (choral conductors) also use similar strategies to incorporate student interest into rehearsals. VT2 mentioned a dissonance between what voice teachers teach and what choral directors teach. In the future, hopefully voice teachers and choral directors can work together to make sure their students are receiving the same instruction. Finally, it would be interesting to see if the same factors that affect young adolescents voice perception also affect older adolescents’ since these students are at a more advanced stage of adolescence and autonomy.

**Value to the Researcher**

As a future music educator and choral conductor, the researcher now has a better understanding of what kinds of relationships influence adolescent music perception, involvement, and preference. Due the voice teacher interviews and observations, the researcher also has a variety of methods she can use within her general music classes and choral rehearsals that can tap into a student’s musical background so students say engaged and find their learning meaningful.
Delimitations

Since the study has a small sample size and participants come from similar areas, conclusions can only go so far as to how a small percentage of adolescents coming from middle to high socioeconomic status perceive their voice due to the mentioned factors. Interviews were given based on participant availability, so some participants were interviewed before their observation(s) and so were interviewed after. Participants who were interviewed before may have been aware of what their responses were in their lesson so they changed their routine in their lesson so match their responses. More than half the students were 14 or 15, so most of the data collected reflected how middle adolescents perceived their voice rather than those just entering adolescence.

References


Appendix A

Consent form for interview and observation of child

All consent forms will turned in by hand before your child’s observed voice lesson and interview

Consent Form

I agree to allow my child to participate in a recorded in-person interview and have one voice lesson recorded and observed.

**Purpose of the Study:** The goal of the observation and interview of the voice student is to gather data regarding how voice instructors use student musical backgrounds as assets within a classical voice lesson and whether or not the strategies are effective for the student. The data will be used to develop key concepts that will help music educators become aware of different strategies of incorporating student musical backgrounds into classical voice lessons. These strategies can also be implemented within an ensemble setting.

**Requirements:** I understand that if I agree to let my child participate in this study, he/she will be asked to participate in an in-person interview first, then have two voice lessons observed. During the interview, your child will be presented with a variety of questions. His/her responses will be voice recorded by the researcher for later transcription and analysis. Transcripts will be de-identified. No identifying information will be published.

**Risks:** I have been informed that there are minimal risks anticipated with my child’s participation in this interview and observation.

**Benefits:** I understand that the intended benefits of this study include a potential opportunity to provide feedback that will help teacher candidates understand how to incorporate musical backgrounds of students into classical settings.

**Confidentiality:** All information gathered during the investigation will be kept confidential. The researchers will record interviews and maintain hand written notes of the conversations. The researcher will personally transcribe all interviews in order to maintain anonymity of research participants. All notes and files will be maintained in a secured location. Audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

**Participation Withdrawal:** I am aware that participation in this study voluntary and I or my child can withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice.

**Contact:** If have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Kaylie Rosenkranz, via email: kayrosenkranz@gmail.com or phone: 630-363-2027 or Dr. Nicole Rivera, North Central College Faculty Supervisor, nrivera@noctrl.edu; 630-637-5921. You should also like my information as a contact.

__________________________________________________________________________  ____________________________________________________________________
Signature Date
Appendix B

Assent form for interview and observation of voice student

All assent forms will turned in by hand or by email before the observed voice lesson and in-person interview

Assent Form

I agree to participate in an in-person interview and then have one voice lesson observed. I also agree to having the interview and my voice lesson recorded by Kaylie Rosenkranz.

Purpose of the Study: The goal of the observation and interview of the voice student is to gather data regarding how voice instructors use student musical backgrounds as assets within a classical voice lesson and whether or not the strategies are effective for the student. The data will be used to develop key concepts that will help music educators become aware of different strategies of incorporating student musical backgrounds into classical voice lessons. These strategies can also be implemented within an ensemble setting.

Requirements: I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to participate in an in-person interview first, then have one voice lesson observed. During the interview, I will be presented with a variety of questions. My responses will be voice recorded by the researcher for later transcription and analysis. My name and any identifying information will not be included on transcripts, papers or presentations of this study.

Risks: I have been informed that there are minimal risks anticipated with participation in this study including nerves during the voice lesson which may affect my singing voice.

Benefits: I understand that the intended benefits of this study include a potential opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between the music I listen to and the way I view my voice within a classical setting.

Confidentiality: All information gathered during the investigation will be kept confidential. The researchers will record interviews and maintain hand written notes of the conversations. The researcher will personally transcribe all interviews in order to maintain anonymity of research participants. All notes and files will be maintained in a secured location. Audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Participation Withdrawal: I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Contact: If have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Kaylie Rosenkranz, via email: kayrosenkranz@gmail.com or phone: 630-363-2027 or Dr. Nicole Rivera, North Central College Faculty Supervisor, nrrivera@noctrl.edu; 630-637-5921.

__________________________________________  ________________________
Signature                                           Date
Appendix C

Consent form for interview and observation of voice instructor

All consent forms will turned in by hand before the observed voice lesson and interview

Consent Form

I agree to participate in an in-person interview and then have two voice lessons observed. I also agree to having the interview and voice lessons recorded by Kaylie Rosenkranz.

Purpose of the Study: The goal of the observation and interview is to gather data regarding how voice instructors use student musical backgrounds as assets within a classical voice lesson. The data will be used to develop key concepts that will help music educators become aware of different strategies of incorporating student musical backgrounds into classical voice lessons. These strategies can also be implemented within an ensemble setting.

Requirements: I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to participate in an in-person interview first, then have two voice lessons be observed. During the interview, I will be presented with a variety of questions. My responses will be voice recorded by the researcher for later transcription and analysis. Transcripts will be de-identified. No identifying information will be published.

Risks: I have been informed that there are minimal risks anticipated with participation in this interview.

Benefits: I understand that the intended benefits of this study include a potential opportunity to provide feedback that will help teacher candidates understand how to incorporate musical backgrounds of students into classical settings.

Confidentiality: All information gathered during the investigation will be kept confidential. The researchers will record interviews and maintain hand written notes of the conversations. The researcher will personally transcribe all interviews in order to maintain anonymity of research participants. All notes and files will be maintained in a secured location. Audio files will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Participation Withdrawal: I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice.

Contact: If have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Kaylie Rosenkranz, via email: kayrosenkranz@gmail.com or phone: 630-363-2027 or Dr. Nicole Rivera, North Central College Faculty Supervisor, nrrivera@noctrl.edu; 630-637-5921. You should also like my information as a contact.

_________________________________________________  __________________________
Signature                        Date
Appendix D

Interview Questions

Questions for student interview
1. How old are you and what grade are you in?
2. Approximately how much time do you listen to music in a day?
3. What kind of music do you listen to?
4. Why do you like this music?
5. What characteristics (timbre, range, and style) in the voice do you specifically like about the music you listen to?
6. Does this music influence the confidence you have in your voice?
7. What do you consider yourself as (bass, tenor, soprano, alto)
8. Do you feel like your teacher incorporates your interest in music within your voice lesson? If so, how? If not, do you want them to? Do you think they should?
9. What type of music do you like to sing in your voice lessons? Why?
10. What do you think you get out of taking voice lessons?
11. What are your future goals with singing?
12. How does music influence your social relationships? (how does your family influence your involvement in music)

Questions for voice instructor interview
1. Where did you get your degree and what specifically is your area of expertise?
2. How did your schooling affect the way you teach lessons?
3. Did you learn about culturally responsive teaching when in school?
4. What do you think culturally responsive teaching is?
5. What techniques/pedagogies do you use in your lesson/classroom to account for the voice change adolescents go through?
6. Do you incorporate popular/cultural music repertoire into concert settings?
7. What songs have you used in lessons?
8. What are similar vocal aspects (timbre, range, etc) between popular/cultural music and classical music?
9. Given the similarities, what makes each type of music different for a singer?
10. Do you think mimicking popular/cultural music is healthy for the voice?
11. How do you build off of previous musical backgrounds to teach classical music?