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Source: *The Choral Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 5 (DECEMBER 1998), pp. 9-32

Published by: American Choral Directors Association

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A Missing Chapter from Choral Methods Books: How Choirs Neglect Girls

by Patricia O'Toole



All choral method books address problems that directors have with boys in choir: changing voices and range limitations, recruiting and retention, potential discipline problems, and identity issues that accompany puberty. Choral textbooks address these issues and frequently dedicate entire sections or chapters to them (see Appendix A). In contrast, few choral method books address issues of concern to girls. While some choral textbooks discuss problematic vocal ranges for girls and occasionally suggest repertoire for these problems, the textbooks do not discuss many other issues: identity issues that accompany puberty for girls, the subtle lessons learned from studying a mostly male-centered curriculum in all school subjects, the loss of opportunities they will experience as they outnumber boys in their choral programs by as much as 3:1, and the consequences of subjecting themselves to an activity where the societal and professional beliefs are that boys who sing are special, while girls who sing are ordinary.¹

The purpose of this article is to discuss issues concerning the education of girls in general and in choral programs, a crucial chapter missing from choral methods text books. As the literature is reviewed and issues raised, the question will undoubtedly come to mind, "What about boys? Their education is as problematic as girls!" There is no question about the seriousness of this inquiry; however, the purpose of this article is to provide an in-depth look at the education of girls. As we think about improving education for girls, we will have to re-think how we teach boys. Boys, consequently, will benefit from these explorations and suggested remediations.

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To frame this topic, I will review research on how schools shortchange girls, by highlighting the work of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Their studies show how stereotypical perceptions of gender roles affect teachers' expectations and subsequent interactions with female and male students, to the extent that boys have distinct advantages over girls. I will discuss choral practices and policies in light of the AAUW research and suggest that choral directors operate under the same stereotypical expectations that impede the education of female singers. Three appendices provide resources for choral directors, methods teachers, and students interested in pursuing issues raised in this paper.

The "New Scholarship" on Girls

Boys-Girls, What's the Difference?

Baby girls wear pink; baby boys wear blue. Girls are made of sugar, spice and everything nice, while boys are made of snips, snails, and puppy dog tails. Women are from Venus; men are from Mars. Common wisdom in our society states that there are differences between men and women that exceed the biological and include modes of communication, interaction, and self-perception. Whether or not one personally subscribes to these differences, there is overwhelming evidence to suggest that society constructs gender differences based on the constraining notion that men should be masculine and women feminine. Western culture promotes and produces these stereotypes through all media and through the sorting of men and women into appropriate societal roles and occupations. To reveal how these stereotypes have damaged both men and women, let us review how they work.

fers to qualities such as authoritative, assertive, and productive. As a result, men are warriors, presidents, inventors, doctors, executives. They are in the world making, changing, and improving it, preoccupied with achievement. On the other hand, feminine denotes sensitivity, nurturing, and modesty, which is why it "makes sense" that women are mothers, nurses, and teachers. Historically, women's authority is in the home raising children, and entry into the work force is in the role of caretaker or in low-paying subordinate jobs. Feminine stereotypes encourage women to be more preoccupied with the shape of their bodies than the caliber of their minds.

Within patriarchal society male characteristics are privileged. Therefore, doctors and lawyers make more money and have more status and power than nurses and teachers. Further, history and literature books are full of the tales and accomplishments of men, and such books perpetuate stereotypes. Certainly there are

and construction workers, just as there are male nurses, teachers, and primary care parents. However, the ideology of patriarchy makes this category jumping difficult by imposing severe and debilitating judgments on those who try. For example, women who are assertive and aggressive are bitches, and men who are sensitive and caring are wimps. The sexual orientation of men and women who operate in opposing categories is frequently called into question. Such scrutiny and name calling erodes authority and hinders one's ability to act. Because men and women internalize these definitions, they participate in maintaining these categories and interactions. Men and women can be sexist, just as men and women who support gender equality can be feminists.

Girls in School

Reform movements, pedagogical innovations, and classroom materials have assumed little difference between the

The only exceptions are well-established, all-girl schools that modify teaching methods to account for girls' learning styles, although the success of these schools is frequently attributed to elite clientele rather than innovative pedagogy. Over the past decade, however, there has been a growing concern for the experiences girls have in school. This movement began with Carol Gilligan's influential book, *In a Different Voice*, where she claims that girls' very different ways of dealing with moral dilemmas have been silenced and denigrated, leading to serious pathologies.² Gilligan maintains that women are more caring, less abstract, and more sensitive than men in making moral decisions and, therefore, speak in a different voice.

In 1990 the American Association of University Women (AAUW) commissioned a national study to examine the ways in which schools were not meeting girls' needs.³ In addition to issues raised by Gilligan, the AAUW was concerned with the results of standardized achievement tests, such as the SAT, ACT, GRE (graduate record exam), LSAT (law school exam), and MCAT (medical school exam), in which boys always average higher scores than girls. Further, more boys become National Merit Scholars even though more girls take the exams. The AAUW was also concerned about the gendered sorting of careers in which an abundance of girls select service professions and few select ones requiring higher levels of math and science. By investigating school policies, curriculum foci, teacher expectations, and student perceptions, their overall finding was:

Girls and boys enter school roughly equal in measured ability. On some measures of school readiness, such as fine motor control, girls are ahead of boys. Twelve years later girls have fallen behind their male classmates in key areas such as higher-level mathematics and measures of self-esteem.⁴

Self-esteem is a complex construct, and psychologists have difficulty agreeing on a definition, let alone the means by which to measure it.⁵ Peggy Orenstein, who

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ethnography on the daily lives of middle school girls, defined self-esteem as:

Derived from two sources: how a person views her performance in areas in which success is important to her (so if appearance is more important to a girl than academic success, gaining a few extra pounds may damage her self-esteem more than an F in math) and how a person believes she is perceived by significant others, such as parents, teachers, or peers.⁶

An individual with a healthy self-esteem would have a suitable sense of potential, competence, and innate value as an individual. Unfortunately, study after study has shown that girls are less likely than boys to have a healthy self-esteem. In 1990 the AAUW conducted a national survey in which 3000 students between the ages of nine and fifteen were polled on their attitudes towards themselves, school, family, and friends. Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate

ing to the questions "I'm happy the way I am," and "I'm good at a lot of things."

positive responses as they get older. However, in both cases the girls' response



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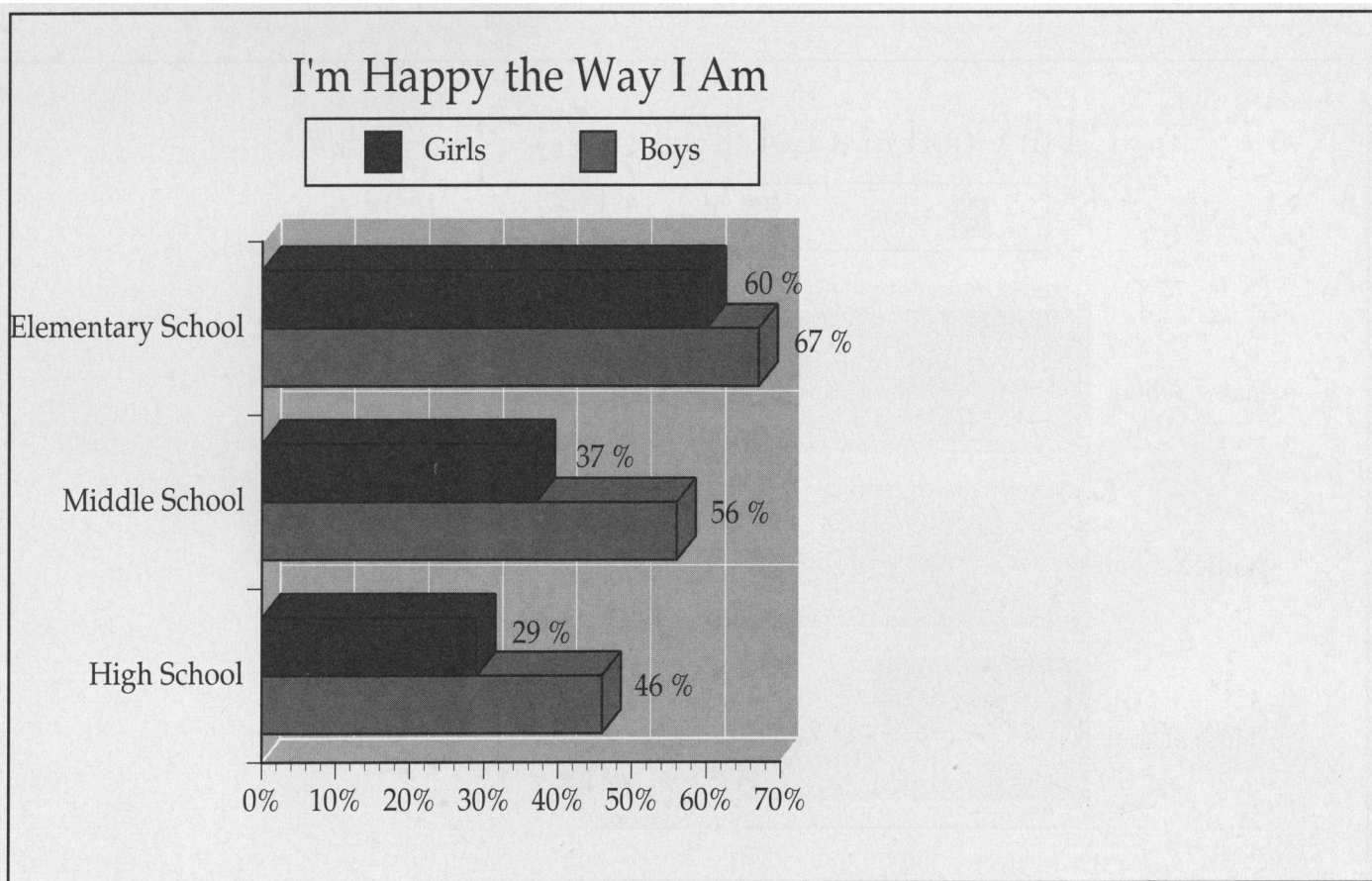


Figure 1. The percentage of students answering "always true" to the question, "I'm happy the way I am."

Figure 3 is the AAUW's self-esteem index based on responses to approximately ninety questions.

The drop in self-esteem for girls during middle school years is severe, as compared to the slight drop for males. At first glance I found this surprising, given the awkwardness of middle school boys whose voices are in various stages of mutation, whose bodies range from gangly to newly muscled, and whose faces may sport freckles, acne, the first signs of facial hair, or all three. Apparently changes experienced by girls during puberty have a more devastating effect:

For girls who are early maturers, puberty can be a particularly trying time. They tend to be heavier than their classmates in a culture that values slimness, and their social and emotional development may not match their physically mature appearance. Early-maturing girls exhibit more eating problems than average or late maturers and are at a greater risk for depression.⁹

for both sexes, research indicates that it is a particularly difficult time for girls because, on average, they complete puberty as boys enter it, which means that girls physically mature before boys. The AAUW's Self-Esteem Index then could be an indication of girls' loss of confidence in intellectual abilities as they struggle with the desire to meet societal norms of beauty, femininity, and acceptability.

Even if one is skeptical about how the AAUW measured self-esteem, one must ponder why girls will not respond positively to questions such as "I like the way I look," "I like most things about myself," and "I'm happy the way I am." It appears that by middle school, girls have learned to at least perform femininity by feigning a lack of confidence in their physical and intellectual abilities. Whether girls believe they are good at a lot of things does not seem to matter. It is more important that girls do not acknowledge their abilities, so they are perceived as feminine by the boys (and teachers to some extent) and, therefore, will have a

most in middle and high school—social acceptance.

Gender Equity in School

Gender expectations are reinforced from the moment a child is born. Parents have the tendency to hold and talk to baby girls differently from baby boys, expecting the girl to be more delicate, requiring more careful handling. Buying baby clothes also betrays similar gender differences. In a baby clothing store, it is immediately noticeable that three-fourths of the displays are clothes for baby girls, suggesting that parents should dress up baby girls more than baby boys. Even at this early age, society forces girls to focus on their appearance and external characteristics. As children enter school they recognize the terms boy and girl as conceptual categories complete with rules for interaction and behavior.¹⁰ For example, children distinguish between toys, books, and topics for discussions that are appropriate for each gender. By early adolescence boys and girls choose to adhere more strictly to gender roles, as girls are

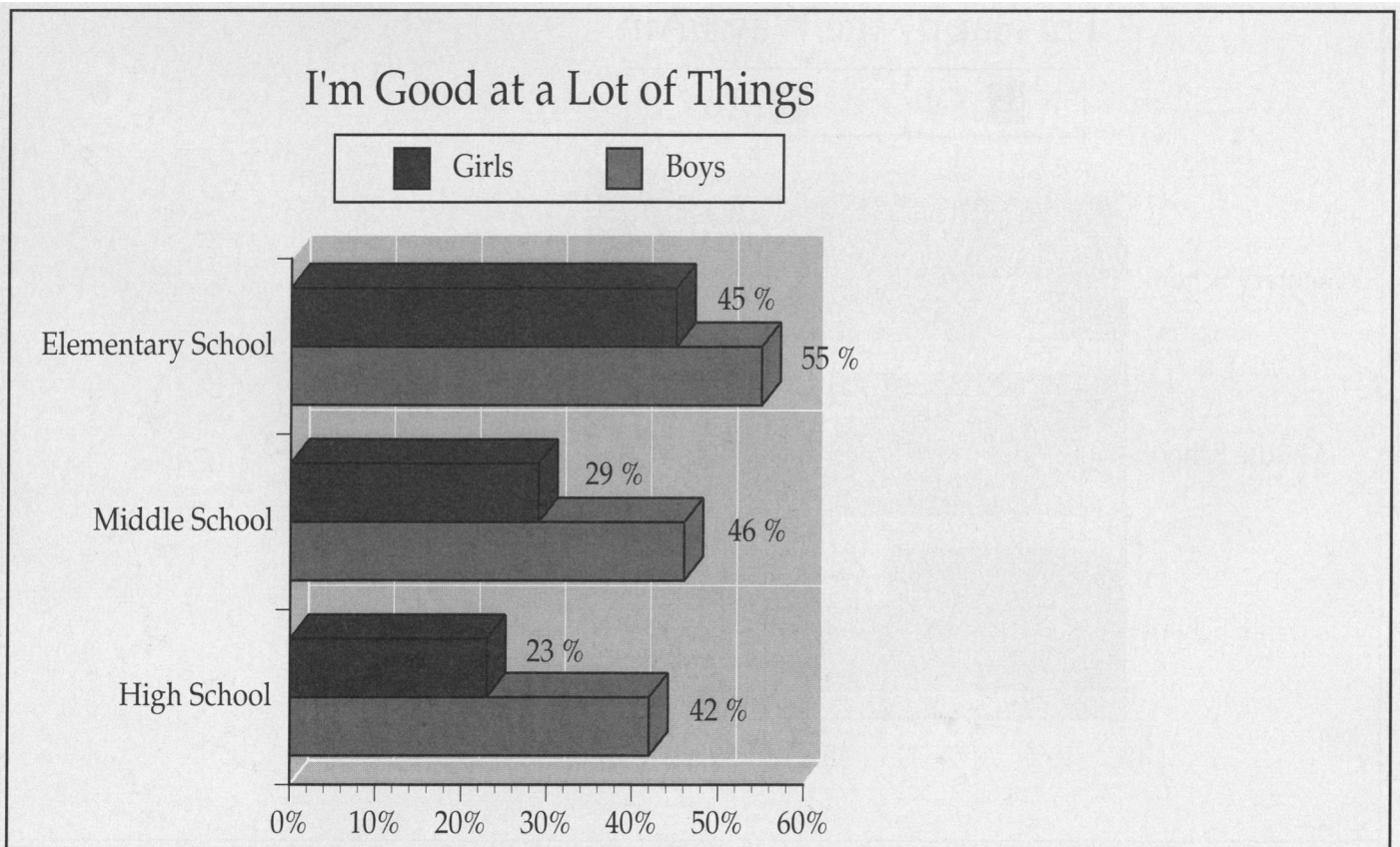


Figure 2. The percentage of students answering "always true" to the question, "I'm good at a lot of things."⁷

to boys, and boys rarely consider themselves to be like girls, having learned the emasculating consequences for doing so.¹¹

Teachers are not immune from society's notions of gender. Teachers have been found to interact differently with boys and girls, and thus their pedagogy is laden with subtle messages about who is important in the classroom. Researchers Lee and Gropper found that teachers characterize the ideal pupil as orderly, conforming, and dependent—traits typically identified as feminine.¹² Ironically, these qualities that seem to favor girls actually work against them because teachers tend to be preoccupied with less-than-ideal students. Further, by reinforcing conforming dependency, teachers are discouraging girls from more assertive and interactive learning that would serve them better in the future.¹³ Lee and Gropper also found that teachers discipline boys who fail to conform to their ideals, while often ignoring girls who do not. When both boys and girls are misbehaving, teachers are three times as likely to discipline boys only.¹⁴ Through such disciplinary actions,

negative) and leave girls with the impression it is more important that boys learn to behave.

from classroom gender equity studies. It reveals the hidden assumptions within the curriculum and how teacher interactions



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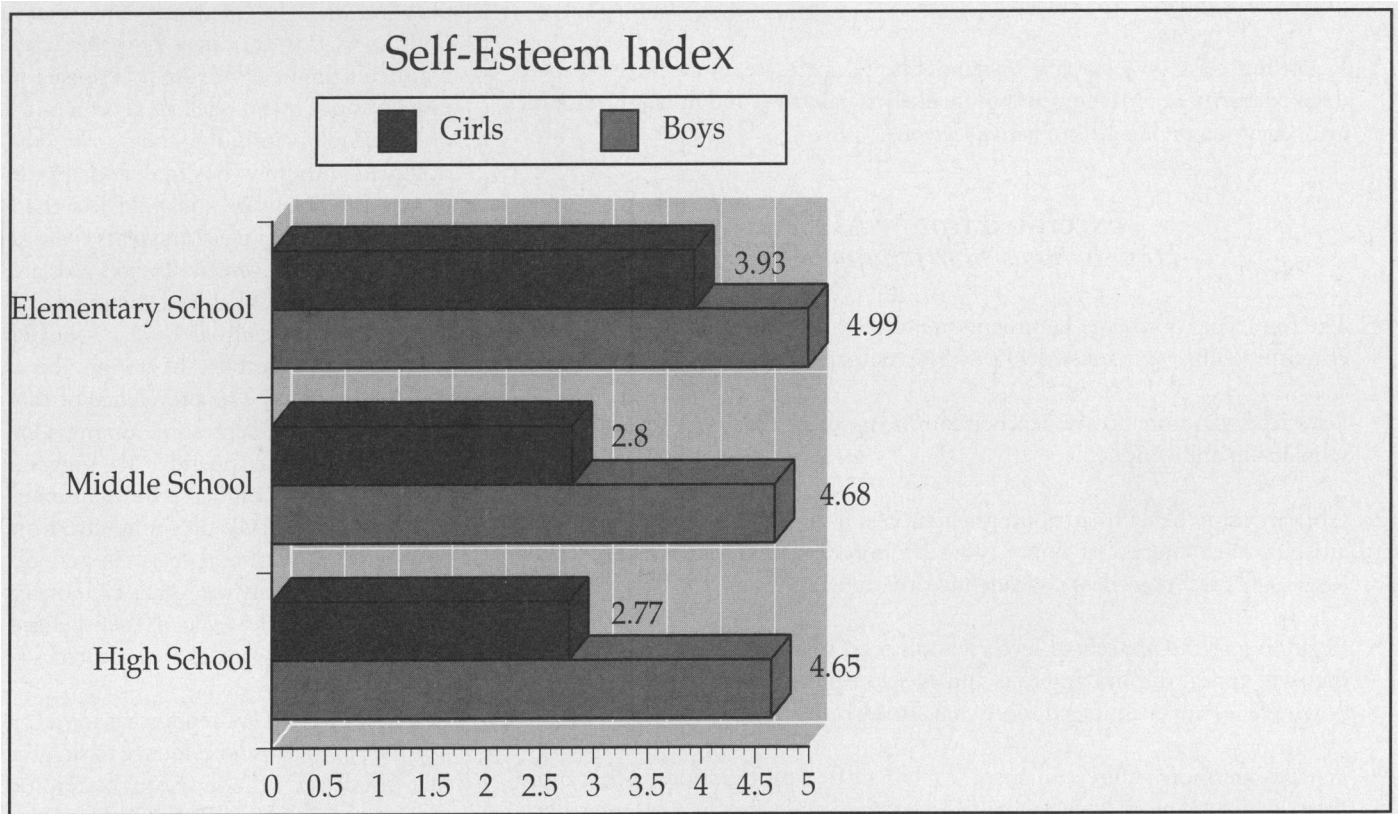


Figure 3. Self-esteem Index based on answers to the questions like: "I like the way I look," "I like most things about myself," "I'm happy the way I am," "Sometimes I don't like myself that much," "I wish I were somebody else"⁸

dependent, and resourceful, and encourage girls to be dependent, passive, and insecure.

The data suggest numerous ways girls lose out in schools: they receive less teacher attention; they are asked fewer higher-order thinking questions; their learning styles are discounted. While collecting research for her ethnography, Peggy Orenstein watched boys dominate class discussions, shouting out answers as girls sat patiently, hands raised in silence. "I think my opinions are important, so I yell them out," a suburban boy named Nate tells Orenstein after math class. "The teacher will tell you not to do it, but they answer your question before the people who raise their hands. Girls will sit there until the bell rings with their hands up and never get their question answered."

such practices:

Students who talk in class have more opportunity to enhance self-esteem through exposure to praise; they have the luxury of learning from mistakes, and they develop the perspective to see failure as an educational tool.¹⁷

Orenstein describes a teacher who attempts to promote a gender-fair classroom by calling on boys and girls alternately from her attendance roster. After two days the boys blew up, claiming she was unfair. "Equality was hard to get used to; they perceived it as a loss," she told Orenstein. Changing habits with long historical roots is difficult at best.

For a girl, the passage into adolescence is not just marked by menarche or a few curves. It is marked by a loss of confidence in herself and in her abilities. It's marked by a scathingly critical attitude toward her body and a blossoming sense of personal inadequacy.¹⁸

The good news is that since the 1991 AAUW report, action taken to improve girls' test scores seems to be working. The disparity between boys' and girls' scores in math and science are barely significant. Further, more girls are entering math- and science-based university degree programs. In the public realm, girl's sports are receiving more attention with the popularity of women's professional basketball, and Nike has produced a series of commercials encouraging girls to be tough and strong. There are also more television shows and movies with women doctors, lawyers, and adventurers. Girls in the late 1990s are aware that there are multiple roles for them to inhabit and that it is okay to want to be strong and smart. Girls know this; they may, however, have a difficult time embodying it because for every positive role model, there are a hundred examples reminding them to be preoccupied with how they look and appear to boys. Women are still paid less than men in the market place and glass ceilings still exist in many careers. Today's girls are caught in a mire of mixed messages. Be assertive—be deferential; be lean—be big chested; be agreeable—be tough; be a flirt—be demure. The prevalence of eating disorders and depression among adolescent girls (see Appendix B) suggests that living this conflict is burdensome, exhausting, and has a profound effect on how girls interact and learn in school. Girls know in many cases they cannot act smart and capable, even if they believe they are, if they want to be accepted socially.

The 1998 AAUW report, *Separated by Sex*, tells us there is no evidence to suggest that single-sex schools work better for girls, a position I maintain. It does little good to remove girls from the problematic world in which they will live. Through

Excerpted from AAUW Issue Brief: *Equitable Treatment of Girls and Boys in the Classroom*¹⁵

- Teachers initiate 10 percent more communication with boys in the classroom, which strengthens their sense of dominance.
- Teachers ask boys more complex, abstract, and open-ended questions, which provides for more active learning.
- Regarding class projects and assignments, teachers are more likely to give detailed instructions to boys and more likely to take over and finish the task for girls, again depriving girls of active learning.

Excerpted from AAUW: *How Schools Shortchange Girls*¹⁶

- The four types of teacher comments are: praise, acceptance, remediation, and criticism (Sadker & Sadker, 1995); white males receive more of all four types.
- Boys received more precise teacher comments than females in terms of both scholarship and conduct.
- Girls are more likely to attribute their success to luck; boys are more likely to attribute their success to ability (boys feel more control over academic challenges; girls feel powerless in academic situations).
- Beginning at the pre-school level, schools tend to choose classroom activities that will appeal to boys' interests and to select presentation formats in which boys excel or are encouraged more than are girls.
- Females are more indirect in speech, relying often on questions, while more direct males are more likely to make declarative statements or even interrupt.

Figure 4. Differences in the education of boys versus the education of girls.

boys and girls can learn to negotiate gender relations better and prepare themselves to face gender challenges in their lives. This would be more difficult if boys and girls were separated for twelve years of valuable educational opportunities.

The next section reviews the treatment of girls due to policies and practices of choral music education. In many cases we inadvertently tell girls they should exchange their musical potential for the retention of male singers.

The Education of Girls in Choirs

Gender Expectations in Choirs

Expectations based on gender exist in choral practices—that is, choral directors anticipate that male and female singers will have different needs. For example, directors expect male singers to be fewer in number and more difficult to recruit than females, to have more complicated and noticeable vocal problems, and to be more of a disciplinary challenge. State and national conference leaders, articles in journals, and textbooks on how to be a choral director frequently discuss these concerns. Discussions, however, fail to add what it means to be a female singer who is not difficult to recruit, has few noticeable vocal problems, is well behaved, and spends most of her time waiting for directors to turn their focus from male singers. Choral practices and policies are saturated with gender expectations that are so commonplace they have become invisible to both directors and singers. In the following discussion I trace the effects of gender expectations in the profession's preference for choir voicings (SATB, TTBB, SSAA), repertoire choices, training of male and female singers, rehearsal interactions, anticipation of how to achieve excellence, and policies that sort students inequitably.

The Choral Hierarchy

In the choral profession there exists an implicit hierarchy based on voicings that ranks choirs in the following order: mixed-voices, men, boys or children, women. Although some individuals

evidence to suggest that, on the average, this is how the choral profession thinks about and organizes itself.¹⁹ This hierarchy is based on a preference or taste that developed over centuries of music making and is part of the value system of choral music. The hierarchy remains rigid because the choral value system is dogmatic; not only is it unquestioned, it is considered blasphemous to do so.

chical choices as social and historical constructs, it may be possible to imagine and incorporate other preferences or possibilities that work to the advantage of all singers.

SATB choirs are at the top of the choral hierarchy because of historical precedence (although originally the soprano and alto parts would have been covered by boys' voices). Through the centuries,

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ten about, and promoted SATB choral repertoire, which lends a historical significance and authority to the music and the voicing. As a result, numerous great works, complete with histories and analyses, are available for SATB ensembles. Presently, the choral profession considers the timbre mixing of men's and women's voices preferable, as evidenced by the quantity of SATB ensembles performing at ACDA conferences and by the quantity of professional recordings of mixed-voice choirs.

Always a favorite with audiences, men's choirs fall next in the hierarchy. Besides the particular timbre combination of bass and tenor voices, there seems to be something extraordinary about a group of men who sing together: women swoon and men cheer loudly—even adults who might otherwise never attend a choral concert. Performing everything from early music and sacred motets to Broadway and jazz, complete with the occasional choreography and costume addition, men's

ied repertoire.

There seems to be a nostalgia toward children's or boychoirs that places them next on the hierarchy. Community organized children's choirs are experiencing a new revival in this country. Their popularity may be due in part to the charm of children singing and the images of a better world that it invokes. While the boychoir tradition perpetuates the historical exclusion of women from music-making, children's choirs provide opportunities for the abundance of girls interested in singing. Additionally, children's choirs have attracted the attention of talented, contemporary composers and, therefore, have a diverse and challenging repertoire available.

Women's choirs generally fall to the bottom of the choral hierarchy for various reasons. First, some listeners do not prefer the timbre of women's voices—a dislike internalized even by some women. Furthermore, female singers learn early that mixed-voice choirs receive more

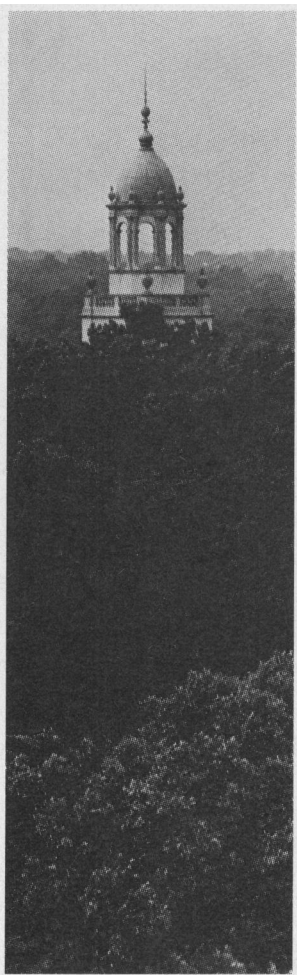
voice choirs tour, record, and are usually the last to perform on concerts, a position that suggests their dominance. Most directors construct their choral programs with the mixed-voice choir as the advanced ensemble, and this limits the participation of women to the number of available male singers. Directors then place the excess women in a women's choir, which students often perceive as the dumping ground for leftover and less talented female singers. Being assigned to a women's choir, then, is a direct comment on a woman's (in)ability. Finally, most of the repertoire available to high school level women's choirs is limited to appropriately feminine topics, such as love or nature, which fail to hold the attention of singers and audience.

In summary, categories and expectations of gender in the preference for choral voicings mirror those of schools and society at large. In our patriarchal society masculine qualities are privileged, and this results in greater power and status for men. Similarly, directors and singers have an implicit sense that choirs with males in them command more attention, a more diverse repertoire, and greater authority.

Repertoire Issues

At first glance, the gender stereotyping of choral repertoire seems obvious. Because men have written most of the music performed by choirs, boys sing about manly things, such as wars and drinking, and girls sing about womanly things, such as marriage and the home.²⁰ Regardless of how apparent the stereotyping, choral directors do not consider the incidental effects this repertoire may have on boys and girls who sing music primarily from and about the patriarchal male point of view. In this section I will discuss a variety of problems with standard choral repertoire and show how these problems operate to reproduce gender stereotypes.

Mixed-voice and women's choirs not only sing primarily the music of male composers, they also perform music written mostly from the male perspective. Many love songs are written from the perspective of stereotypical male desire that positions women as mere objects of beauty. Gustav Holst's "My Sweetheart's Like Venus" demonstrates this objectification:



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My sweetheart's like Venus, she's lovely and light,
 She's fairer than blackthorn, she's slim and she's bright,
 There's no one is like her, from far or from near,
 It's truth I am telling for all men to hear.

Although the passage mentions that the sweetheart is bright (which probably refers to radiance as opposed to intelligence, given the nature of the other descriptors), the rest of the verse and song describes only her external appearance, for the sole purpose of establishing her as an object to be admired. Many school-age boys are equally enamored of their girlfriends' looks instead of their intelligence, personality, athletic capability, musical talents, kindness, and other more complex qualities. By performing songs about such traditional forms of femininity, male and female singers internalize harmful stereotypes of the appropriate terms for romance: slender bodies, long flowing hair, passive women, active men. The language of these songs may seem old or poetic and, therefore, harmless. However, the prevalence of eating disorders among teenage girls who starve themselves for the sake of such beauty suggests the need for more thoughtful music selection (see Appendix B for a discussion of the severity of this problem). Granted, choir is not the only place teenagers receive these messages, but directors might consider texts carefully before adding to the barrage of sources that define beauty in such a harmful, superficial manner.

Standard mixed-voice repertoire also includes songs that focus on male sexual domination and conquest of women. The following example is the textual translation of Monteverdi's madrigal, "Si ch'io vorrei morire" (*Quattro Libro dei madrigali*):

I wish to die,
 Now that I kiss love,
 The beautiful mouth of my beloved hear.
 Ah dear and sweet tongue,
 Give me so much spirit
 That with sweetness in this breast
 it may extinguish alas my life.

until I swoon.
 Ah mouth, ah kisses, ah tongue,
 again I say I wish to die.

In this text we hear only the man's voice, and it is somewhat predatory in nature. There is no dialogue with the consenting woman; we only hear the man's pleas for sexual satisfaction. While such texts are open to different interpretations, to high school and undergraduate students, this text, taken at face value, supports the dominant societal stereotype of women as mere sexual conquests.

Another song I have adjudicated repeatedly at competitions and festivals is Offenbach's "The Neighbors' Chorus." In this text the neighbors inquire about a relationship that has become violent:

Did you beat her, try to choke her
 till you made her pout?
 Did her father take a poker, did he
 throw you out?
 Did you beat her and choke her and

Ah!

Granted, Offenbach's work demands a tongue-in-cheek rendition, but given the prevalence of wife abuse and sexual harassment, this song requires delicate handling.²¹ Just as English teachers discuss the problematic term nigger when teaching *Huckleberry Finn*, so should music teachers discuss problematic gender relations in song texts.

Besides singing from the male perspective, choral directors require girls to sing about male experiences, even in all-women ensembles. Don Besig's "Reflections of a Lad at Sea," and Nancy Telfer's "I'se the Bye" ("I'm the boy who rows the boat to catch the fish, etc.") are two selections performed by women's choirs. Asking young women to sing these particular songs is not necessarily harmful, but calls into question the severe lack of repertoire about a diversity of women's experiences, the passive or nonexistent roles women play in most choral texts, and the fact



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ences (how many boychoirs have sung Thompson's "A Girl's Garden"?).

Ron Nelson's "He's Gone Away" is a popular women's choir selection whose highly seductive melody detracts attention from the dubious message in the text. The chorus is:

He's gone away for to stay a little while,
But he's comin back if he goes ten thousand miles.

The husband or boyfriend has gone away (to war perhaps) and left a pining lover behind. In the first verse, the woman is left behind asking the following questions:

Oh, who will tie my shoes?
And who will glove my hand?
And who will kiss my ruby lips when you are gone?
Oh he's gone, look away over yandro

doing much for herself. Instead of taking this opportunity to become independent and self-sufficient, she decides to rely on her family:

Oh, its pappy'll tie my shoes,
And mammy'll glove my hands.
And you will kiss my ruby lips when you come back.
Look away, look away over yandro

Directors need to reflect on what girls learn from singing about themselves as love objects and pining lovers, while singing about boys as providers, suitors, heroes, saviors.

Occasionally, male composers attempt to write women-centered music, i. e., music that embodies images and social roles they think women would enjoy performing. Frequently, this can be problematic and even offensive. The following example is an insipid attempt entitled, "Charge It!" by Jeff Funk (New Directions Choral Series: Belwin Inc):

Consider the use of department store shopping bags as inexpensive props. (J.E.F.)

I've got a black belt in shopping!
Life would be so hard if it weren't for credit cards.
Shoes and clothes... I got to have 'em all!
Gotta get to a mall where I'm gonna...

(chorus)
Charge it! Charge it!
Put it on the plastic for now and worry 'bout it later.
Charge it! Charge it!
When I'm on the hunt for new clothes,
I gotta cater to my sense of style and fashion.
Gotta get to a mall 'coz shopping is my passion.
But I ran outta cash. I hate writing checks.
I'll simply sign my name by the

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(skip a verse)

#3 The boys depend on us to have great clothes and look real fi(h)ine. We can't let 'em down.

I'm gonna grab my purse, throw on my coat, and grab the keys to the car!

The mall ain't far.

(chorus—with modulation)

In addition to poor financial advice, this song fosters a shallow, two-dimensional stereotype of women. The women in this song are concerned with two things: retaining their "black belt" in shopping and looking attractive for the boys. This is an offensive, problematic text for teenage girls already inundated by media ads suggesting the same stereotypical role.

Composer Roger Bourland has been successful at writing strong music for women's choirs. He chooses texts that do

sets to music the works of distinctive women writers or poets. Consider the following text from his *Alarcón Madrigals* (Yelton Rhodes Publications), "A Small but Fateful Victory":

that summer night my sister said no never again, never again,
she wasn't doing the dishes anymore my mother could only stare maybe wishing she had said the same thing to her mother
she too had hated her "wifely" chores of cooking, cleaning, cooking, cleaning
always looking after six brothers and her father
a small thunder shook the kitchen as we quietly exchanged looks around the table of five brothers
the impasse broke when my father put on an apron and started to run the hot water in the sink
I could almost hear the sweet music of victory ringing in my sister's ears

that summer night my sister said no!

Also consider the text Bourland's "The Last Song." The poem was written by Bell Hooks, a famous African American scholar, when she discovered she had breast cancer:

within our hands we hold the magic seed
let us eat and drink together our time will not be long
within our voice we carry the magic sound
our song of sorrow our dance of praise
within our hearts we house the hidden flowers
fragrance of morning dew of nightfall that we may sleep sound remembering always this time together
this time within our hands

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that are rarely present in quality choral music: a defiant teen and a breast cancer survivor. It is refreshing to perform music that breaks the stereotype of women's lives centering around having a mate.

In summary, gendered notions of appropriate texts for girls and boys affect and limit directors' repertoire selections. The majority of choral repertoire is about male experiences and written from the male perspective—even women's choirs'

girls will comply with any repertoire choice (see Appendix A for examples of the extent of these expectations). One has to wonder how long boys would tolerate singing songs primarily about girls and songs written from the female perspective. Just as textbook companies have rethought the presentation (or lack thereof) of women in history, literature, social studies, and science, choral directors and music publishers need to respond to the same

directors, we need to search for better texts for women to sing, even in the mixed-voice choir. There are plenty of topics for women to sing about, such as the suffrage movement, famous women, coming of age experiences, women adventurers. There are even a few publishing companies that collect interesting music by, about, and for women. I have listed these in the resource section in Appendix C. I am not advocating throwing out centuries of repertoire. Rather, I strongly advocate that in addition to balancing music choices, we engage singers in critical discussions about historically produced texts and the implications of such topics in today's society and the students' everyday lives.

Vocal Range Issues

Vocal ranges are a gendered aspect of choral practice that have become part of our profession's common sense and are, therefore, seldom questioned. It is a difficult issue to discuss because scientific assumptions preempt cultural analysis in Western choral practices. However, if we start from the position that in no way do we wish to harm or limit anyone's voice, we are left with some interesting observations. For example, directors teach men to explore the full extent of their range; they learn to sing in falsetto as well as chest voices, and some men even specialize in the alto or countertenor voice. The profession has developed pedagogy to create a healthy upper range for men. The inverse is not true. For the most part, women are not encouraged to explore and use their lower ranges, and physiological explanations prevents us from even considering it. However, if we ascribe to the assumption that vocal abilities are normally distributed within a population, 68% of female singers would have average voices, 14% would have higher than average voices, and 14% would be lower than average. The Western singing tradition has cultivated the higher-than-average voices, but not the lower ones. Normal distribution and general observation tell us there are women with lower voices. Why have these voices not been used?

A cultural analysis would suggest that gendered notions of what is and is not appropriate might affect how we train

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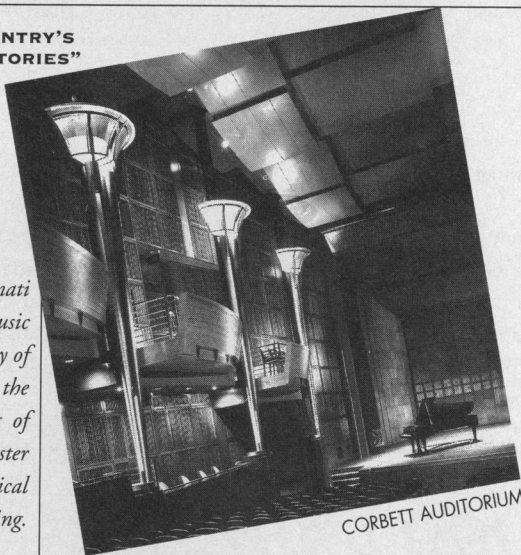
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F.J. Haydn	<i>Theresienmesse</i>
Honegger	<i>Une Cantate de Noel</i>
Mozart	<i>Vesperae solennes K. 339</i>
Pärt	<i>Litany</i>
Rachmaninov	<i>Vespers</i>
Schubert	<i>Mass in A-flat</i>
Verdi	<i>Quattro pezzi sacri</i>

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(feminine) ranges, while men are encouraged to explore and use appropriate (masculine) ranges—the full range of their abilities.

Ironically, many women tenors and basses exist (and can be found in abundance in non-Western and nonclassical traditions), but admitting to their validity is somewhat of a professional taboo in Western choral practices. Church and civic choirs frequently use female tenors, and Sweet Adeline choruses use female basses who can sing as low as B^b (or lower). But directors of professional or traditional mixed-voice choirs would never use female tenors or basses. Part of the gendered professional common sense that keeps women from developing their lower range is the notion that singing low will ruin or severely limit a woman's voice. Paradoxically, it is permissible for male singers to limit their voices to countertenor, but not for a woman to do so in developing bass or tenor voices. One only has to listen to singers like Ysaye Maria Barnwell from

ruined voice is not always the result of singing bass (she can sing an F below c, as well as soprano I). Certainly, one could argue that she is an exceptional singer, but one has to wonder how female singers would be affected if there were more acceptable role models like her.

It may appear a contradiction to argue for an appreciation of female voices and for developing women's lower ranges, which may have them sounding more like men. The point is the Western vocal tradition has not permitted women to develop and use their full range of vocal possibilities because of fear of vocal damage and because of conventional notions of what sort of voice or sound is appropriately feminine. Cultural notions of vocal production prevent women from singing SATB music with the full scope of timbres that are produced by a mixed-voice or a men's choir. As a result, women are dependent on men for what the choral profession considers full participation in music. In contrast, men do not need

and the King's Singers are two excellent examples of popular all-male groups that perform the full range of SATB repertoire. In this instance, choral practices suggest that boys can be independent and experimental, while girls must remain dependent and acquiescent.

Boys (and Girls) in the Classroom

As stated previously, the AAUW National Survey reveals that teachers give boys the majority of attention in classrooms, ask boys more sophisticated, higher-order thinking questions, and expect boys to be more outspoken and unruly. At the same time, teachers expect girls to be passive, well-behaved, and attentive. In my observations, this scenario holds true in choral rehearsals. Getting boys to behave and sing well is a challenge for many public school directors. As a result, girls take a back seat to boys in choral classrooms, just as they do in most of their other classes. Boys act-out

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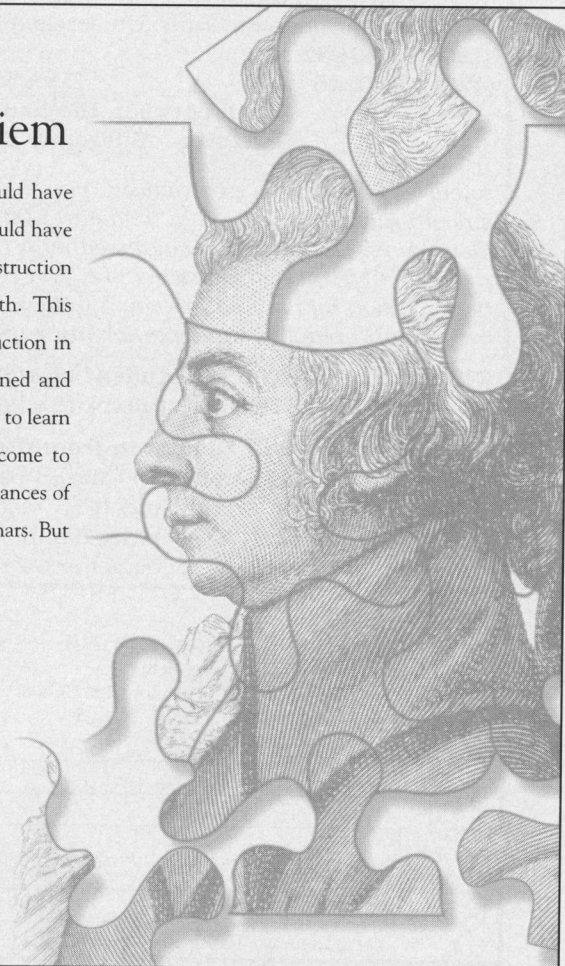
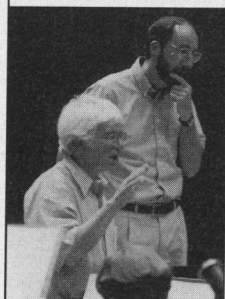
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identity crises, because of their vocal needs, and because the profession has nurtured a sense that male singers are entitled to special attention.

Culturally, singing has been identified as a feminine activity, and despite numerous macho male role models on the radio and MTV, singing in a choir remains fixed as feminine. This means that young male choral singers confront cultural stereotypes that dispute their manliness and sexuality, a conflict that often plays out in hostile and antagonistic ways. For

directing a junior high honor choir, I asked students about the benefits of singing at camp versus singing in their school music programs. Without hesitation, the young men blurted out, "support and acceptance from other guys for wanting to sing." To my horror, they told of being punched in the hallways and called fags, just because they sang in choir. If this physical violence is a common experience among young male singers (and not an urban myth), it is not surprising that they feel the need to be assertive, domineering,

rehearsals. Teachers need to help these struggling young men find an alternative choral singer identity—one that separates the issue of singing and sexuality and includes a critique of male privilege in choral ensembles.

The identity crises of young male choral singers is only worsened by the embarrassing vocal problems of the changing voice. Society requires men to be strong and self-sufficient, and the changing voice renders young men out of control and clearly less able than female singers. There is no question that the changing voice is a challenging instrument that requires much care and attention. It is unfortunate that this usually detracts from the advancement of young women's vocal and musical development. The best solution suggested by method textbooks is rehearsing junior high boys and girls separately, during which time they learn both common and individual repertoire. This scenario allows boys the privacy to work out their vocal (and emotional) difficulties, while the girls develop at their own pace, unhindered by disparity in abilities.²² When these students move on to the integrated high school chorus, they are more confident in their vocal abilities, thus reducing undesirable tensions and behaviors in rehearsals. Unfortunately, district policies often prevent implementation of this logical solution. Consequently, teachers need to be concerned about and creative with their pedagogy in order to ensure equity between time spent with male and female vocal challenges.

Lastly, boys in choir expect to be the center of attention because they realize they are a rare commodity and because they are dominant in many of their other classes. This was evident in a junior high honor choir I conducted last fall when the boys, who did not audition because of insufficient numbers, came to rehearsal expecting me to accept their outspokenness and their attempts to negotiate the parameters of their behavior. The girls, who did audition, came to rehearsal expecting to be focused, well behaved, and supportive of the male singers because they realized that it was the male achievements, after all, that would make or break the final performance. These experiences have created a sense of entitlement in

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being concerned about equitable participation for female students. During my time with this choir, we had several conversations about the constant tension between the guys who wanted to perform their traditional roles (what the girls called jerks) and the guys who wanted to inhabit a new, more sensitive role. These conversations felt like a consciousness-raising effort at best, because it is difficult for young men to achieve sensitivity, given the barrage of societal indications that suggest sensitivity subordinates boys in their otherwise dominant societal role.

The Quality Indicator

In mixed-voice choirs, the boys always determine the quality of the ensemble. If the boys can focus, overcome their vocal challenges, and learn quickly, the ensemble will be strong. Typically, directors take for granted that girls already exhibit these qualities and will wait for the boys to catch up. Sometimes it is the mere quantity of men that determines the

conferences the quality/quantity of men is consistently the preoccupation of choral directors. A high school ensemble with a large number of male singers almost immediately is recognized as excellent and seems to intensify the male-lusting to which the choral profession is so prone. Directors release heavy sighs as they daydream about repertoire they could perform and the envy they would draw if they had more men in their choirs. Paradoxically, when ensembles at these events have few men, it is the men who again are notable for their courage to sing and their ability to balance. Often the quality of the women's voices is part of the conversation also, but without fail the number of men becomes an indication of quality. Unfortunately, both these situations reinforce the notion that men who sing are special, while women who sing are ordinary, sentiments echoed in other school subjects.

Inequity

Because female singers outnumber male singers as much as 3:1 in choral programs, it is challenging to find an equitable and strong programmatic configuration, especially for directors who desire a balanced mixed-voice ensemble as the top choir. At the high school or college level the women's choir is rarely the advanced ensemble. The most disheartening holding pen example is when schools have two choirs—one mixed-voice and one women's, which generally means that directors place all males directly into the mixed-voiced choir, while females have to audition or spend a year training in a women's choir before directors permit them to join the advanced ensemble.

Numerous high school directors practice such discrimination with good intentions, reasoning that choral programs will be more successful if the mixed-voice ensemble is balanced. However, when directors place males in ensembles to which females have access only through

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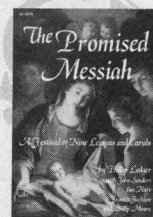
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choir, directors explicitly suggest that female singers are less valuable than male singers. The extent to which female singers have believed this is evident when asked if they would prefer to sing in a mixed-voice choir or an advanced, select women's choir. The answer is usually that women prefer to sing in a mixed-voice choir, because singing with men has more status and more rewards than singing with only women. Mixed-voice choirs tour more frequently than women's choirs; they have more diverse repertoire; they take advantage of more musical activities, such as competitions and festivals; they record more CDs, and directors highlight them in concerts by positioning them as the last to perform.

This policy of promoting men over women because there is a lack of men and an abundance of women, seems especially ludicrous, considering the vocal and emotional maturity of high school women compared to high school men. Given the widespread deficit of male singers, it makes sense to have a women's choir as the advanced ensemble in many high school programs. However, because of historical precedence and professional

such options. Additionally, the fear may exist that if the advanced ensemble is all women, the profession and school administrators will view the program as weak or inferior, and hence the director as ineffective, because a truly effective director would be able to attract male singers. Unfortunately, as the number of male choral singers decreases, their value increases, but as the number of female singers increases, their value decreases.

An even more insidious form of discrimination occurs during auditions for honor choirs, such as all-state, all-county, and summer advanced ensembles. The number of girls auditioning always exceeds the number of boys, in some states by as much as 4:1.²³

Recently, an honor choir I was to conduct had 112 sopranos, 65 altos, 23 basses, and 15 tenors audition for a forty-voice choir, with only ten singers on each part. The organization required that this ensemble be mixed-voice and that an equal number of voices were on each part. Figure 5 demonstrates the inequities created in this situation:

There are a number of reasons to be concerned about the way this ensemble

make the ensemble, while only 18 boys were rejected. This means 8.7 times more girls were rejected than boys. Competition for the girls was fierce. Given that 88.7% of them would not make it into the ensemble, they had to be excellent musicians with top-notch voices. Secondly, as a result of this competition, there will be a marked difference in attitude in the soprano and alto section, where only 9% and 16% make it in, from that in the tenor and bass section where 70% and 45% made it into the ensemble.

These numbers reveal a hard, cold reality that exists in most states; the choral profession discriminates against girls because there are more of them who want to sing. Part of the reason girls have not challenged these policies is that they are well socialized by the system and believe it is better to be accepted based on one's merits, rather than due to a lack of competition. This sense of pride, along with choral practices that teach them to value male singers over themselves, results in girls supporting and acquiescing to these policies. Further, administrators, teachers, parents, or students rarely examine these numbers; the choral profession has simply come to accept that girls will always outnumber boys.

The profession perpetuates these forms of discrimination by forgetting that the separation of vocal parts according to timbre is only a preference. It is not a truth; it is a value that blinds directors to other possibilities. One such possibility is to split any group of singers into four equal parts, which also has historical precedence, but not prominence. Composer William Billings used to put men and women on all four parts because he wanted a different aesthetic:

Suppose a company of forty people; twenty of them should sing the bass, and the other twenty should be divided according to the discretion of the company into the upper parts. Six or seven voices should sing the ground bass, which sung together with the upper parts, is most majestic, and so exceedingly grand as to cause the floor to tremble.²⁴

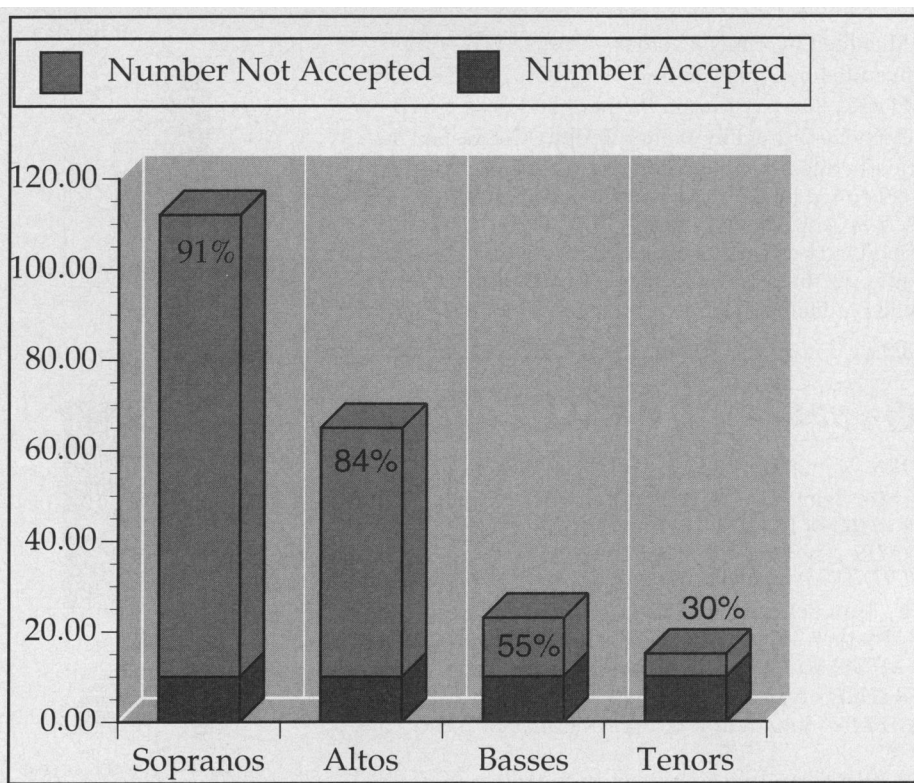


Figure 5. A break-down of the 215 singers who auditioned for a 40 voiced high school men's and women's ensemble.

portunities for women to participate in mixed-voice choral ensembles.

Another solution would be to make the honor choir SSAA (at least every other year). Or, as an alternative, audition the singers, and if out of the 215 singers the top 40 turn out to be girls, then have an SSAA ensemble. This raises the question about what to do with the SSAA ensemble if a state has both a mixed-voice and a women's ensemble. In which choir are the most advanced women placed—the mixed-voice ensemble or the treble ensemble? Would all-state chairpersons consider ranking all students according to ability and then, if the majority of the top singers are women, fill the women's choir first?

Possibly, honor choir officials do not pursue these alternative practices because the choral profession is desperate to have boys sing. They are afraid of discouraging boys by not making them feel special. It seems that the profession is more afraid of losing the few men they have than they are of denying the opportunities women have earned and rightly deserve.

Summary

Girls are treated as poorly in choral ensembles as they are in the rest of their school subjects. Through biased teacher interaction, male-centered repertoire choices, the limiting of their vocal development, choral polices that sort students inequitably, and competition for which boys may not have to compete at all, girls are led to doubt their self-worth. This erosion correlates with changes in the male voice, a time when teachers expect male students to require a great deal of attention. Ironically, although singing in a choir is considered a feminine activity, it is the male singers who are privileged. For girls, this experience only compounds feelings of belittled self-worth and second-class citizenship, as described in the AAUW report on how schools shortchange girls in general.

Left-Out Information

What choral method books leave out then, is a great deal of information about the experience girls have in schools and in

made aware of the following problems:

- In the majority of cases, girls will outnumber boys in choral programs, which means they will have limited opportunities and will have to work harder and be better musicians than boys to achieve the same rewards.
- Teachers expect girls to behave without many disciplinary

them to sit patiently as male choir members negotiate their interactions with teachers.

- In addition to waiting for boys to mature emotionally, girls will also have to wait for them to mature vocally because choral directors would rather have a mediocre mixed-voice choir than a women's ensemble that is the top school choir.



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when singing, it does not seem to be an issue about girls feeling womanly (See Appendix A). Further, when directors choose women-centered music, it usually positions women as love objects pining for their men.

•Women rarely sing about strong female figures or a diversity of female experiences. Additionally, when they perform with boys, they will have to objectify themselves as they sing from the male perspective and about male experiences. But it will not matter, because if the boys are happy, so will be the girls (See Roe 1970, Appendix A).

•There is no time, space, or concern for what might irritate, annoy or disturb a female singer in choir.

Suggestions and Reminders

The following are suggestions and reminders of how directors can counter

members:

•If your school choir tours, make sure you provide equal opportunities for the women's choir to tour.

•Create an advanced women's ensemble, either curricular or co-curricular.

•Perform music by women composers in all choirs.

•Remember when planning concerts to balance the repertoire so all choirs are performing appealing music. Occasionally, highlight the women's choir by giving them the most interesting song on the concert.

•Avoid excessive repertoire that objectifies and renders women passive. At the very least, discuss these cultural problems with the ensemble when performing repertoire that does not escape problematic stereotypes.

singers to appreciate and applaud the female singers.

•The next time you stop to worry about how the men feel, ask yourself the same question about the women.

•Instead of throwing out old standards in your choral library, teach your choir to discover and critique gender inequities in them.

•Plan a festival of women's choirs.

•Monitor your pedagogy (or ask a student to assist) and analyze how you spend your class time.

•Avoid calling incompetent boys women, and stop referring to female singers as guys.

•Start a girls' unaccompanied ensemble that sings jazz and popular tunes without creating a male counterpart, so the girls feel unique.

•Look into policies for how honor choir members are selected, both in your school district and at state honor choir competitions.

•Review the suggested women's and mixed-voice choral repertoire for state festivals and competitions and ask that particularly inappropriate pieces be replaced.


•Remember, male choral directors are not necessarily gender-biased, just as female choral directors are not necessarily bias-free. We all must continuously monitor the ways we create and maintain problematic stereotypes.

On a Personal Note

Being female, I find it emotionally challenging to read research on how schools cheat girls and then analyze choral practices and find the same inequities in our choral practices. As singer, I am a product of the choral system. I have defended the system and experienced its roadblocks. As director, I am a product of the system because I have learned more of the rules by studying it. I have participated in maintaining the system and implicate myself as I critique it. I stand among the guilty. As singer, I experience anger and frustration; while as director, I experience shame and bewilderment because the pressure to conform to institutional values of

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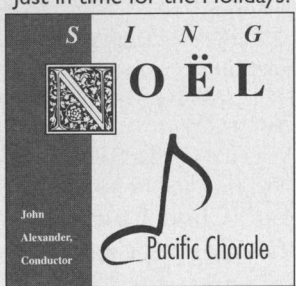
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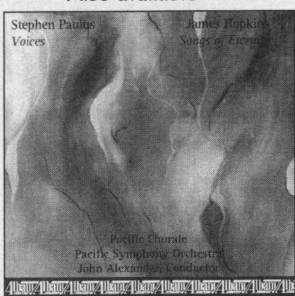


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ties for real and effective change. For example, how possible is it to have a mixed-voice ensemble that divides parts evenly among singers and not by timbre, thus no longer limiting the participation of women? How seriously will the profession take me as a director of this hybrid choir, and how soon before someone says it is not really a mixed-voice choir, but something else and thus relegates it to a lower position within the choral hierarchy? Amid this flood of mixed emotions, I am encouraged by the research that clearly shows consciousness-raising does effect practice in a positive direction. Even if the result is minimal, being aware of and caring about how we treat girls in choirs allows directors to imagine new, equitable possibilities. By introducing the AAUW research and these observations of choral practices to undergraduate, pre-service choral teachers, method professors can effect positive change at the grass-roots level by suggesting new choral configurations and caring about women who elect to sing in a choir. Further, choral methods professors should also introduce students to outstanding examples of women's choirs. Amabile and Elektra, both from Canada, are tremendous women's choirs that perform strong and diverse music, that have performed at regional and national ACDA conferences, and have several CDs available.

There is no doubt the future of our society depends on boys and girls learning to respect each other as equal individuals. Further, little boys are in as much trouble as little girls; more boys are diagnosed with learning disabilities, commit suicide, and are imprisoned. The choral profession has spent a great deal of effort recruiting and retaining male singers—to the detriment of female singers. Our profession needs to review the literature, research, and rethink our interactions with males (see Appendix A for how we talk to and about male singers). Girls' issues are less pressing—they turn out in droves, sit patiently, and therefore, miss opportunities—so we have ignored them. It is time to turn our attention to the majority of choral singers, make some different choices, and give female singers the respect and opportunities they deserve.

¹ Patricia O'Toole, "What have you Taught Your Female Singers Lately?," *Choral Cues* 27, no. 2 (1997): 12–14. This is a shorter version of this article.

² Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

³ The AAUW had two influential research-based reports. The first, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (NY: American Association of University Women, 1991), was a commissioned poll conducted by the professional polling firm Greenberg-Lake, which was assessed by additional academic advisors. The second report, *The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls* (NY: Marlowe & Co., 1992), was a compilation of 1,331 studies conducted over the past twenty years. Included in the studies were data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Science Foundation, and the Educational Testing Services.

⁴ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls* (NY: Marlowe & Co., 1992), 3.

Feminism? (NY: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 142–143.

⁶ Peggy Orenstein, *School Girls, Young Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap* (NY: Anchor Books, 1994), xix.

⁷ AAUW, *Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America* (NY: AAUW, 1991), 7–9.

⁸ *Ibid.* These statistics refer primarily to white girls and boys. African-American and Latino girls had significantly higher self-esteem scores.

⁹ J. Rierdon, E. Koff, and M. Stubbs, "Gender, Depression, and Body Image in Early Adolescents," *Journal of Early Adolescence* 8: 109–117.

¹⁰ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹² Patricia Lee, "Sex-role Culture and Educational Practice," *Harvard Educational Review* (August 1974): 370–371.

¹³ AAUW, "Equitable Treatment of Girls and Boys in the Classroom," *AAUW Issue Briefs* (NY: American Association of University Women, 1989).

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¹⁵ AAUW, "Equitable Treatment of Girls and Boys in the Classroom," *AAUW Issue Briefs* (NY: American Association of University Women, 1989), 3.

¹⁶ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 123-126.

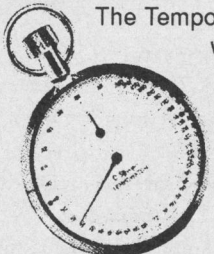
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Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap, 13.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, xvi

¹⁹ On a recent survey I gave to twelve public school teachers conducting choirs in grades 5-12, all twelve listed SATB as the most important choir. Seventy-five percent listed TTBB as the second most important because of the need for more men in choirs. While this is a small sample, I suspect it is indicative of what a larger sample would tell us.

²⁰ It is not a surprise to find that female composers often maintain these patriarchal categories, given that many study with male teachers and are funded by conservative organizations. The definition of "womanly" music and who gets to define it quickly becomes a complex issue. It would be unfair to state that women only write about stereotypical female roles because they are conditioned or forced to. Some do it because it is what they know and love.

²¹ This song also brings to mind other topics for class discussion, such as voyeurism and gossiping.

²² Although the AAUW report, *Separated by Sex*, found no evidence to suggest that single-sex schools benefit girls by improving their math and science scores and reducing exposure to sexism, I believe

issue. In many choirs the female singers have more advanced skills and abilities than the male singers. The inverse was not the case in math and science classes; boys and girls have equal abilities in math and science. By keeping boys and girls together in the same choir when there is extreme disparity in their abilities, the director impedes the education of girls (and boys).

²³ Mike George, Director of Wisconsin Music Educators Association. Discussion about boys and girls auditioning for the State Honor Choir.

²⁴ Chris Small, *Music, Society, Education* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 136.

²⁵ Paul Roe, *Choral Music Education* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1970), 17, 177-187.

²⁶ Kenneth Miller, *Vocal Music Education: Teaching in the Secondary School* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1988), 28.

²⁷ Shirley McRae, *Directing the Children's Choir* (NY: Schirmer Books, 1991), 20.

²⁸ Don Collins, *Teaching Choral Music* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1993), 436-437.

²⁹ Barbara Brinson, *Choral Methods and Materials* (NY: Schirmer Books, 1996), 24.

³⁰ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 142

³¹ Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Failing at Fairness* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 104.

³² *Ibid.*, 105

³³ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 140

³⁴ Peggy Orenstein, *School Girls, Young Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap*.

³⁵ AAUW, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, 137.

—CJ—

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Appendix A: Choral Method Books and Boys

Choral method books include discussions about recruiting and retaining boys in choir. There is also extensive discussion about how to deal with the changing voice and what literature is most appropriate. By looking at what some of the textbooks say, we get a sense of how the profession feels about boys and, by default, about girls (few of these books include extensive discussion of girls' issues). I have italicized certain words and phrases that I believe deserve more careful analysis, interpretation, and discussion.

1970

- All-boy groups, especially in junior high, will appeal to *manliness* and lessen vocal embarrassment.
- Recruitment of boys is especially easy when they are offered a chance to sing *manly* music with other young men.
- Song selection: The girls will go along with *any music that the boys like*.
- Boys' interest may also be *aroused* by inviting outstanding men in any walk of life to tell about the important part music has played in their lives.²⁵

1988

- Recruiting boys will be one of the *most important recruiting challenges*. Many boys feel they cannot sing, and others feel singing is feminine. . . . The problem of convincing boys that singing is sufficiently *masculine* may take a little longer.
- Audiences are *attracted* to the singing of a boys' chorus.
- Boys usually prefer brief, clear comments that do not require them to sort out subtle ideas or suggestions. They also expect the teacher to *make them behave* in class, and boys will accept discipline when they see it is being administered fairly and without hostility.²⁶

1991

- A word should be said here about the *special challenge* of recruiting

and keeping boys in the choir. Unless they are unusually motivated because of musical interests, boys need to be convinced that choir is not *a sissy activity* . . . and that sports and music can co-exist.²⁷

1993

- Adolescent boys are inclined to enjoy choral music more if directors treat them as if they were *men*. Directors should be careful to choose language that promotes *masculinity*. Talk about *masculine* topics and be positive and authoritative when relating to them. Chose literature that relates to their *masculinity*. Certainly men should learn to relate to the finer, more artistic, and more aesthetic aspects of life, but possibly this should be a growth process that begins with young singers after they feel confident in their masculinity and after they have committed themselves to the choral program.²⁸

1996

- By urging students to join, several "key" students may be recruited. For example, football and basketball players who join choir *may cause* several cheerleaders to join, and friends of both players and cheerleaders will be eager to join as well because they will want to be involved in the same activities as their *perceived leaders*.²⁹

While the language in the above text has grown more subtle over time, the messages have remained the same. Choral directors will successfully recruit male singers only if they acknowledge the young males' need to be manly. According to the advice of these authors, it is more important to make a male student feel manly than it is to encourage him to be sensitive or express himself in a creative manner. This line of thinking is still prevalent. A young teacher wrote the following inquiry to *Choralist*, the electronic discussion group for choral directors:

(Monday, November 24, 1997)

I teach elementary school music (it's my first year) and I have split my

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choir into boys and girls. Both choirs are fifth and sixth graders (11–12 years old.) I would like your input as to literature for the boys. They are slightly below the girls in ability, but they are enthusiastic. I think some unison or simple two-part would be good. Even SSA or TTBB would be helpful. I'd really like to sell this boys' choir as a manly, virile, masculine experience. Do you have or know of any tunes that fit the bill?

We do not know if the young teacher read the texts quoted above or if he came to this perspective based on his own experiences. Many expert choral directors would tell him that this approach works. However, the choral profession has been driven by its incessant desire for balanced mixed-voice choirs. It has ignored the problems it created for boys as well as girls. There is no research on how the privileging of male students may harm males as well as females. One can speculate about the success of male-female interaction, in professional and personal relationships, when men have been told they must be manly, virile, and masculine first and sensitive and expressive second.

Appendix B: Negative Physical and Psychological Effects of Puberty for Adolescent Girls

We need to help all children, particularly girls, to know and believe that their bodies are their own to control and use as they feel appropriate—and not objects to be appropriated by others. This, of

course, is particularly difficult in a culture that uses the female body to advertise everything from toilet cleansers to truck tires, and where the approved female roles remain service-oriented.³⁰

With peer pressure driving life choices, adolescence is a difficult time for boys and girls. Typically, teenage years are a time when students engage in “experimental” behaviors—behaviors that can ultimately threaten their lives. Parents,

religious leaders, and teachers work to instill in teenagers a strong sense of self-worth, with the hope they will make the right choices when confronted with drug use, driving while intoxicated, and unprotected sex. Unfortunately, research indicates that girls are not weathering the pressures well, which is not surprising given the messages of self-worth received in school. Compounding the pressures are harmful messages from television, movies, magazines, and billboards. The media set a standard for attractive women at waif-thin or highly “buff” and promote an obsession with dieting. While boys and girls consume these beauty ideals, girls are more discontent with their body image than boys and are literally killing themselves (bulimia, anorexia) to achieve this ideal. Eating disorders are at an all-time high among girls and some are “troubled . . . as early as elementary school. For most girls adolescence marks the beginning of social starvation.”³¹

Low self-confidence and a negative body image often lead to depression. While males show more signs of depression in early childhood, by adolescence the trend is reversed.

In a study of Oregon high school students, girls were twice as likely as boys to exhibit depressive symptoms, and in a Canadian high school study, the ratio was three to one. Higher self-esteem and achievement orientation protect boys from depression. Deprived of this buffer, many girls feel “helpless, hopeless, and stressed.”³²

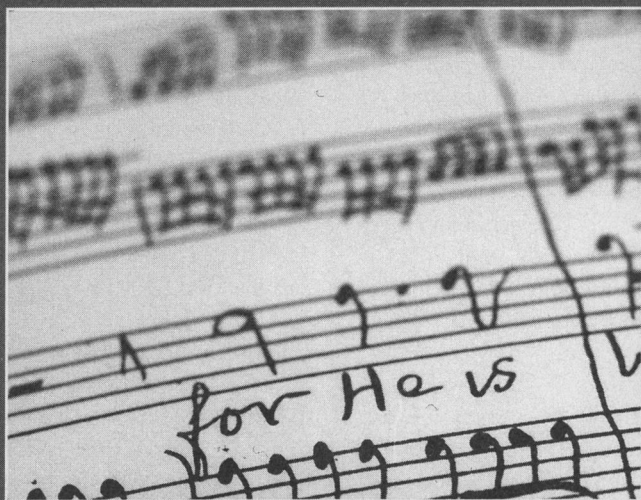
Adolescent girls are four to five times more likely than boys to attempt suicide; however, more boys succeed because they choose more lethal methods.³³

Finally, there is the issue of unprotected sex, which is closely related to low self-esteem. Girls are afraid that if they refuse to participate in sexual activity, or if they require condom use, they will jeopardize male affection.³⁴ Women are the fastest growing group in the U.S. for contracting HIV. A 1989 study in Washington, D.C., reported infection rates at 4.7% per 1,000 girls, a figure almost three times the 1.7% rate for boys.³⁵ The reason women are the largest growing group is because many more women (32.7%) contract HIV through heterosexual contact than men (2.3%).

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Appendix C: Resources for Teaching and Further Study

I compiled the following list of resources so anyone interested in these issues could begin a comprehensive study. Therefore, I have included resources in music education and in general education that can be found in journals, magazines, books, and on the Internet.

AAUW Resources:

Hostile Hallways: The AAUW Survey on Sexual Harassment in America's Schools, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1993).

How Schools Shortchange Girls: Action Guide, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992).

How Schools Shortchange Girls: Executive Summary, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992).

How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study on Major Findings on Girls and Education, (New York: Marlowe and Company, 1992).

Issue Briefs:

College Admissions Tests: Opportunities or Roadblocks? (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1998).

Creating a Gender-fair Multicultural Curriculum, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1992).

Education and Training: The Path Out of Poverty for Women, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1995).

Equitable Treatment of Girls and Boys in the Classroom, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1989).

Gender Equity and the Training of Educators, (Washington: American Association of University Women Educational Foundation, 1991).

Grants:

Research and Projects Community Action Grants: Call the AAUW Educational Foundation for an application 202/728-7602.

Books about Issues Concerning Girls, Psychology, and Public Schools:

L. Brown and C. Gilligan, *Meeting at the Crossroads: Women's Psychology and Girls' Development*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

P. Fallan, M. Katzman, and S. Wooley (eds.), (1994). *Feminist Perspectives on Eating Disorders*, (New York: Guilford Press, 1994).

S. Feldman and G. Elliot (eds.), *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982).

S. Gilligan, et al., and J. Tanner (eds.), *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

V. Hey, *The Company She Keeps: An Ethnography of Girls' Friendships*, (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 1997).

P. Orenstein, *Schoolgirls: Young Women, Self-esteem, and the Confidence Gap*, (New York: Anchor Books Doubleday, 1994).

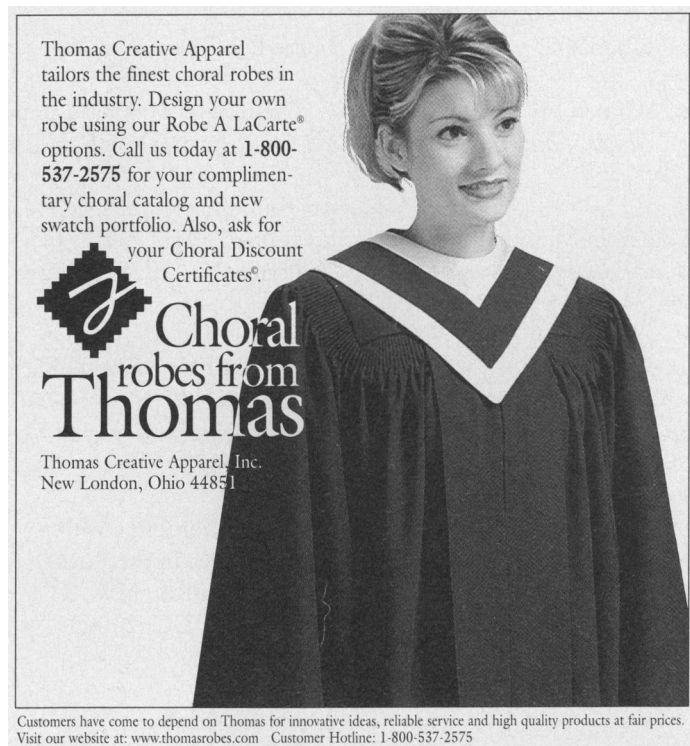
M. Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994).

M. Sadker and D. Sadker, *Failing at Fairness: How our Schools Cheat Girls*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

Articles from Popular Magazines:

These readings provide an insight into how the non-academic world views the issues of growing up female.

A. LeBlanc, "Harassment in the Hall," *Seventeen*, (September 1992) 163-165, 170.



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N. Perry, "Why it's So Tough to be a Girl," *Fortune*, (August 10, 1992) 82.

J. Schrof, "The Gender Machine" U.S. News & World Report, (August 2, 1993), 43.

J. Seligmann, "The Littlest Dieters," *Newsweek*, (July 1987), 48.

Undergraduate Level Music Education Articles:

J. Koza, "The Boys in the Band: Sexism and the Construction of Gender in Middle School Textbook Illustrations," *Educational Foundations*, 6 (1992), 85-105.

P. O'Toole, "What Have You Taught Your Female Singers Lately?" *Choral Cues*, 27, no. 2, (1997), 12-14.

S. Porter, and H. Abeles, "So Your Daughter Wants to be a Drummer?" *Music Educators Journal*, (January, 1979), 46-49.

D. Pucciani, "Sexism in Music Education: Survey of the Literature 1972-1982," *Music Educators Journal*, (September 1983), 49-53.

C. Seashore, "Women in Music: A 1940 Perspective," *Music Educators Journal*, (January 1979).

P. Weiss, "Women in Music: A 1978 Perspective," *Music Educators Journal*, (January 1979), 73-74.

Graduate-Level Readings:

B. Davies, *Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities*, (New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1993).

M. Fine, "Sexuality, Schooling, and Adolescent females: The Missing Discourse of Desire," *Harvard Educational Review*, 58, no.1 (1988), 34-47.

S. Gabriel and I. Smithson (eds.), *Gender in the Classroom*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

L. Green, *Music, Gender, Education*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Heresies #10: *Women and Music*, (New York: Heresies Collective, 1980).

R. Lamb, (1994). "Aria Senza Accompagnamento: A Woman Behind the Theory," *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, IV-V (1994), 5-20.

F. Maher and M. Tetreault, *The Feminist Classroom*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1994).

P. O'Toole, "I Sing in a Choir but I have 'No Voice!'" *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, IV-V (1994), 65-76.

L. Stone (ed.), *The Education Feminism Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 1994).

V. Walkerdine, *Schoolgirl Fictions*, (London: Verso, 1990).

N. Wolf, *The Beauty Myth*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1991).

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Internet Resources:

These are two comprehensive websites for topics about women in music and choral music for women.

The Internet for Women in Music (and those curious about them)—<http://www.users.interport.net/~beand/ifwm.html>—A comprehensive list of websites, email addresses, listservs for people and organizations connected to women in music.

Monica Hubbard's (Caltech Women's Glee Club) Website—<http://www.co.caltech.edu/~musicpgm/mhubbard/glee.html>—Find useful links to a discography of women's choruses, a comprehensive women's chorus repertoire list, the International Alliance for women in Music, Vivace Press/Women of Note Quarterly, and ChoralNet.