

<p>Institution: Edge Hill University</p>
<p>Unit of Assessment: 25 - Education</p>
<p>Title of case study: Impact on widening young male participation in chorus</p>
<p>1. Summary of the impact The Widening Young Male Participation in Chorus research project has resulted in significant changes in international practice in choral work with 11-14 year old boys, commonly referred to in the literature as the "missing males".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A direct result of the underpinning research is the creation of new boys' choirs, the inclusion of under-represented groups such as white, working class boys and improved pedagogical practice in secondary schools. These results are seen in the UK and as far afield as Africa and Australia. • The research has been recommended by the Department for Education/Department for Culture Media and Sport through the National Music Plan which lists the project website. • The research findings have been adopted by the Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD) and has shaped the work of conductors through ABCD's training and apprenticeship schemes. • Composers and arrangers have written music following the research guidance.
<p>2. Underpinning research The underpinning research for this case study builds upon previous AHRC-funded research led by Ashley in the field of the sociology of young male identity. Ashley (PI) was employed initially as Reader in Education and in May 2008 awarded a personal chair during the course of the research and remained in the employ of Edge Hill University throughout the assessment period. The research, undertaken between 1st May 2008 and 30th November 2009, investigated the understandings of adolescent voice change held by teachers and by school pupils. In particular it established patterns of success and failure associated with the retention of boys in choral singing between the ages of 11 and 14; a time when it is well known from previous research that large numbers of young males are lost to this activity. The core focus of this research was on the construction of vocal identity in 11–14 year old boys. Ashley's previous work had indicated tensions and differences in practice between the UK and the USA and this research sought to resolve an area of continued uncertainty concerning the vocal techniques appropriate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (i) during a time when boys' voices are changing as a result of puberty and (ii) at a time when social pressures with regard to singing style, context and repertoire are intense (Refs a, b). <p>The research findings have been published in internationally recognised peer reviewed journals that cover the different disciplines making up the cross-disciplinary fields of the research. These are principally social studies of gender, youth and class (b, c, d), studies of choral pedagogy (e) and music curriculum development (f). The research identified five success criteria for vocal identity and school/choral settings that are discussed in the academic literature. Some of these criteria, such as the need to teach singing to boys and girls separately, are controversial, but the research demonstrated that much better results are achieved when such practices are adopted. The research interpreted and exemplified to a large constituency of users through, for example, the SingUp National Singing Programme and the National Music Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A real commitment to boys' participation in the arts, supported by the senior leadership team of a school or setting. (Refs a, f) 2. A willingness to organise school timetables to avoid, wherever possible, a clash between singing and sport. (Ref b) 3. A willingness to experiment with opportunities for boys to explore voices without the presence of girls, such as setting music classes by gender or the provision of parallel, single sex extra-curricular activities (Ref c). 4. Music teachers' and choir conductors' knowledge of and the ability to apply key research findings on the changes that happen to boys' voices between the ages of 10 and 15. (Ref e)

Impact case study (REF3b)

5. A willingness to celebrate the achievements of boys who sing, for example through performing to primary school children as ambassadors for the school. (Ref b)

The employment of these criteria generated further research findings around motivation of teachers and the boys that they taught which had real, and original, significance for educational practitioners, choral directors and composers (Refs e, f). During the research process it was established that, for the teachers, it was new subject knowledge and improved understanding of voice development in boys that motivated changes in practice. In addition, the second phase of the research did confirm that, for the boys, it was the freedom to discover their voices in a situation where they were protected from girls' comments and judgements. Boys were found to be significantly more sensitive to this issue than commonly recognised and the research demonstrated that boys quickly and readily changed their attitudes when moved to a single sex setting.

3. References to the research

Items c), d) and e) below are submitted in REF 2. All items available on request.

- a) Authored Book: Ashley, M. (2009) *How High Should Boys Sing? Gender, authenticity and credibility in the young male voice*. Aldershot: Ashgate
- b) Journal Article: Ashley, M. (2010) "Real boys" don't sing but real boys do: the challenge of constructing and communicating acceptable boyhood. *THYMOS Journal of Boyhood Studies*, 4 (1) 54 – 69.
- c) Journal Article: Ashley, M. (2010) Slappers Who Gouge Your Eyes: vocal performance as exemplification of disturbing inertia in gender equality. *Gender and Education*, 22 (1) 47 – 62. DOI 10.1080/09540250802213164, impact factor, 0.495, ranked 66/188
- d) Journal Article: Ashley, M. (2011) The perpetuation of hegemonic male power and the loss of boyhood innocence: case studies from the music industry. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14 (1), 59 -76. DOI 10.1080/13676261.2010.489603, impact factor 0.680
- e) Journal Article: Ashley, M. (2011) The Angel Enigma: experienced boy singers' perceptual judgements of changing voices, *Music Education Research*, 13 (3) 343 – 354. DOI 10.1080/14613808.2011.603046, impact factor 0.404, ranking 9/84 (Music)
- f) Journal Article: Ashley, M. (2012) Broken voices or a broken curriculum? the impact of research on UK school choral practice with boys, *British Journal of Music Education*, Firstview May 2013 CJO 2013 doi:10.1017/ S0265051713000090, impact factor 0.944, raking 65/216

4. Details of the impact

Ashley has actively disseminated the findings of the underpinning research. The findings and their application have attracted significant coverage in the press and in television and radio. This has included articles in *The Guardian* (for example, Other Source 1, Section 5), *Independent* (Other Source 2, Section 5), *Times Educational Supplement*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Daily Mail*, and features in BBC TV CBBC Newsround, BBC World Service, BBC TV North West Tonight, BBC Radio 4 (Today Programme) and BBC Radio Five Live. He also engaged in knowledge exchange directly with research users (schools, choirs, music policy-makers), as reflected below.

The following impacts arose between January 2008 and July 2013:

- i. Impact on national policy (Other Source 3). The National Curriculum requires all children to sing up to the age of 14. It has been widely reported in research for many years that boys cannot be motivated to sing in the lower forms of the secondary school. The reason commonly given and promoted in popular media such as the Gareth Malone TV series is that boys think singing is "uncool". This research has demonstrated that "uncool" is more a consequence of a lack of teachers' knowledge of adolescent voices. In 2010 the DfE and the DCSS jointly formulated a new National Music Plan and accepted the findings of

- the research, and published it as a case study in the National Music Plan, recommending that all UK secondary schools should adopt the research findings.
- ii. Impact on the professional practice of choir directors (Factual Statement 1, Section Five). The Association of British Choral Directors (ABCD) is the leading professional association for choral conductors in the UK and offers a broad portfolio of conductor training. ABCD has recognized the problems in motivating young adolescent male singers with a consequent shortage of adult male singers. ABCD is using the research findings to establish networks of teachers and conductors across its UK regions.
 - iii. Direct impact in school classrooms (Other Source 4). There is a severe shortage of classroom materials that teachers can draw on to communicate the research findings to students through their teaching. The research produced filmed materials for classroom use available as a DVD or on-line through the project website. The ability to track the use of these materials shows that they are being used in over 500 secondary schools, mainly in the UK but also globally including Australia and Kenya. Requests to use the material continue to come in at the rate of about four per month four years after the completion of the research.
 - iv. Direct impact on music hubs. The National Music Plan requires the setting up of music hubs that offer extended singing opportunities to schools and community groups in their areas. Hubs are required to have singing strategies. When hubs have drawn upon the research findings, they have experienced considerable success in addressing the absence of young adolescent males. A particularly strong example (Factual Statement 2) is the Cornwall music hub that employed the research directly, resulting in a 200 strong adolescent boys' choir that performed at the Royal Albert Hall and in front of HRH Prince Charles on a visit to the county.
 - v. Direct impact on primary/secondary school partnerships and transitions (Factual Statement 3). The National Singing Programme ("Sing Up") funded by the previous Labour government spent £40m to promote singing in primary schools, but ignored secondary schools. This policy was critiqued by the research (ref 6). Drawing directly on the research findings, Bristol Cathedral Choirs School created a new boys' choir that visits primary schools in the area. The result has been improved primary to secondary continuity, the popularization of singing for boys on entry to secondary school and the recognition amongst boys in the top class of primary school that singing is something they might like to continue at secondary school. The school has commissioned professional DVDs of its work.
 - vi. Impact on teacher development in specialist schools with performing arts and music specialism. Even in schools where music and performing arts are specialisms, boys are significantly under-represented in singing and the expectations of the National Curriculum are not met. In recognition of this, the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) commissioned regional staff development workshops in Coventry and London to familiarize lead teachers with the research findings.
 - vii. Impact on singing provision outside schools. There is a lack of knowledge about how to engage young adolescent boys in vocal music making within the community. Boys are significantly under-represented in community based choral work. Sense of Sound is a national organization with offices in London and Liverpool offering vocal and choral opportunities to a wide range of individuals and community groups. The organization has commissioned workshops based on the research findings in order to increase its effectiveness in working with adolescent boys.
 - viii. Impact on singing provision inside and outside schools (Factual Statement 4). Wren Music is an independent company based in Plymouth, facilitating community based music making in the county of Devon. Wren Music has twice organized county wide events significantly employing the research findings in order to target young adolescent boys and those who work with them. Youth vocal leaders have received training based on the research findings.
 - ix. Impact on widening opportunities in schools with challenging circumstances (Factual Statement 5). Choral singing is significantly more likely to take place in independent schools or schools with a strong musical tradition. The research sought specifically to address the considerable challenge of engaging boys in schools located in areas of

challenge. Glenburn Sports College is situated in Skelmersdale, Lancashire, an area of high deprivation and social challenge. Glenburn has engaged with the research to start a boys' cambiata singing group.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

Factual Statements:

1. Chair, ABCD North West, Association of British Choral Directors – addresses provision of training and networking days to support teachers in implementing the research findings.
2. Singing Strategy Lead, Cambiata – addresses use of the research findings in the Cornwall 'music hub' with a 200-strong boys' choir; success of that work.
3. Director of Specialism, Bristol Cathedral Choir School – addresses the creation of a new boys' choir which visits primary schools and the impact of this work on continuity of singing from primary to secondary school.
4. Director of Music, Wren Music – addresses use of the research findings in the design and delivery of county-wide signing events aimed at boys and those who work with them.
5. Head of Music, Glenburn Sports College – addresses engagement with the research to start a boys' cambiata singing group.

Other Sources:

1. James Morrison (2008). Musical youth: How can we get boys singing? *Independent*, 04 September 2008. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/schools/musical-youth-how-can-we-get-boys-singing-917732.html> [Accessed 22/11/13].
2. Janette Owen (2009). Sing Out Brother! *The Guardian*, 5 May 2009. Available at <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/may/05/singing-schools> [Accessed 22/11/13]
3. The National Music Plan: The Importance of Music (DfE/DCMS, 2011) p. 44. Available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/180973/DFE-00086-2011.pdf [Accessed 22/11/13].
4. Database of registered users of the research (available on request) www.boys-keep-singing.org.uk