Contributions to Music Education Vol. 45 (2020), pp. 147–165.

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Instrumentalists' Comfort and Self-Perceived Competence in Teaching Choral Music

This study was designed to explore differences between instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence ratings based on their undergraduate choral methods curricular background and in-service choral teaching experiences, using a 7-point Likert scale, on 15 specific choral teaching skills presented through a researcher-developed survey. In this study, data computation included descriptive and non-parametric statistics to analyze the participants' (N = 106) responses. According to this study, the participants' undergraduate choral methods curricular experience had a positive influence on comfort and self-perceived competence when instrumental music teachers taught choirs in secondary school classrooms. Instrumental music teachers self-reported being more comfortable and competent in teaching choral music as teaching experience increased. Based on this study's findings, it is important to facilitate opportunities for both pre-and in-service instrumental music teachers to explore voice as an instrument and various levels of secondary school choral repertoire.

Keywords: music teacher education, undergraduate music education curriculum, choral methods, pre-service instrumental music teacher training, in-service instrumental music teacher professional development

Introduction

Music education students in the United States generally choose to enter their university programs to learn skills in a specific area of specialization such as band, choir, orchestra, or general music. However, the job market often not only demands that music teachers instruct in more than one musical area but does not guarantee the opportunity to find a position that matches one's specialty (Groulx

2016; Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Parker & Powell, 2014). A music teacher's position can include teaching band and choir or orchestra and choir, which can encompass skills and competencies in all music areas and at all grade levels. Hence, music education students who focus on one teaching area may not feel they possess or have developed adequate skills to teach outside their chosen area of specialization without additional course preparation or experience.

Groulx (2016) found that 83% of music teachers indicated that they taught outside their specialization at some point during their career, and that 63% of non-choir teachers reported that the second most common assignment outside of their specialization area was teaching choirs. However, even given this need, Hamann and Ebie (2009) found that music education students had a strong commitment to a chosen area in music education but little desire to teach outside of that field. Parker and Powell (2014) claimed one possible reason for this lack of desire was that instrumental music education students were overwhelmed by the choral method curricular requirements and were unfamiliar with voice as an instrument and choral music practices.

Musical competencies or developing particular skills has been an integral part of undergraduate music education curricula (Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Schmidt, 1989; Triplett, 1981). One's competency is often impacted by motivation, which can initiate successful outcomes in professional pursuits (McAllister, 1995; Ryan, 1982). For example, teaching micro-lessons and leading vocal warm-ups were challenging for instrumental music education students (Parker & Powell, 2014) and brought up a question of competency to teach outside their chosen area of specialization. Competence in teaching situations can reflect comfort levels of subject matter knowledge (Wingenbach, White, Degenhart, Pannkuk, & Kujawski, 2007). In a study by Hamann and Ebie (2009), pre-service music teachers felt confident that method courses would alleviate their concerns regarding unfamiliarity by providing necessary skills and adequate knowledge to be effective teachers.

Some teacher preparation programs are now shifting the focus of curricular offerings toward the preparation of music education majors in multiple areas of music instruction by requiring methods courses in choral, instrumental, and general music (Branscome, 2012; Groulx, 2016; Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Parker & Powell, 2014). Pre-service music teachers attending the National Association of Schools of Music meeting were encouraged to be prepared to teach in multiple areas of music at various grade levels (Abrahams, 2000). Several states offer teacher certification as K-12 music endorsements that encompass instrumental, choral, and general music areas without regard to emphasis (Conway, 2002; Groulx,

2016). Adequate course preparation in undergraduate music education programs could prepare pre-service teachers to teach outside of their chosen field with comfort and competence.

Past and/or current choral music teaching experiences can also increase in-service instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence when teaching choir. Although engaging in new teaching experiences involves taking risks, new teaching experiences can enhance ones' teaching skills (Harreveld, Rutjens, Rotteveel, Nordgren, & Pligt, 2009). Focusing on previous experiences can help individuals be more comfortable and competent in unfamiliar areas (Harreveld, Rutjens, Rotteveel, Nordgren, & Pligt, 2009). According to Dweck & Leggett (1988), the pursuit of specific learning goals enhances competence and promotes professional development. Similarly, in-service instrumental music teachers' professional goals of developing and refining effective choral pedagogical skills could be expected if they had to teach choral music, which could positively influence their future choral teaching career.

Methods course content continues to be an important topic of discussion in music teacher education curricula (Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Hamilton, Murphy, & Thornton, 2004; Legette 2013). Research has been conducted on the composition of and activities included in undergraduate methods courses (Coppola, 2009; Parker & Powell, 2014) since methods class curricular requirements are intended to be beneficial in the preparation of music teachers (Legette & McCord, 2015; Stambaugh, 2016). Hence, it would be important to discern the impact such changes have had over the past several decades on those teachers that are providing music instruction outside of their chosen area. Since many music teachers agree that undergraduate methods classes are important in training competent classroom practitioners (Conway, 1999; Groulx, 2016; Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Parker & Powell 2014), it would be necessary to assess the comfort and self-perceived competence levels of in-service instrumental music teachers who took choral method classes in their undergraduate programs, in relation to teaching in choral settings or in relation to choral teaching experiences.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether specialized method courses, specifically choral method courses taken by instrumental music education majors, current choral teaching experience, and years of choral teaching experience were beneficial in the comfort and self-perceived competence levels of instrumental music education majors who taught choral music in classroom settings. The six research questions under investigation were as follows. What are the differences in comfort levels and in self-perceived competence levels between

instrumental music teachers who: (Q: 1 and 2) took a choral methods class and those who did not; (Q: 3 and 4) are currently teaching choir versus those who are currently not teaching choir; and (Q: 5 and 6) have taught choir 1-4 years versus those who have taught choir 5 years or more.

Method

Participants (*N* = 106) were recruited from the population of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) membership list. Since it was not known how many instrumental teachers taught choir, the initial emailing was sent to 5,013 instrumentalists in the NAfME email file. Sixty-six surveys were completed in the first emailing. Eight days later, NAfME sent out a follow-up email to the initial 5,013 teachers, and 59 additional surveys were completed during the second/final emailing. As a result, the researcher collected 125 responses, with an overall survey response rate of 2.5%, of which 19 were disqualified because the respondents identified primarily as non-instrumental music teachers, leaving 106 completed surveys.

The six-question survey (see Appendix for survey) was constructed as follows. Question one was a filter question to eliminate non-instrumental music teachers. The remaining questions were then organized into three categories identifying participants' teaching information, the differences in comfort levels, and the differences in self-perceived competence levels. Questions two through four pertained to participants' choral methods curricular experiences and choral teaching experiences; and questions five and six directed participants to rate their comfort and self-perceived competence levels on 15 choral music teaching skills using a seven-point Likert-type scale (e.g., 1: *Strongly Uncomfortable/Incompetent*, 7: *Strongly Comfortable/Competent)*. In order to construct appropriate survey questions, literature that identified choral pedagogical criteria were reviewed (Coppola, 2009; Kim, 2013; Parker & Powell, 2014; Stambaugh, 2016; Zeuch, 2014), as were studies that examined the importance of undergraduate music education method courses, which focused on effectiveness and preparedness (Conway, 1999; Hamann & Ebie, 2009; Hourigan & Scheib, 2009; Legette & McCord, 2015).

To establish validity of the instrument, a pilot study was administered to third- and fourth-year music education students (*N* = 13) enrolled in a band methods course at a large, public university in the Southwestern United States to review the content and receive information in regard to readability and ease of use. Changes were made to the final instrument such that 12 choral music teaching skill survey items were included in the final survey. A second pilot test containing the 12 cho-

ral teaching skills was administered to 10 choral music teachers who had between 2 to 15 years of choral teaching experience. Based on results from the second pilot test, two additional choral teaching skills were added. Finally, one additional choral teaching skill was added per suggestion from vocal music faculty members resulting in a total of 15 choral music teaching skills on which participants assessed their comfort and self-perceived competence levels.

Analyses of the survey data were computed using descriptive and nonparametric statistics, including the Pearson Product-Moment correlation and the Mann-Whitney test. Correlations were computed to determine any similarity between participants' comfort and self-perceived competence scores on the 15 survey music skills variables. Additionally, the mean scores of instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence levels in the 15 choral music skills were ranked to explore which specific components the participants felt the most and least comfortable and competent when or if teaching choirs.

Results

Research Question One

There were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in comfort levels between the instrumental music teachers who took a choral methods class (n = 73 or 68.9%) during their music teacher education program and those who had not taken a choral methods class (n = 33 or 31.1%) during their music teacher education program on four of the 15 choral teaching skills. Skills that differed significantly for those who did not take a methods course versus those who did not take a methods course were vocal modeling (M = 4.38, SD = 1.85 versus M = 3.47, SD = 1.91), vocal pedagogy (M = 3.19, SD = 1.62 versus M = 2.85, SD = 1.70), choral repertoire knowledge (M = 3.19, SD = 1.62 versus M = 2.61, SD = 1.70), and ability to establish choral program goals and objectives (M = 4.79, SD = 1.60 versus M = 4.00, SD = 1.94).

Research Question Two

There were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in comfort levels between the instrumental music teachers who took a choral methods class (n = 73 or 68.9%) and those who did not (n = 33 or 31.1%) on five of the 15 choral teaching skills. Results were as follows: choral repertoire knowledge (M = 3.27, SD = 1.56 versus M = 2.58, SD = 1.66), vocal pedagogy (M = 3.71, SD = 1.69 versus M = 2.88, SD = 1.673), ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives (M = 5.01, SD = 1.56 versus M = 4.09, SD = 1.91), vocal modeling (M = 4.25,

SD = 1.82 versus *M* = 3.36, *SD* = 1.91), and ability to establish choral program goals and objectives (*M* = 5.00, *SD* = 1.61 versus *M* = 4.18, *SD* = 1.85).

Research Question Three

There were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in comfort levels among the instrumental teachers who were currently teaching choir versus those who were not currently teaching choir on three of the 15 choral teaching skills. Participants comfort levels among those who were currently teaching choir (*n* = 51 or 48.1%) versus the teachers who were not currently teaching choir (*n* = 55 or 51.9%) were as follows: the ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives, (*M* = 4.84, *SD* = 1.53 versus *M* = 3.98, *SD* = 1.78), choral repertoire knowledge (*M* = 3.37, *SD* = 1.65 versus *M* = 2.67, *SD* = 1.61), and ability to establish choral program goals and objectives (*M* = 4.92, *SD* = 1.60 versus *M* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.82).

Research Question Four

No significant differences were found in any of the 15 teaching skills between the participants' self-perceived competence levels among those who were teaching choir (*n* = 51 or 48.1%) versus those who were not teaching choir (*n* = 55 or 51.9%).

Research Question Five

There were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in comfort levels between the two groups of instrumental music teachers, on 11 of the 15 choral teaching skills, who had taught choir and who (1) had taught choir less than 1-4 years (*n* = 33 or 51.6%) and (2) had taught choir 5 years (*n* = 31 or 48.4%). Results were as follows: choral repertoire knowledge (*M* = 2.50, *SD* = 1.14 versus *M* = 4.42, *SD* = 1.67), ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives (*M* = 4.13, *SD* = 1.56 versus *M* = 5.58, *SD* = 1.36), vocal pedagogy knowledge (*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 1.32 versus *M* = 4.48, *SD* = 1.75), choral music student assessment knowledge (*M* = 3.59, *SD* = 1.39 versus *M* = 5.06, *SD* = 1.41), ability to establish choral program goals and objectives (*M* = 4.16, *SD* = 1.74 versus *M* = 5.65, *SD* = 1.14), choral classroom management knowledge (*M* = 4.59, *SD* = 1.68 versus *M* = 5.94, *SD* = 1.26), choral class administrative skills (*M* = 4.72, *SD* = 2.00 versus *M* = 6.03, *SD* = 1.22), lesson plan and score study knowledge (*M* = 4.75, *SD* = *1.80* versus *M* = 5.65, *SD* = 1.45), sight-singing skills (*M* = 4.91, *SD* = 1.71 ersus *M* = 5.81, *SD* = 1.28), musicianship skills (*M* = 6.06, *SD* = 0.91 versus

M = 6.52, *SD* = 0.81), and choral conducting skills (*M* = 5.13, *SD* = 1.60 versus *M* = 5.90, *SD* = 1.45).

Research Question Six

There were significant differences ($p \leq .05$) in self-perceived competence levels between the two groups, on 10 of the 15 choral teaching skills, of the instrumental music teachers who had taught choir and who (1) had taught choir less than 1-4 years (*n* = 33 or 51.6%) and (2) had taught choir 5 years or more (*n* = 31 or 48.4%). The results were as follows: choral repertoire and literature knowledge (*M* = 2.47, SD = 1.08 versus *M* = 4.42, *SD* = 1.59), ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives (*M* = 4.16, *SD* = 1.44 versus *M* = 5.87, *SD* = 1.15), ability to establish choral program goals and objectives (*M* = 4.31, *SD* = 1.64 versus *M* = 5.84, *SD* = 0.97), vocal pedagogy knowledge (*M* = 2.97, *SD* = 1.33 versus *M* = 4.55, *SD* = 1.57), choral music student assessment knowledge (*M* = 3.91, *SD* = 1.42 versus *M* = 5.39, *SD* = 1.40), choral classroom management knowledge (*M* = 4.59, *SD* = 1.66 versus *M* = 5.81, *SD* = 1.42), lesson plan and score study knowledge (*M* = 4.63, *SD* = 1.81 versus *M* = 5.81, *SD* = 1.40), choral class administrative skills (*M* = 4.97, *SD* = 1.84 versus *M* = 6.10, *SD* = 1.01), vocal modeling (*M* = 4.00, *SD* = 1.63 versus *M* = 4.87, *SD* = 1.54), and choral conducting skills (*M* = 5.09, *SD* = 1.35 versus *M* = 5.87, *SD* = 1.77)

Correlations

Participants' comfort and self-perceived competence levels were highly correlated ($r > .75$ or $p < .001$) in all 15 choral teaching skills. Correlations ranged from a low of $r(104) = .76$ to a high of $r(104) = .91$. The correlations were as follows: choral conducting skills and keyboard skills *r* = .91, choral repertoire and literature knowledge, *r* = .90, vocal pedagogy knowledge *r* = .88, diction knowledge *r* = .87, vocal modeling and lesson plan and score study knowledge *r* = .86, ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives and choral class administrative skills *r* = .84, ability to establish choral program goals and objectives *r* = .83, musicianship skills, sight-singing skills, aural skills, and choral music student assessment knowledge *r* = .81, and choral classroom management knowledge *r* = .76.

Ranking

Mean scores of instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence levels of the 15 choral music skills were ranked to determine the ordering of participants' ratings of each choir teaching component to explore specifically what participants perceived were the skills which they felt the most and least comfortable and competent when or if teaching choir. The statistical results, displayed in Tables 1 and 2, show the comfort and self-perceived competence rankings of the 15 choral music teaching skills among individuals (1) who took and those who had not taken a choral methods class, and (2) among participants teaching and those not teaching choir.

Table 1

Comfort and Self-Perceived Competence Ranking – Those Who Took a Choral Methods Class and Who Did Not

	Comfort		Self-Perceived Competence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Variable	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Ability to establish choral program goals and objectives	4.79 (1.61)	4.00 (1.94)	5.00 (1.61)	4.18 (1.85)
Ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives	4.62 (1.61)	3.91 (1.83)	5.01 (1.55)	4.09 (1.91)
Choral class administrative skills	5.30 (1.66)	5.18 (1.63)	5.44 (1.57)	4.94 (1.96)
Choral conducting skills	5.38 (1.56)	5.45 (1.39)	5.41 (1.36)	5.06 (1.90)
Keyboard skills	3.41 (1.74)	3.76 (2.22)	3.48 (1.69)	3.88 (2.07)
Musicianship skills	6.08 (1.08)	6.39 (0.93)	5.93 (1.23)	6.24 (1.28)
Sight-singing skills	5.12 (1.61)	4.88 (1.90)	4.92 (1.53)	5.36 (1.51)
Aural skills	5.41 (1.34)	5.67 (1.29)	5.15 (1.48)	5.52 (1.41)
Diction knowledge	4.33 (1.86)	3.79 (1.75)	4.07 (1.80)	3.73 (1.86)
Vocal pedagogy knowledge	3.62 (1.71)	2.85 (1.70)	3.71 (1.69)	2.88 (1.67)
Choral repertoire and literature knowledge	3.19 (1.62)	2.61 (1.70)	3.27 (1.56)	2.58 (1.66)
Lesson plan and score study knowledge	5.18 (1.60)	4.91 (1.99)	5.21 (1.60)	4.85 (1.89)
Choral classroom management knowledge	5.34 (1.46)	5.21 (1.90)	5.19 (1.53)	5.18 (1.69)
Choral music student assessment knowledge	4.41 (1.47)	4.00 (1.75)	4.63 (1.54)	4.09 (1.91)
Vocal modeling	4.38 (1.84)	3.42 (1.90)	4.25 (1.82)	3.36 (2.00)

Table 2

Comfort and Self-Perceived Competence Ranking - Regarding Current Choral Teaching Status

	Comfort		Self-Perceived Competence	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Variable	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Ability to establish choral program goals and objectives	4.92 (1.60)	4.20 (1.82)	5.08 (1.51)	4.44 (1.85)
Ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives	4.84 (1.52)	3.98 (1.77)	4.98 (1.59)	4.49 (1.80)
Choral class administrative skills	5.27 (1.76)	5.09 (1.80)	5.41 (1.62)	5.16 (1.80)
Choral conducting skills	5.37 (1.60)	5.29 (1.74)	5.31 (1.38)	5.29 (1.71)
Keyboard skills	3.80 (1.92)	3.25 (1.85)	3.88 (1.83)	3.35 (1.78)
Musicianship skills	6.25 (0.87)	6.11 (1.18)	6.00 (1.23)	6.05 (1.27)
Sight-singing skills	5.33 (1.47)	5.13 (1.62)	5.10 (1.55)	5.02 (1.53)
Aural skills	5.47 (1.33)	5.51 (1.33)	5.22 (1.49)	5.31 (1.45)
Diction knowledge	4.29 (1.84)	4.04 (1.85)	4.20 (1.83)	3.75 (1.79)
Vocal pedagogy knowledge	3.63 (1.65)	3.15 (1.79)	3.67 (1.57)	3.25 (1.83)
Choral repertoire and literature knowledge	3.37 (1.65)	2.67 (1.61)	3.37 (1.62)	2.76 (1.56)
Lesson plan and score study knowledge	5.04 (1.65)	5.13 (1.62)	5.02 (1.73)	5.16 (1.68)
Choral classroom management knowledge	5.12 (1.69)	5.45 (1.30)	5.14 (1.71)	5.24 (1.45)
Choral music student assessment knowledge	4.27 (1.50)	4.29 (1.64)	4.61 (1.51)	4.33 (1.81)
Vocal modeling	4.43 (1.78)	3.76 (1.97)	4.29 (1.67)	3.67 (2.08)

Discussion

In this study, instrumental music teachers who took a choral methods course reported that they felt more comfortable with vocal instructions, choral repertoire knowledge, and constructing choral program goals and objectives as curricular standards than instrumental music teachers who had not taken a choral methods course. Those instrumental majors who completed a choral methods course felt competent to teach vocal teaching skills and choral literature knowledge in a classroom setting. While some differences, between instrumental teachers who took a choral methods course as compared to those who did not take a choral methods course, might be accounted for by choral methods instructors having assigned more importance to these areas than other choral topics, it appears that pre-service instrumental music teachers can acquire information pertaining to a variety of specific choral teaching skills from a choral methods class. Therefore, it

may be beneficial for instrumental music majors to take a choral methods class at the undergraduate level (Parker & Powell, 2014).

It was also found that instrumental music teachers who were currently teaching choir versus those who were not currently teaching choir reported being more comfortable in delivering instructions, selecting appropriate choral literature, and specifying curricular goals and objectives. One reason participants who had or were teaching choir may have felt more comfortable delivering instructions, selecting literature, and/or specifying curricular goals and objectives, than participants who had not or were not teaching choir, may have been due to the fact that they selected and worked on the standard secondary school choir repertoire, giving instructional directives and working toward specific curricular goals and objectives while rehearsing various works. Interestingly, instrumental music teachers who were currently teaching choir did not report that they felt more secure in their choral skills or knowledge. In other words, there was no observed significant differences in self-perceived competence between those who were and those who were not currently teaching choir.

Participants with five or more years of choral teaching experience reported higher comfort scores in 11 of 15 choral teaching skills as compared to those with less than five years of choral experience, indicating that protracted choral teaching experience improves one's comfort level in relation to many of the 15 choral teaching skills. Zeuch (2014) reported that in-service music teachers' level of comfort in various choral skills increased even though choral music was outside of their comfort zone when they were early career teachers. Similarly, participants with five or more years of experience reported higher competency scores in 10 of 15 choral teaching skills than those with less than five years of experience. Protracted choral teaching experience may help instrumental teachers feel more competent as choral music practitioners.

A strong, positive correlation between comfort and self-perceived competence was found in all 15 choral teaching skills. When looking at participants' comfort and self-perceived competence ratings, similarity was found in many instances and correlations between these scores ranged from a low of $r(104) = .76$ to a high of $r(104) = .91$. Participants seemed to view comfort and self-perceived competence as analogous sensations and may have found it difficult to differentiate between these two constructs in rating each of the 15 choral music teaching skills. It could also be possible that the comfort and self-perceived competence definitions provided in the survey sounded less distinguishable to the participants and perhaps different comfort and self-perceived competence definitions would have yielded different results.

According to the ranking results, the participants' highest rating in all areas was in musicianship skills. It appears that instrumentalists' musicianship skills served to increase their comfort and self-perceived competence when teaching in choral settings (Conway, 1999). Likewise, aural skills were rated second highest by participants on both the comfort and self-perceived competence components.

Choral repertoire knowledge was rated as the least comfortable and competent component by instrumental music teachers teaching choir, regardless of their choral methods background. According to Zeuch (2014), music teachers need to be exposed to a wide range of choral repertoire. Vocal pedagogy was rated as the second least comfortable and competent area by instrumental music teachers in teaching choir. Parker and Powell (2014) recommended that basic vocal pedagogical experience, as well as an understanding of the human voice as an instrument, are needed to enhance instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence levels in vocal pedagogy knowledge. In short, instrumental music teachers may be unfamiliar with secondary school choral repertoire and unaccustomed to understanding the human voice as an instrument and teaching singing in a choral setting, therefore it may be beneficial to offer vocal pedagogy and appropriate choral literature experiences to these individuals during their undergraduate education.

Implications for Music Teacher Education

Since instrumental music teachers who took a choral methods class during their undergraduate music education programs had significantly higher comfort scores on four of the 15 choral teaching skills and had higher self-perceived competence scores on five of the 15 teaching skills self-perceived competence levels than those who did not take a choral methods class, it may be beneficial for all instrumental music education students to take a choral methods class at the undergraduate level. Such courses could be helpful in exposing instrumentalists to choral settings and having them learn from those experiences.

Significant differences were found between those who were teaching choir and those who were not teaching choir in three of the 15 teaching skills. It may be valuable to offer instrumental music education majors a semester of choral internship experience with appropriate professional development and mentorship opportunities. Such practicums could help pre-service instrumental music teachers enhance their choral music teaching assignments and help ensure more comfort and competence in choral music teaching settings.

Instrumental music teachers who had taught choir during their teaching careers for five years or more had significantly higher comfort scores on 10 of

the 15 choral teaching skills and had higher self-perceived competence scores on 11 of the 15 choral teaching skills than those who had less than five years of choral teaching experience. This finding indicates that extended choral teaching experience could be beneficial in increasing instrumental music teachers' comfort and self-perceived competence in choral settings. Building teaching experience through early choral field experiences can be crucial in supporting pre-service instrumental music teachers' success and longevity teaching in choral settings. Additionally, placing instrumental music education students in student teaching settings that include working with a choral group, along with an instrumental group, could be beneficial.

Participants' comfort and self-perceived competence levels were highly correlated in all 15 choral teaching skills. While comfort and competence ratings were self-perceived and self-reported, an objective competence rating could be achieved by having veteran choral music teachers observe and assess instrumental music teachers' choral instructional competence. Such objective assessments could be used to provide useful feedback and constructive criticism to improve instrumental music teachers choral teaching skills.

It is noteworthy that the lowest skill rankings were almost the same for all subgroups. The lowest skill rankings areas were participants' comfort and self-perceived competence scores in the knowledge of vocal pedagogy and choral literature. Professional development opportunities, that would enhance instrumental music education majors' knowledge of vocal pedagogy and secondary school choral repertoire, would be beneficial in augmenting knowledge in these areas. For instance, it may be helpful to invite instrumental music education majors to several choral method class sessions to be exposed to secondary school choral literature and vocal pedagogy for adolescent voices. The researcher did not collect information on the nature of participants' choral ensemble experience or private vocal study background. It might be interesting to determine the influence of choral ensemble or private vocal study on participants' choral teaching skills and abilities. Singing in a university choir or taking voice lessons for one semester using elective credits could provide instrumentalists opportunities to better understand the voice as an instrument.

Although it might well be ideal to require all instrumental majors to take a choral methods course in their music teacher education programs, if this cannot be accomplished at all institutions, it is suggested that pre-service music teachers be required to obtain choral field experience to prepare for their future career by visiting local secondary school choir concerts to explore current concert repertoire, building a working relationship and professional exchange system with their vocal

colleagues, visiting secondary school choral classrooms that veteran choral music practitioners instruct, and/or seeking professional development opportunities to be involved in continued study in vocal techniques and secondary school choral repertoire.

Recommendations for Future Research

Results of this study suggest the importance of instrumental music teachers' course preparation, including a choral methods course as part of their undergraduate music education curricular requirement. Additionally, it would seem prudent, based on results of this study, that instrumental music education students be exposed to authentic choral teaching experiences in their undergraduate music education curriculum where they could study suggested choral repertoire and apply vocal pedagogical knowledge that could be crucial to their success when working with choral groups. Future researchers should investigate whether instrumental music education majors, who were provided choral methods courses and authentic choral field experiences in choral settings as curricular activities, are more successful choral music teachers than those students who did not have similar experiences.

According to this study, in-service instrumental music teachers who took an undergraduate choral methods class, as well as those who were teaching choirs, rated both choral literature and vocal pedagogy content areas as topics in which they felt the least comfortable or competent. Current undergraduate choral methods classes may not provide enough preparedness for instrumental music majors in the area of secondary school choral repertoire and vocal pedagogy. These two components need to be emphasized when training pre-service instrumental music teachers to increase their comfort and self-perceived competence when preparing to teach in the choral area. Further research, investigating choral methods content in these two areas, using vocal majors as participants may reveal whether vocal majors might rate their knowledge of vocal pedagogy and choral literature in similar ways.

When a state offers a K-12 state music license the expectation is that teachers are able to teach at all levels and in all areas including instrumental, choral, and/or general music. Thus, to structure undergraduate choral methods courses more effectively for instrumental music education majors, further research is needed to investigate instructional strategies and curricular ideas that may enhance instrumental music teachers' knowledge of choral repertoire and vocal pedagogy. Future researchers should focus on various external assessment measures and feedback formats that could aid instrumental music teachers to increase their

comfort and self-perceived competence in choral teaching areas.

This researcher found that some instrumental music teachers taught choral music for at least a portion of their in-service experience. Determining how to best prepare instrumental music teachers to successfully realize their choral music teaching experiences would be an important research objective. In-service instrumental music teachers, who taught choral music as part of their in-service teaching experience, reportedly gained competence fulfilling many but not all choral teaching skills assessed in this study. Considering this finding, it would be important to provide continuing instruction/professional development opportunities to instrumental music teachers to help develop confidence in those choral teaching areas in which they still felt insecure. For example, interviewing in-service instrumental music teachers would be helpful to determine which specific components of teaching choir were intimidating (vocal technique such as tone, diction, blend, balance, intonation-via-vowel formation, etc.) or not covered in their undergraduate choral methods class or teacher preparation curriculum. This information could then be used to inform planners and presenters of professional development conferences as well as those who teach choral methods to choral or all music education majors. Additionally, it may be helpful to conduct a study in which instrumental music education majors would be interviewed after having taken a choral methods course to determine whether any uncertainties or further questions remained after completing one semester of a choral methods class.

Given the similarity of participant' ratings in their comfort and self-perceived competence assessments in this study, future researchers may choose an option to ask participants to rate either their comfort or their self-perceived competence level, but not both. Asking either question would still provide valuable and similar information. The strong relationship between participants' comfort and self-perceived competence ratings in this study would support the directive to have participants respond to either comfort or self-perceived competence-oriented questions, but not both, in future research endeavors of this nature. For the purpose of further investigation, objective assessment methods, such as asking external evaluators to assess teaching effectiveness could be used to provide an independent assessment of participants' choral music teaching skills. Another assessment might include a participant' self-report of comfort while competence could be assessed by external evaluators.

Future research is also needed to draw on a larger population of instrumental music teachers. This study targeted the NAfME population of instrumental music teachers, but the number of participants was relatively small. While the data provided useful information about this particular sample's comfort and self-perceived

competence in relation to choral methods skills and knowledge, these findings may not be representative of the total population and care must be taken to not draw any broad conclusions beyond this particular sample.

It is vital to facilitate opportunities for both pre- and in-service music teachers to explore the voice as an instrument and to acquire knowledge of secondary school choral repertoire. Instrumental music teachers may feel both comfortable and competent teaching choral music if they have taken an undergraduate choral methods course and had in-service choral music teaching experience. Instrumental music teachers who take choral methods courses, acquire choral music experiences, and receive professional support can become effective classroom choral music practitioners.

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Appendix

Survey Instrument

This is a survey dealing with your comfort and competence working with choral ensembles. If you complete this survey, you are granting permission to use your data for study purposes.

1. Please complete the entire survey regardless of your answer choice. Upon graduation, did you see yourself primarily as an instrumental music teacher?
   1. Yes
   2. No

2. Did you take a choral methods class in your undergraduate music education program?
   1. Yes
   2. No

3. Are you currently teaching choir at your institution?
   1. Yes
   2. No

4. If you are currently teaching choir, how many years have you taught choir? Please write the number of years you have taught below. For example, 4 years

_____

5. Please rate your comfort level working with choral ensembles on the following 15 items by clicking the appropriate box. (Note: Comfort is defined as the level of teachers' feelings of mental well-being and/or confidence, or ease.)

Choral Methods Components	Very Uncomfortable ← ------ →Very Comfortable						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Ability to establish choral program goals and objectives							
2.Ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives							
3.Choral class administrative skills							
4.Choral conducting skills							
5.Keyboard skills							
6.Musicianship skills							
7.Sight-singing skills							
8.Aural skills							
9.Diction knowledge							
10.Vocal pedagogy knowledge							
11.Choral repertoire and literature knowledge							
12.Lesson plan and score study knowledge							
13.Choral classroom management knowledge							
14.Choral music student assessment knowledge							
15.Vocal modeling							

6. Please rate your competence level working with choral ensembles on the following 15 items by clicking the appropriate box. (Note: Competence is defined as the perception of one's ability to successfully impart information or knowledge.)

Choral Methods Components	Very Incompetent ← ------ → Very Competent						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Ability to establish choral program goals and objectives							
2.Ability to give clear and decisive choral instructional directives							
3.Choral class administrative skills							
4.Choral conducting skills							
5.Keyboard skills							
6.Musicianship skills							
7.Sight-singing skills							
8.Aural skills							
9.Diction knowledge							
10.Vocal pedagogy knowledge							
11.Choral repertoire and literature knowledge							
12.Lesson plan and score study knowledge							
13.Choral classroom management knowledge							
14.Choral music student assessment knowledge							
15.Vocal modeling							

Thank You for Completing this Survey!