

BE STILL:
A PEDAGOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MINDFULNESS-BASED PRACTICES IN VOCAL
MUSIC EDUCATION

By

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Liberty University

A MASTER'S THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS IN MUSIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices improve productivity in general education and vocal settings and have the potential to revolutionize choral music education. The purpose of this research is to improve vocal music education, vocal pedagogy, and voice practice, through the study of mindfulness-based practices and their relevance in vocal practices. The essential question answered as part of this research is, how do mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices increase productivity in the choral classroom? Sub questions addressed in this research include: 1) What is mindfulness meditation?, 2) How is mindfulness already utilized in vocal settings?, and 3) How can mindfulness best be included in the curriculum for the choral classroom? Mindfulness is an ancient practice that has been passed down, modified, and expanded upon for generations to improve physical and mental health, and as is learned in this research, vocal health. In vocal settings mindfulness is used to encourage awareness of the vocal mechanism, promote relaxation, and reduce stage fright. Mindfulness can be adapted to meet the needs of each individual choral classroom using methods such as the Alexander Technique, General Secular Mindfulness, and Yoga. Mindfulness improves productivity in the choral classroom by addressing common problems associate with student singing, improving focus and behavior management, and increasing awareness within the student.

Dedication Page

I dedicate this project to my husband Jacob Elder, for his support and encouragement throughout our coursework and thesis project.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness techniques have become commonplace in 21st-century western culture. These techniques are utilized to improve a variety of matters ranging anywhere from anger management to baseball. Although mindfulness is an ancient practice, individuals today utilize mindfulness techniques to improve their daily lives. Mindfulness carries profound implications for the choral classroom of the 21st century. Becoming a well-rounded choral educator requires an examination of various techniques in order to increase knowledge and encourage growth. Mindfulness meditation offers a variety of health benefits while also increasing awareness and intention; each of these components useful in choral singing. When singing, it is essential to be aware of aspects of the vocal mechanism, posture, and placement. Mindfulness allows the practitioner to increase awareness of these areas, giving him or her the ability to intentionally adjust errors of placement, posture, and vocal technique. This study investigates the use of mindfulness meditation in the choral classroom as it relates to vocal pedagogy and production. Although mindfulness meditation is not commonly used in the choral setting, mindfulness-based practices have profound implications for the choral classroom.

Background

I find benefit in researching and practicing mindfulness techniques such as Yoga, Pilates, Meditation, and Prayer. As I entered the field of music education as a choral director in 2018, I had no idea that these personal practices would one day make their way into my teaching practice. Before beginning my teaching career, in passing, I heard about the uses of mindfulness in education as a way to focus students and improve their educational experiences. Examples of these uses include: elementary students sent to practice mindfulness instead of detention, using mindful imagery to prepare for performances, and other examples of mindfulness used in

countless settings. Due to these uses, I could not help but wonder if mindfulness belongs in the choral setting. I began to ask myself, “If mindfulness can calm students and completely alter their headspace, can incorporating mindfulness in the choral classroom completely change the atmosphere of my class?”

In spring of 2020, the benefits of mindfulness practices in my own classroom were revealed as a student in my advanced choir class noticed that the class had not engaged in a mindfulness practice in the last few classes. She went on to explain that without the mindfulness practice, she observed that the class is unfocused, talkative, unmotivated, and unproductive, but with the mindfulness practice students were focused motivated, productive, and calm. The rest of the class agreed and begged to have another mindfulness practice that class. I knew then that I had to learn more about mindfulness as it relates to the voice and how I can apply these practices to the choral classroom. Thus, determining the inspiration for this research topic.

Statement of Problem

In the 21st century, as mental health cases rise¹ and attention spans fall² it becomes increasingly important for educators to create an environment where students can learn effectively and safely. Often students are distracted by homework, family concerns, abuse, neglect, and friendship troubles leaving them mentally absent from class. The integration of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices into the choral classroom has the potential to

¹ American Psychological Association, “Mental health issues increased significantly in young adults over last decade: Shift may be due in part to rise of digital media, study suggests,” ScienceDaily. www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/03/190315110908.htm (accessed October 18, 2020).

² Kevin McSpadden, “Science: You Now Have a Shorter Attention Span Than a Goldfish,” *Time*, Time, 14 May 2015, time.com/3858309/attention-spans-goldfish/.

improve student focus, clarity, and mental state. This would create a positive environment where students are more prepared to learn, more focused on learning, and are more mentally present and healthy during class. These qualities would be beneficial in any class setting, especially a class that relies heavily on paying mindful attention to how certain movements and actions feel. The choral class requires that students take mindful action when singing and participating in music to be intentional with their learning and their progress. If students in a choral setting are not using mindfulness techniques, their movements, changes, adaptations, and progress are arbitrary and they may not be able to recreate the movement, change, adaptation, etc. that allowed them success in any given action. For example, a young soprano is learning to sing a high B natural, the director gives a bit of imagery that causes the student to successfully phonate the note. The soprano, however, is not mindfully aware of their vocal process and is therefore unable to remember the physical sensation of the vowel shape, breath support, soft-palate position, etc. that allowed her to create that sound. Teaching students to be mindfully aware of their vocal processes through mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices could remedy this dilemma and others like it.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to improve vocal music education, vocal pedagogy, and voice practice, through the study of mindfulness-based practices and their relevance in vocal practices. This research examines pre-existing vocal mindfulness literature in order to apply findings to choral settings. Through the study of various methods of incorporating mindfulness methods into vocal practice, implications of these practices in choral settings will be assessed. The purpose of this being to establish a baseline for using mindfulness in choirs in order to aid choral music educators in providing more productive and mindful instruction. Using mindfulness

and mindfulness-based practices when the students arrive in choir class allows students to release themselves from their deeper concerns and focus on the joy of singing. This also provides students with valuable tools they can use in real-life situations long after they graduate from your class. The intent of this research is to impact the realm of vocal music education through mindfulness-based practices and encourage fellow vocal music educators to utilize mindfulness in their own classrooms.

The purpose of this research involves examining the use of mindfulness-based practices in secular and biblical settings alone. The purpose of this research is not, however, to discuss mindfulness and meditation as it relates to Buddhism, Hinduism, Paganism, or any other non-Christian religion. This research will only include mindfulness, mindfulness-based practices, and meditation as they are used in secular and biblical settings. There will not be a discussion or comparison of non-Christian religious practices or the non-Christian roots of any practice as they are not relevant in this specific research. Only the version of yoga known as hatha yoga, will be discussed to avoid any inclusion of non-Christian religious practices.

Significance of the Study

The body-mind connection is essential in the choral classroom and one way to achieve said connection is through mindfulness meditation and mindfulness-based practices. Positive change in behavior and comprehension occur through the incorporation of mindfulness practices. When looking for additional resources one may find that there are various studies regarding mindfulness in the classroom, mindfulness in singing, and mindfulness in general, but not many regarding mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in a choral setting. This study is needed because it fills the gap between the studies relating to mindfulness in education and the studies

relating to other vocal health techniques to include mindfulness in choral settings. This need will be discussed further in the literature review.

Research Question and Sub Questions

In this research one main question is addressed, the question being, how do mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices increase productivity in the choral classroom? It is known that in the vocal setting, as well as health practice settings, mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices are utilized to increase productivity. It is unknown, however, if mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices increase productivity in the choral classroom. This research seeks to discover just how effective mindfulness can be in a choral setting, as well as if and how mindfulness should be adapted for use in a choral setting. Through this research the researcher will examine ways in which mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices can be used to increase choral classroom productivity.

Throughout this research three sub-questions are addressed:

- 1) What is mindfulness meditation?
- 2) How is mindfulness already utilized in vocal settings?
- 3) How can mindfulness best be included in curriculum for the choral classroom?

In this research, it is essential to first define mindfulness meditation as a basis for the entire project. Once mindfulness is defined, then pre-existing mindfulness use in vocal settings can be examined. Finally, connections will be drawn between the effectiveness of mindfulness-based practices in vocal settings and implications will be identified for choral education. Means will also be established to implement mindfulness in the choral classroom.

Definition of Terms

In order to examine the use of mindfulness in the choral classroom, we must first define mindfulness and other related terms. The terms will each exist as part of three main categories of definitions. The first category includes mindfulness, meditation, secular meditation vs. biblical meditation, and mindfulness scales. The next category of definitions involve various mindfulness-based practices. These practices include: 1) Alexander Technique, 2) Feldenkrais Method, 3) Myofascial Release, 4) Body Mapping, 5) Rolfing, 6) Pilates, and 7) Yoga. It is pertinent to note that, for the purpose of this research we are only going to discuss the form of yoga called “hatha yoga” which is the western adaptation of yoga used purely as exercise. Yoga, like Pilates, involves using movement and breathing to improve physical fitness. The third category of definitions includes terms related to education and the fourth category are words related to vocal health. The definitions of terms are as follows.

- **Alexander Technique:** The Alexander Technique is a method created to encourage well-being as a result of focusing awareness and posture habits in order to reduce exertion and tension.
- **Block Schedule:** An alternative schedule traditionally used for middle and high school students that separates a 6 or 7 period day into two days labeled an “A day” and a “B day”. This lengthens the amount of time students spend in a given class, but shortens the number of times the class occurs in a given week.
- **Body Mapping:** Body Mapping is a practice where students become acquainted with the framework of their own bodies.
- **Body Scan:** A Body Scan is a mindfulness activity that encourages practitioners to gain better awareness of their physical body. In this practice the practitioner focuses

on one body section at a time, releasing all tension in each section. The practice usually begins at the top of the head or the toes and goes to the opposite end of the body.

- **Curriculum:** Curriculum exists as the design and lessons to be presented in any particular course. This definition includes the knowledge and skills students are expected to comprehend by the end of the course.
- **Feldenkrais Method:** Feldenkrais Method is a method named for creator, Moshe Feldenkrais, in which efficiency and well-being of the body and mind are promoted by use of neuromuscular activity analysis to inform flexibility, coordination, and range of motion exercises.
- **Larynx:** The larynx, commonly known as the voice box, sits on top of the trachea. It is made of cartilages, muscles, bones and other body parts that are responsible not just for vocal production, but also respiratory function. The vocal folds are housed in the larynx and the movements of various components of the larynx, including the vocal fold adduction and abduction, are responsible for vocal production.
- **MAAS: Mindful Attention Awareness Scale:** A scale that includes 15 items in order to measure mindfulness in research participants.
- **Meditation:** “Think deeply or focus one's mind for a period of time, in silence or with the aid of chanting, for religious or spiritual purposes or as a method of relaxation.”³

³“Meditate,” Lexico, Accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/mindfulness>.

- **Biblical Meditation:** Biblical meditation requires one to think deeply and focus one's mind on the Word of God or some other communication/personal connection with God.
- **Secular Meditation:** The act of utilizing meditation solely as a method of relaxation or other health benefit.
- **Mindfulness:** “A mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations, used as a therapeutic technique.”⁴
 - **State:** Mindfulness as a state is a way of experiencing mindfulness in a way that can easily be transitioned in and out of.
 - **Trait:** Mindfulness as a trait is tendency to be mindful, or being in the habit of being mindful.
- **Mindfulness Based Intervention (MBI):** Mindfulness Based Interventions, or MBIs are forms of mindfulness used as a therapy to treat conditions related to physical and mental health.
- **Mindfulness-Based Practices:** Mindfulness-based practices are any practice that uses components of mindfulness. For example: Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, etc.
- **Mindfulness Scales:** Research tools utilized to quantify mindfulness in patients or research participants.

⁴ “Mindfulness,” Lexico, Accessed May 6, 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/mindfulness>.

- **Mindful State Questionnaire:** the Mindful State Questionnaire is a research tool utilized to quantify mindfulness in patients or research participants.
- **Myofascial Release:** Myofascial release serves as an alternative medicine-type method that treats poor muscle function and pain using stretch-like movements and other muscle relaxing techniques.
- **Noting Practice:** A mindfulness technique where participants categorize inner dialogue as either thoughts or feelings. This allows them to acknowledge the thought or feeling and then let it go.
- **Pharynx:** A part of the vocal mechanism that connects the nasal cavities to the larynx.
- **Pilates:** Pilates is a practice developed in the early 20th century by Joseph Pilates that uses movement and breathing to improve physical fitness.
- **Rolfing:** Rolfing exists as a holistic practice in which deep tissue manipulation is used to improve myofascial structure.
- **Yoga for exercise:** A secular practice that combines breathing and physical poses to encourage strengthening and achieving a mindful state.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

When examining the literature currently available regarding the subjects of mindfulness, meditation, mindfulness in education, mindfulness and singing, vocal health, etc. a variety of things are apparent: 1) there are ample resources available regarding certain mindfulness topics and practices, however, 2) there are few, if any, studies relating to mindfulness in the choral classroom. Existing research regarding mindfulness can be broken down into the following sections: 1) the effect of choral singing on mindfulness, 2) the effect of mindfulness on singing, 3) vocal health, 4) mindfulness as a general subject, 5) mindfulness in general education, 6) Biblical meditation and Christian approach to mindfulness, and 6) mindfulness-based practices.

The Effect of Choral Singing on Mindfulness

There is currently one resource available that discusses both choral singing and mindfulness. This study is Julie Lynch and Charlotte E Wilson's "Exploring the Impact of Choral Singing on Mindfulness."⁵ This study, however, covers the effect of choral singing on mindfulness, *not* the effect of mindfulness on choral singing. In this study, the researchers conducted a study following 65 female amateur choir members as they participated in choir and measured their levels of mindfulness using pre-post test methodology. The levels of mindfulness were collected using a self-report method via a Mindful State Questionnaire and Mindful Attention Awareness Scale. In order to establish a control, members were asked to complete the same process later in the week at home, before and after listening to a CD. The results of the study supported the hypothesis that choral singing positively influenced states of mindfulness in participants. The researchers recognized that, "The call for attention to numerous details such as

⁵ Julie Lynch and Charlotte E Wilson, "Exploring the Impact of Choral Singing on Mindfulness," *Psychology of music*. 46, no. 6 (November 2018): 848–861.

watching the conductor, listening to the other voices in harmony, reading the music and/or remembering the words all contribute to reaching this attentive, aware and accepting state, one that is truly indicative of mindfulness.”⁶ Even though this study does not discuss the effect of mindfulness on choral singing, it does establish a correlation between mindfulness and choral singing. This study also established a starting point for which areas of choir could benefit from a mindfulness practice.

The Effect of Mindfulness on Choral Singing

There are several resources relating to mindfulness and singing. Two of the most relevant studies include: 1) “Mindfulness for Singers: The Effects of a Targeted Mindfulness Course on Learning Vocal Techniques”⁷, and 2) “Singing and Mindfulness.”⁸ Both of these resources discuss the effect of mindfulness on singing, but do not discuss its implications in the choral classroom. These studies do, however, provide valuable insight into how effective mindfulness could be if transferred to a choral setting. This assumption is founded on the idea that if mindfulness positively effects individual vocal musicianship, these effects would be equally as positive should they be applied to a whole group.

Mindfulness for Singers: The Effects of a Targeted Mindfulness Course on Learning Vocal Techniques by Anne-Marie Czajkowski and Alinka Greasley discussed how mindfulness

⁶ Julie Lynch and Charlotte E Wilson, “Exploring the Impact of Choral Singing on Mindfulness,” *Psychology of music*, 46, no. 6 (November 2018): 848–861.

⁷ Anne-Marie L. Czajkowski, and Alinka E. Greasley, “Mindfulness for Singers: The Effects of a Targeted Mindfulness Course on Learning Vocal Techniques,” *British Journal of Music Education* 33, no. 3 (May 2016): 211–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265051716000097>.

⁸ Martha Elliott, "Singing and Mindfulness," *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 1 (Sep, 2010): 35-40, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/748000250?accountid=12085>.

practices improve breath support and posture, reduce tension, and promote acceptance of constructive criticism.⁹ This study examined the progress of eight university vocalists and their voice instructors. The voice students were administered a mindfulness questionnaire pre- and post- mindfulness intervention. The students participated in eight weekly hour-long lessons covering the basics of mindfulness including breathing, walking and eating mindfulness. The students also examined topics such as mindful movement, posture, primary and secondary suffering, body scans, and experiencing criticism and judgment. Students were given a weekly task and a daily ten-minute practice regimen. At the end of the study, students completed their questionnaire and participated in a one-on-one interview with the authors regarding their experiences with each section of the study. The voice instructors participated in a blind study in which, at the end of the study, they were expected to speculate which of their students participated in the mindfulness study and which had not.

Results of this study showed that mindfulness greatly improved student productivity. The mindfulness questionnaire collected data on five facets of mindfulness: 1) Observe, 2) Describe, 3) Aware, 4) Non-Judge, and 5) Non-react. The researchers noted that, “Data show an increase for all five mindfulness facets across the course of the study; this was particularly noticeable for the Non-Judge and Non-React facets.”¹⁰ The authors observed that mindfulness practices allowed students not only to learn vocal techniques more memorably and with ease, but also to apply these lessons more effectively. The body scan was especially effective in increasing

⁹Anne-Marie L. Czajkowski, and Alinka E. Greasley, “Mindfulness for Singers: The Effects of a Targeted Mindfulness Course on Learning Vocal Techniques,” *British Journal of Music Education* 33, no. 3 (May 2016): 211–33, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0265051716000097>.

¹⁰ Czajkowski, and Greasley, “Mindfulness for Singers: The Effects of a Targeted Mindfulness Course on Learning Vocal Techniques,” *British Journal of Music Education*.

vocalist productivity because it focused on awareness of sensations of the vocal mechanism and other body functions necessary for singing. The authors discussed their limitations including that they only utilized a small sample size from Australia and encouraged others to expand the study to include a different group of vocal students, in a different country. In reading the study, a gap is discovered in the research of vocal health subjects, mindfulness is researched in vocal settings, but not specifically in choral settings. This study, while not explicitly about choral education, includes profound implications for the choral classroom that will guide further research.

“Singing and Mindfulness” by Martha Elliot explored the effects of mindfulness as they relate to singing. In the text, Elliot stated, “Some of the benefits of mindfulness training are increased concentration, more focus and clarity, decreased agitation and reactivity, and a greater feeling of calm and ease. These are all qualities that we know are enormously helpful in singing and performing.”¹¹ Elliot deduced that singers already know how to practice, therefore adding mindfulness to practices simply makes them more aware of what they are already doing as they are doing it. In this study, Elliot examined positive effects of mindfulness and explained how these positive effects are beneficial in certain components of singing. Mindfulness topics discussed in Elliot’s study include: posture, breath, focus, clarity, decreased agitation and distraction, attention to thoughts and emotions, and finding a balance between effort and relaxation. This article, while not a qualitative or quantitative study, provided a background for what components of mindfulness are beneficial in singing and can later be applied to a choral setting.

¹¹ Martha Elliott, "Singing and Mindfulness," *Journal of Singing* 67, no. 1 (Sep, 2010): 35-40, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/748000250?accountid=12085>.

Many of the studies encountered thus far have differentiated between mindfulness as a state and mindfulness as a trait. Mindfulness as a state can be described as experiencing mindfulness in a way that can easily be transitioned in and out of. For example, in the Lynch and Wilson study, participants transitioned into a mindful state through participation in a choral rehearsal.¹² Mindfulness as a trait is explained more as a tendency to be mindful. For example, a person who constantly makes themselves aware of the present moment, only thinking of washing dishes when washing dishes, only thinking about walking when walking, etc. “More recently, theory suggests that the two are intricately related, and heightening state mindfulness with regular meditation practice eventually increases trait mindfulness.” For this research, both topics will be discussed. This researcher deduces that in order to develop mindfulness as a trait, one must first learn to participate in mindfulness as a state. If choral educators teach students to enter mindfulness as a state, then students would eventually utilize mindfulness in the choral classroom as a trait.

Vocal Health Practices

There is a seemingly unlimited amount of resources available regarding vocal health practices. Some of these resources are more-broad when discussing vocal health, while others deal with a particular subject, such as adolescent voices, vocal health for conductors, vocal health for young singers. Some resources covered even more specific areas of vocal health such as medical services useful for a healthy voice, health benefits of specific factions of vocal training, and attitudes toward healthcare for the voice, to name a few. Two of the most applicable

¹² Julie Lynch and Charlotte E Wilson, “Exploring the Impact of Choral Singing on Mindfulness,” *Psychology of music*. 46, no. 6 (November 2018): 848–861.

sources include: “Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Singers, and Teachers,”¹³ and “Bodymind and Voice: Foundations of Voice Education,”¹⁴ If one does not understand the necessary factors for voice care and basic voice science, there can be no claims made to the effectiveness of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in vocal and choral settings. These resources will serve as a basis for understanding these necessary principles of a healthy voice.

David’s and LaTour’s text entitled, “Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Singers, and Teachers”, exists as a textbook for the basics of vocal health and vocal technique that is a valuable source for this research. Topics discussed in this text include posture, breath control, initiation, creation and release of sound, resonance, vowels, consonants, vibrato, vocal register negotiation, improving range, improving intonation, articulation and dynamic control, choral blend, changing voices, reducing tension, vocal health, and warming up. The most relevant sections in this text include: posture, breath control, reducing tension, and vocal health. This resource is valuable to this particular research because the effectiveness of mindfulness cannot be explained until the physiology of how the voice works and how to produce sound through bodily mechanisms is examined. While none of the information in this text explicitly addressed mindfulness or mindfulness-based practices, the authors do provide insight into vocal health elements necessary for discussing mindfulness benefits.

The chapter that discussed posture provided insight into how posture-related mindfulness may be effective for singers. In this chapter, the authors explored that proper posture eases

¹³ Julia Davids and Stephen LaTour, *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Singers, and Teachers*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

¹⁴ Leon Therman, *Bodymind and Voice: Foundations of Voice Education*, Iowa City, IO: The VoiceCare Network, 2000.

breathing, reduces tension and makes singing less tiring. According to Davids and LaTour, “Correct posture elevates the ribs, allowing greater lung expansion and finer control over breathing.”¹⁵ It can be concluded that a practice proven to improve posture, could therefore ease breathing, reduce tension, and make singing less tiring.

The breath control chapter explained that, “Breathing is *the* foundation of singing.”¹⁶ In this section, the reader learned that proper breathing allows the singer to sing high-notes more effectively, manage longer passages, manage breath pressure for dynamic level, avoid straining, relax muscles when not breathing, and improve vibrato. If breathing is the foundation of singing and breathing can be significantly improved through mindfulness techniques, there is a possibility that mindfulness can improve a singer’s breathing and subsequently their singing.

The section related to tension reduction explained that, “Muscle tension is necessary to accomplish many of the tasks of singing...But excessive and extraneous tension are the enemies of good tonal quality.”¹⁷ In order to produce a quality sound, the neck, larynx, pharynx, jaw, tongue, lips, shoulders, and legs all must be relaxed. This tension occurs when singers try to over control aspects of the vocal mechanism and relevant muscles that both can and cannot be controlled. Logically, a practice that could reduce tension in these areas would consequently improve phonation.

¹⁵ Julia Davids, and Stephen LaTour, *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Singers, and Teachers*, Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press.

¹⁶ Davids, and LaTour, *Vocal Technique: A Guide for Conductors, Singers, and Teachers*, p. 23.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 219.

Vocal Health is another important section in this book as it discussed the importance of health for singers. This section discussed how as singers the body is an instrument and singers must keep it in good condition in order to produce the best possible sound. Important topics of vocal health include: hydration, safe amounts of singing, meal consumption, health conditions that affect vocal health, medications and hormonal factors. Mindfulness could improve awareness of his or her actions including mindful water and meal consumption. Mindfulness has the potential to improve health conditions and hormonal factors which could also avoid the need for certain medications.

Another valuable resource on vocal health is “Bodymind & Voice” co-edited by Leon Thurman EdD and Graham Welch PhD. This resource is a collection of articles relating to vocal health and training and it is written in three volumes. The first volume included information about bodymind self-expression, and music learning. It is here that the meaning of bodymind is given. The editors explain that historically the mind and body are considered separate entities. Subsequently, physical health and mental health are often separated and not considered to be related, resulting in disjunct and ineffective diagnosis. Scientists and health practitioners are slowly moving away from this notion, according to the editors, and are pursuing titles such as neuropsychologist or physiological psychiatrist. In the preface, Therman and Welch stated that, “To approach teaching and learning and self-expression without a consideration of how bodyminds carry out those functions would be like trying to repair a television set without considering its electronic functions.”¹⁸ This concept is an important one to grasp for the nature of

¹⁸ Leon Therman, *Bodymind and Voice: Foundations of Voice Education*, Iowa City, IO: The VoiceCare Network, 2000.

this research. When evaluating the need for mindfulness in the choral classroom, the educator must understand the wholistic principle that is the bodymind connection. If educators are not improving the mental and physical state of students then they cannot expect to see an improvement vocally.

In the second volume, the editors compiled articles on the subject of “How Voices are Made and How They are Played in Skilled Singing and Speaking.”¹⁹ This volume provided an in-depth analysis of how the voice works and a description of the mechanical/physical aspects of the voice. One of the most influential sections of this book is the chapter on breath-flow. This chapter not only described how the breath works physiologically, but also how to mentally train a student, or oneself, to breathe correctly. One example is, by using imagery, the teacher would instruct the student to imagine that the ribcage was made up of walls, then imagine the walls moving as he or she breathes. If a teacher uses imagery to aid a student in the understanding of proper breath control, it is possible that breathing exercises in a mindfulness practice could positively affect the breath-flow in singing.

Mindfulness as a General Subject

Mindfulness as a general subject is something that has become increasingly popular in the 21st century. Individuals study and practice mindfulness as a remedy to all sorts of ailments including anxiety, stage fright, insomnia, etc. Mindfulness is a useful tool that employs breathing and awareness techniques in order to improve mental presence. There are several resources on the subject of mindfulness in a secular setting; however a few stand out in relevance to this research.

¹⁹ Leon Therman, *Bodymind and Voice: Foundations of Voice Education*, Iowa City, IO: The VoiceCare Network, 2000.

Nhất Hạnh and Mobi Ho's, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: an Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* introduced and defined mindfulness in a manner that is easy to understand. Chapter one of the text discussed using the present moment as a gift. The authors explained this principle through the use of parable-like stories. For example: Not thinking of time spent with others as “their time”, but as your own time (spending time mindfully), washing dishes to wash dishes (acting mindfully), and eating a tangerine (eating mindfully). The purpose of these stories was to show the importance of being present in each moment. The second chapter provided more guidelines for practicing mindfulness, as the author discussed breathing in mindfulness and the miracle of each action. Chapter three described that, “Every day and every hour one should practice mindfulness.”²⁰ In this example, the author explained that mindfulness is not something that one can do occasionally, but is something one must learn to incorporate in every action. This ties into the concept of mindfulness as a state or a trait. The author in this case is implying that mindfulness should be used as a trait and not simply a state. Chapter four discussed the physical process of mindfulness including the sitting positions and breathing exercises, as well as the purpose of mindfulness. The remaining chapters discuss elements of Buddhism and therefore are not relevant to this study.

In recent years two apps have become a valuable resource for learning and practicing mindfulness: 1) Calm, and 2) Headspace. Calm was created by Alex Tew and Michael Acton Smith and launched in 2012. This app exists as an app used for meditation, sleep and relaxation.²¹ The Calm app has daily meditations, sleep stories, meditation series, sleep music,

²⁰ Thich Nhất Hạnh, and Mobi Ho, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: an Introduction to the Practice of Meditation*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2016.

²¹ “About,” *Calm Blog*, www.calm.com/blog/about, Accessed October 1, 2020.

and nature sounds including both free and paid features. *Headspace* was founded in 2010 by Andy Puddicombe and Rich Pierson with the original intention of becoming an events company.²² The attendants of the events, however, enjoyed their participation so much that they wanted to take their knowledge home, thus the Headspace app began. This app includes “meditations, animations, articles, and videos.”²³ The basic mindfulness course is free on this app, however, all other content requires a paid membership to Headspace. Both the Calm and the Headspace apps offer quality content that is ideal for individuals wanting to practice a secular form of mindfulness. Both apps claim and provide scientific support to claims that mindfulness improves conditions such as stress, insomnia, anxiety, and depression to name a few. These apps could be a valuable resource for the music classroom teaching students to breathe properly and to improve their mental, physical, and emotional health that may consequently improve their productivity in the choral classroom.

Mindfulness in General Education

Resources available regarding mindfulness in education is frequently related to general education, especially at the elementary level. These resources relate to mindfulness used to calm and focus students, as an alternative to punishment, as a tool to cope with trauma, as a classroom management technique, as a way of helping students with intellectual disabilities, and many more. While these resources do not relate to music or choral education, they do provide tools for

²² “What Is Headspace?” *Help Center*, help.headspace.com/hc/en-us/articles/115008040287-What-is-Headspace-. Accessed October 1, 2020.

²³ “What Is Headspace?” *Help Center*, help.headspace.com/hc/en-us/articles/115008040287-What-is-Headspace-. Accessed October 1, 2020.

using mindfulness in classrooms that can be applied to a music classroom. These resources ultimately provide a baseline for mindfulness and its purpose in non-music classrooms.

One resource that provides significant guidelines for developing a choral mindfulness practice is the curriculum, “Mindfulness for Students: a Curriculum for Grades 3-8”²⁴ by Wendy Fuchs. In this curriculum, the first of the seven chapters provide an outline for the curriculum and the remaining chapters detail the ideals to be introduced. In the first chapter, in addition to providing an outline, the author noted that while non-judgment appears in the definition of mindfulness, commonly, not a lot of emphasis is placed on non-judgmental mindfulness. The author also explained that mindfulness is often used as a form of relaxation, but has a greater purpose than relaxation; awareness and presence. Rationale for the mindfulness curriculum is mentioned in this chapter as it is to improve well-being of teachers and students. The author described common stressors for teachers that affect their performance as a teacher and then stated,

“In addition to teacher stress, children in today’s schools are experiencing elevated levels of stress and anxiety related to past trauma, excessive time spent on social media, etc. Mindfulness practices have extensive evidence that supports a promising, positive effect on psychological and physical symptoms associated with anxiety, depression, and overall health, as well as improved attitudes about school and increased academic achievement.”²⁵

²⁴ Wendy W. Fuchs, *Mindfulness for Students: a Curriculum for Grades 3-8*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2019.

²⁵ Fuchs, *Mindfulness for Students: a Curriculum for Grades 3-8*, 2019.

The author also noted that mindfulness practice supports social-emotional learning by teaching students about self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. This rationale, while associated with a non-music related mindfulness practice, remains relevant when developing a music-related mindfulness practice. Following the rationale, the author explained the process for integrating mindfulness into the classroom. The program would be introduced into a daily schedule with specific topics covered on specific days throughout the year. The program also includes a practice log for student completion both at school and at home. One important component of this program is that students are not required to close their eyes to meditate. This is particularly important in a school setting because many students may have past trauma that causes them to be uncomfortable closing their eyes.

The remaining resources of this chapter detailed the components of a mindfulness practice that would be taught in the curriculum: stress and its effect on the brain, breath awareness, body awareness, focus on gratitude, kindness toward self and others, and open awareness. In this particular curriculum, students would first learn about the “upstairs” and “downstairs” part of the brain, how they function, and how mindfulness works in the brain. Then, students will learn how to breathe properly and how to pay proper attention to their breath as they inhale and exhale. Next, students learn how their minds and bodies communicate and how to participate in activities that increase awareness of their body. In the following section, students learn the “skill of being grateful”, how the body improves from the focus on gratitude. Subsequently, students learn how to kindness towards both themselves and to others improves wellbeing. Finally, students combine all of the skills learned in the previous lessons to create one fluid mindfulness practice. While this source does not include any musical components, the

curriculum could serve as a blueprint for creating a choral mindfulness program for grades six through twelve.

In the study entitled “Effects of Mindfulness-Based Intervention to Improve Task Performance for Children with Intellectual Disabilities”²⁶ by Jeongil Kim and Miyoung Kwon, researchers planned to determine if mindfulness-based intervention would result in improved behavior and functioning for students with intellectual disabilities. The researchers tested their hypothesis with three elementary-age students with intellectual disabilities. Using baseline testing, the researchers established the students’ performance pre and post mindfulness intervention. The students were taught the concept of mindfulness, an awareness practice, and a mindful behaviors practice, with the inclusion of art supplies for an expressive way to increase comprehension. Results of the study show that all of the students increased task performance, reduced task-avoidance, and behaviors in daily life both at home and at school were improved. This study allows the researcher to see a need in implementing this practice not simply to improve choral performance, but also as a classroom management tool to improve behavior and decrease task-avoidant behavior in order to increase productivity within the ensemble as a whole.

The book “Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish”²⁷ written by Christine Mason, Michele Murphy and Yvette Jackson provided information as to why mindfulness should be incorporated into classrooms, what

²⁶ Jeongil Kim, and Miyoung Kwon, “Effects of Mindfulness-Based Intervention to Improve Task Performance for Children with Intellectual Disabilities,” *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities* 31, no. 1 (2017): 87–97, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jar.12333>.

²⁷ Christine Y. Mason, Michele M. Rivers Murphy, and Yvette Jackson, *Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish*, Bloomington: Solution Tree Press, 2019.

mindfulness is, and how it should be incorporated into classrooms. Before the book even officially began substantial information is already presented. In the forward, Paul Liabenow discussed the trauma and toxic stress that both students and teachers face and explain that these factors both a student's ability to learn, a teacher's ability to instruct, and both of their abilities to live well. According to Liabenow,

“Fortunately, there is an exciting knowledge base on the neuroscience of learning, evidence from MRIs, and the authors' empirical research illustrating how mindfulness practices and compassion can diminish stress and fortify focus, reflection, and higher-order cognitive functioning for both students and educators to mitigate the trauma of adverse childhood experiences' deleterious impact.”²⁸

Mindfulness works, mindfulness heals, and mindfulness helps. From this source, we learn that much is clear.

As the authors began, they described what their vision of mindful education would be. They described a school where students and teachers practiced non-judgment to their selves and to others. A school where the students and teachers can collaborate and treat each other with compassion and find a balance between academic and social-emotional learning. Through this visualization exercise, they set their intention for the program they created. The authors discussed further the immediate need to enact mindfulness to aid students in dealing with trauma and toxic stress. The text included the need for caring about students' traumatic experiences, citing statistics that show that an alarming number of young children are victims of child abuse and neglect, with a disproportionate amount of cases applying to children of color and

²⁸ Mason, Murphy, and Jackson, *Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish*, 2019.

indigenous peoples.²⁹ The authors then explained that the consequences of trauma in children are lifelong and significant and the caring adult that often remedies some of these consequences are often not a parent or relative, but the teacher. Teachers have the responsibility to care for students with trauma, or further perpetuate their trauma. Mindfulness has the potential to significantly improve the wellbeing of students affected by trauma. Although this study was not directly related to mindfulness in music, students in music/choral settings are not immune to trauma and can benefit from the use of mindfulness. In fact, students who are attracted to the fine arts are often more likely to have experienced trauma, because they search for means to express trauma and toxic stress through art.³⁰

In “Mindfulness in Schools: a Health Promotion Approach to Improving Adolescent Mental Health”³¹ by Supakyada Sapthiang, William Van Gordon, and Edo Shonin, the authors explained the need for mindfulness in schools to improve mental health. The authors explained that, “Between 10 and 20% of adolescents worldwide experience a mental health problem within a given 12-month period. Students with mental illness face discrimination, isolation, and social stigma that could be mitigated with health promotion campaigns based on mindfulness.”³² In this research, the authors describe an approach to school-based MBIs that meets government

²⁹ Mason, Murphy, and Jackson, *Mindfulness Practices: Cultivating Heart Centered Communities Where Students Focus and Flourish*, 2019.

³⁰ Juliet L. King, *Art Therapy, Trauma, and Neuroscience: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*, Routledge, 2016.

³¹ Supakyada Sapthiang, William Van Gordon, and Edo Shonin, “Mindfulness in Schools: a Health Promotion Approach to Improving Adolescent Mental Health,” *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 17, no. 1 (2018): 112–19, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-0001-y>.

³² Sapthiang, Van Gordon, and Shonin, “Mindfulness in Schools: a Health Promotion Approach to Improving Adolescent Mental Health,” 2018.

objectives, improves the wellbeing of students and teachers, and improves learning and behavior. While this research does not relate to music, it does establish that mindfulness can help students improve their mental state, learning, behavior, and wellness.

As a whole, resources regarding mindfulness in general education provide evidence that there is validity in incorporating mindfulness into any classroom, musical or otherwise. While there are no resources specifically about including mindfulness in a choral setting, these resources provide the most convincing evidence that mindfulness can and should be incorporated into any educational setting regardless of content area. Based on these sources alone, mindfulness should be implemented into any classroom because mindfulness can aid in the healing process from trauma and toxic stress, promote focus and awareness, improve behavior, improve mental health, prevent task-avoidant behavior, and increase non-judgment and compassion amongst both teachers and students.

Biblical Meditation and Christian Approach to Mindfulness

In Psalm chapter 46, verse ten, the sons of Korah write, “Be still, and know that I am God.”³³ Joshua chapter one, verse eight states, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it.”³⁴ The Bible mentions meditation 23 times and God asks us to “be still and know” in Psalm chapter 46, verse 10. If this is God’s view of mindfulness and meditation, why do many Christians have a hard time accepting the use of mindfulness activities? While biblical meditation differs from secular meditation, mindfulness practices, both secular and sacred, have a profound impact on the Christian vocal musician. This research will make a case for

³³ Psalm 46:10, (KJV).

³⁴ Joshua 1:8, (KJV)

mindfulness meditation in a choral setting and will help students not only become better singers, but also help them overcome personal obstacles and bring them closer to God.

Mindfulness is a method utilized by many cultures, however, within Christianity mindfulness can be used to gain a better connection with God. One way that mindfulness can aid in this improved connection is that mindfulness increases intentionality which can be beneficial to Christians. Living an intentional life by using mindfulness to increase awareness allows a Christian to better connect with God and follow His calling for their life. Mindfulness practice can also be found within prayer as prayer is biblical meditation. When God says to “Meditate on His word” He means to pray and to spend time focusing on and being mindful of His word. When we pray, we are making ourselves aware of God’s beauty, grace, majesty, while also recognizing, or becoming aware of, our struggles and our needs. In Philippians chapter four, verse six, Paul writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.”³⁵ God already knows everything His people need, but when we pray, we meditate on these things. God needs us to meditate on our needs and acknowledge that we need help and recognize the things we need help with. Christian mindfulness practitioners must be aware that they need both prayer and meditation, meditation should not be substituted for prayer; however, Christians should live life prayerfully, praying in all situations including mindfulness situations.

Another way meditation can bring Christians closer to God includes that mindfulness-based practices help individuals take care of his or her “temple”. In 1 Corinthians chapter six, verses 19 through 20 Paul stated, “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy

³⁵ Philippians 4:6, (NIV).

Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.”³⁶ Paul echoes this idea in Ephesians chapter four, verse sixteen, “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”³⁷ Your mind, body, and spirit are all part of this temple Paul speaks of. As mentioned in the other sections of the literature review, mindfulness, and other mindfulness-based practices are proven to improve the health of this temple.

If done correctly, there is nothing in a mindfulness practice that takes away from God. Christians often confuse mindfulness-based practices with Buddhist and Hindu meditation when the two are not synonymous. While the two terms are similar, mindfulness is secular while meditation has more of a religious connotation. Mindfulness evolved as the secular form of the meditation religious practice, but meditation is usually referred to in a religious setting whether Biblical, Hindu, Buddhist, etc. This research specifically discusses the use of mindfulness in a secular and biblical setting and NOT on Meditation in the Buddhist or Hindu traditions. Mindfulness, meditation, and biblical prayer can work together as long as you are careful not to get caught up in specifically Buddhist or Hindu traditions.

The best source for examining mindfulness in a biblical setting is the Bible. By reading God’s word we learn what His intentions for His people are. The three main aspects from God’s word regarding mindfulness are: 1) God wants us to live intentionally and mindfulness increases awareness and subsequently intentionality, 2) prayer is essential to a life lived in Christ and prayer includes meditation, and 3) mindfulness practices assist in the caring for God’s temple –

³⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, (NIV).

³⁷ Ephesians 4:16, (NIV).

the Christian's body. By recognizing these themes in God's word, specifically the New Testament, we acknowledge that a mindfulness practice can be an excellent way to become more intentional with daily life, more focused on prayer, and more healthy physically and mentally – therefore taking care of God's temple.

In researching this topic, I found three relevant sources other than the bible: 1) “Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality”³⁸ by Tim Stead, “Christian Mindfulness”³⁹ by Peter Tyler, and “Right Here, Right Now”⁴⁰ by Amy G. Oden. In “Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality,” Stead uncovered the meaning of mindfulness and how this practice can help Christians mindfully make God part of their everyday lives, not simply someone they think about once or twice a week, or even once or twice a day. In his book, “Christian Mindfulness,” Peter Tyler answered questions about the “danger” of mindfulness as a Christian. Tyler examined the Buddhist roots of mindfulness practice and explained that placing mindfulness in a Christian prayer practice does not conflict spiritually. The author explained that despite its origins, mindfulness can be beneficial to improving a Christian's faith and relationship with God. Amy G. Oden explained in her book “Right Here, Right Now,” that Christians have been practicing mindfulness since the beginning of Christianity and simply have not noticed. Oden explained the importance of being in God's presence in every present moment and how mindfulness can help any Christian achieve that. These resources illustrated that if you are looking to utilize

³⁸ Tim Stead, *Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality: Making Space for God*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2017.

³⁹ Peter Tyler, *Christian Mindfulness: Theology and Practice*, SCM Press, an Imprint of Hymns Ancient & Modern Ltd, 2018.

⁴⁰ Amy Oden, *Right Here, Right Now: the Practice of Christian Mindfulness*, Abingdon Press, 2017.

mindfulness to improve your relationship with God, then you will find it. Mindfulness is an excellent way to focus on and draw attention to God.

Mindfulness-Based Practices

Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique is a method created to encourage well-being as a result of focusing on awareness and posture habits in order to reduce exertion and tension.⁴¹ Frederick Matthias Alexander created the technique in the 1890's in order to improve posture and self-awareness, focusing on both physical and mental aspects of the training.⁴² Alexander saw the need for a behavior intervention after he noticed voice loss while public speaking and through the creation of this method, he was able to pursue Shakespearean theater.⁴³

In the 21st Century, the Alexander Technique is most often used by vocal musicians and actors.⁴⁴ Vocalists use the technique to improve all aspects of singing including tone, skill, and air-flow.⁴⁵ Actors and Actresses use this method to reduce stage fright and become more relaxed and natural when performing.⁴⁶ Although Alexander Technique is often used in a musical

⁴¹ "Alexander Technique," Lexico, Accessed August 30, 2020, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/alexander_technique.

⁴² Michael Bloch, *F.M. the Life of Frederick Matthias Alexander: Founder of the Alexander Technique*, London: Little, Brown, 2004.

⁴³ John B. Harer, and Sharon Munden, *The Alexander Technique Resource Book: a Reference Guide*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.

⁴⁴ Kelly McEvenue and Patsy Rodenburg, *The Actor and the Alexander Technique*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

⁴⁵ John B. Harer, and Sharon Munden, *The Alexander Technique Resource Book: a Reference Guide*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.

⁴⁶ Kelly McEvenue and Patsy Rodenburg, *The Actor and the Alexander Technique*, New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

setting, the technique was not originally intended for specifically a musical purpose and is still used today to treat ailments such as back and neck pain and may aid in symptom treatment of Parkinson's disease.⁴⁷

The method is taught in private sessions or lessons by a private instructor to musicians, actors, and other types of performers.⁴⁸ The Alexander Technique focuses on awareness or mindful actions, teaching students to be mindful and aware of everyday actions such as getting up and down from a chair, walking, or participating in a performance rehearsal.⁴⁹ A mirror is often used to help students become more aware of their actions and not simply how their actions feel.⁵⁰ Students are asked to move into numerous activities including, sitting, standing, moving around, and lying down while focusing on the movement of the spine, neck and head.⁵¹

Alexander Technique teachers must complete 1,600 practice hours in order to become a certified Alexander Technique instructor.⁵² Awareness and mindful action are at the forefront of this method.

⁴⁷ NHS Choices, NHS. Accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/alexander-technique/>.

⁴⁸ Kelly McEvenue, and Patsy Rodenburg, *The Actor and the Alexander Technique*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

⁴⁹ John B. Harer, and Sharon Munden, *The Alexander Technique Resource Book: a Reference Guide*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.

⁵⁰ Sanjiv Jain, Kristy Janssen, and Sharon Decelle, "Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method: a Critical Overview," *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinics of North America* 15, no. 4 (2004): 811–25, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pmr.2004.04.005>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 811-25.

⁵² P. Little, G. Lewith, F. Webley, M. Evans, A. Beattie, K. Middleton, J. Barnett, et al. "Randomised Controlled Trial of Alexander Technique Lessons, Exercise, and Massage (ATEAM) for Chronic and Recurrent Back Pain," *Bmj* 337, no. aug19 2 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.a884>.

When searching for resources regarding the Alexander Technique, a majority of print resources center on the use of the technique in the performing arts, while many of the electronic resources and journals involve the use of the technique in health and medical fields, in addition to performing arts uses. Books on the subject include, but are not limited to, a general reference guide, a guide for musicians, a guide for performing artists, and a guide for actors. Articles related to Alexander Technique include publications on the technique and chronic neck pain, mental health, postural coordination, well-being in older adults, and healthcare costs, to name a few. There are no resources available on the subject of Alexander Technique in choral music education; however, the information presented in the guide for musicians can be applied in a choral setting.

One valuable resource for Alexander technique, as well as two other methods that follow, is Graeme Lynn's "Awakening Somatic Intelligence: Understanding, Learning and Practicing the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Hatha Yoga."⁵³ From this, the reader learns that physical pains and conditions often derive from incorrect self-organization and that these deteriorations can be reversed through transformed sensorimotor learning. This learning is best facilitated through the use of the Alexander method and other methods like it. In this method, age is not an obstacle neither are physical impairments. Even if a practitioner cannot fully participate in a certain action attempting the basics of the action will still improve aspects that will eventually improve their ability to perform that action. This technique encourages what the

⁵³ Graeme Lynn, *Awakening Somatic Intelligence Understanding, Learning and Practicing the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Hatha Yoga*, Singing Dragon, 2017.

author calls “psycho-emotional maturation”⁵⁴ in which both the physical and emotional components of one’s body matures and becomes more aware of function. Alexander recognized that when there is a pain or ailment in the body and nothing is wrong with the structure of the affected body part then something must be wrong with the function of the affected body part. Learning this method requires acceptance of where one is and the willingness to try something different. The main components of the Technique mentioned in this source included that everything is connected, relaxation is key, and good habits are necessary. In relation to the argument of mindfulness and Christianity, Alexander argued that this technique is neither inherently moral nor immoral, noting that practicing the Alexander technique would make a thief a better thief. Therefore, as with all of the methods mentioned in this research, if you have good intentions for these practices you will find them and if you have bad intentions for these programs you will find those as well.

Body Mapping

Body Mapping is a practice where students become acquainted with the framework of their bodies. The main resource utilized regarding this topic is Heather J Buchanan’s “An Introduction to Body Mapping: Enhancing Musical Performance Through Somatic Pedagogy.”⁵⁵ In this resource we learn that “Body Mapping is a self-inquiry method that advocates freedom of movement through accurate mind-body connections resulting in a poised and balanced body

⁵⁴ Graeme Lynn, *Awakening Somatic Intelligence Understanding, Learning and Practicing the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Hatha Yoga*, Singing Dragon, 2017.

⁵⁵ Heather J. Buchanan, “An Introduction to Body Mapping: Enhancing Musical Performance Through Somatic Pedagogy,” *Choral Journal* 45, no. 7 (February 2005): 95-101.

usage.”⁵⁶ Through this process, students become aware of their body and the movement of their body. Body Mapping contains four main components: 1) understanding your own body map, 2) training movement 3) training senses, and 4) training attention.⁵⁷ Errors in a person’s body map have the potential to cause injury or discomfort. When students mis-size body parts, are vague about a body part, or completely leave out a body part, it is usually rooted in another psychological issue. For example, students who mis-size a body part are psychologically trying to fit into a self-concept that they are taller, thinner, larger, etc. than they actually are. Body Mapping can be taught in a variety of settings including both choral and private lesson settings. Today Body Mapping is utilized mostly in a vocal or choral discipline, but also easily transferred to an instrumental setting. Body Mapping is used both as an individual practice and as a component of the Alexander technique.

A quick search of Body Mapping and Voice in the Jerry Falwell Library database only returns one relevant source about body mapping as used in a vocal setting, Heather J. Buchanan’s “An Introduction to Body Mapping: Enhancing Musical Performance Through Somatic Pedagogy.”⁵⁸ Thus far, this source is the only source available that discusses mindfulness explicitly in a choral setting. It does not, however, include any other mindfulness method and therefore does not cover the entire scope of this research. Other resources were found using the citations from this resource and an internet search including: Ashley Eady’s

⁵⁶ Kayleigh Miller, “What Is Body Mapping?” *Musicians' Health Collective*, Musicians' Health Collective, 12 Sept. 2014, www.musicianshealthcollective.com/blog/2014/9/11/what-is-body-mapping.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Heather J. Buchanan, “An Introduction to Body Mapping: Enhancing Musical Performance Through Somatic Pedagogy,” *Choral Journal* 45, no. 7 (February 2005): 95-101.

“Body Mapping Helps Musicians” and Barbara and Benjamin Conable’s “What Every Musician Needs to Know about the Body: The Practical Application of Body Mapping to Making Music.

The Conables’ text exists as one of the most utilized resources for implementing a Body Mapping practice in any setting. The founder of Body Mapping, William Conable recognized that student’s based on their perception of their body’s structure or ‘body map’ and thus developed the concept of body mapping. Barbara Conable stated, “Body Mapping is the conscious correction and refining of one’s Body Map to produce, efficient, graceful, and coordinated movement. Body Mapping, over time, and with application, allows any musician to play like a natural.”⁵⁹ The text explains the anatomy of the body and what the musician must understand regarding that anatomy in order to optimize performance. This resource established that not only do students need to be mindful of the present moment, but also their own anatomy or body map. If a student does not understand their own body map, it would be difficult for them to make any modification of improvement in sound in a choral setting.

Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method is a method named for creator, Moshe Feldenkrais, in which efficiency and well-being of the body and mind are promoted by the use of neuromuscular activity analysis to inform flexibility, coordination, and range of motion exercises.⁶⁰ This method is similar to the Alexander technique in that it is an alternative medicine type method that focuses on rebuilding connections regarding movement in order to improve physical and mental

⁵⁹ Barbara Conable, and Benjamin Conable, *What Every Musician Needs to Know about the Body: the Practical Application of Body Mapping to Making Music*. Portland, OR: Andover Press, 2000.

⁶⁰ “Feldenkrais Method,” Lexico, Accessed August 30, 2020, https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/feldenkrais_method.

wellbeing.⁶¹ Moshe Feldenkrais developed this method in the 1950s following a knee injury he sustained in the 1920s playing soccer and re-injuring it in a submarine he worked in as a scientist at a British Naval station during World War II.⁶² Feldenkrais was a scientist, as well as a judo teacher and instead of getting knee surgery, he used his knowledge as a scientist and judo teacher to develop this method.⁶³ Today, the Feldenkrais method is thought to improve injuries, as well as Parkinson's disease⁶⁴ and conditions related to aging.⁶⁵

When participating in the Feldenkrais Method, the specialist focuses on recurring movements that could be improved to reduce strain and inefficiency.⁶⁶ The Feldenkrais specialist will then retrain the student/patient on completing these movements more safely and efficiently.⁶⁷ The student/patient will then repeat these movements slowly until they have retrained themselves on how to perform the movement correctly. While this method is not

⁶¹ Knaster, Mirka. *Discovering the Body's Wisdom: A Comprehensive Guide to More Than Fifty Mind-Body Practices*. New York, NY: Bantam Books, 1996.

⁶² Reese, Mark. *Moshe Feldenkrais: a Life in Movement*. San Rafael, CA: ReeseKress Somatics, 2015.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ L. Teixeira-Machado, F. Araujo, F. Cunha, M. Menezes, T. Menezes, and J. Desantana, "Feldenkrais Method-Based Exercise Improves Quality of Life in Individuals with Parkinson's Disease: a Controlled, Randomized Clinical Trial," *The Journal of Pain* 16, no. 4 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpain.2015.01.471>.

⁶⁵ Kieran Broome, Jane Shamrock, and Kate Alcorn, "Older Peoples' Perceived Benefits of Feldenkrais Method Classes," *Physical & Occupational Therapy In Geriatrics* 33, no. 2 (2015): 118–27, <https://doi.org/10.3109/02703181.2015.1009227>.

⁶⁶ Samuel H. Nelson, and Elizabeth Blades-Zeller, *Singing with Your Whole Self: the Feldenkrais Method and Voice*, Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2002.

⁶⁷ Nelson, and Elizabeth Blades-Zeller, *Singing with Your Whole Self: the Feldenkrais Method and Voice*, 2002.

specifically utilized for musicians, musicians can use this method to retrain poor habits that can lead to, or have already caused, injury.⁶⁸ For example, a violinist could retrain themselves to hold a bow properly to avoid or treat wrist and hand injury. This method uses mindful actions to retrain movement.

Pre-existing research was very specific; therefore, it was difficult to find broader, more universal research on the Feldenkrais Method. Research materials would instead focus on one particular subject, i.e. Feldenkrais and neck pain, Feldenkrais and autism, Feldenkrais and singing, Feldenkrais and leadership positions, etc. The research does not directly relate to choral education, yet information learned in Feldenkrais singing resources can be applied to a choral setting. As mentioned in the section regarding Alexander Technique, one of the most useful resources pertained to more than one mindfulness-based practice, “Awakening Somatic Intelligence: Understanding, Learning and Practicing the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Hatha Yoga.”⁶⁹ The author explained that one of the major differences between the Feldenkrais method and the Alexander Technique is the use of the eyes. Feldenkrais believed that the eyes were the part of the body that organized movement; therefore, the Feldenkrais method focused on the movement of the eyes in addition to the movement of other parts of the body. The primary function of this resource is that all three methods be combined to reach optimal health. While the Feldenkrais Method was not specifically applied to a musical setting in this resource, the information gathered in the resource can be transferred to a choral setting.

⁶⁸ Nelson, and Elizabeth Blades-Zeller, *Singing with Your Whole Self: the Feldenkrais Method and Voice*, 2002.

⁶⁹ Graeme Lynn, *Awakening Somatic Intelligence Understanding, Learning and Practicing the Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and Hatha Yoga*, Singing Dragon, 2017.

Rolfing

Rolfing exists as an alternative medicine practice created around the early-twentieth-century by Dr. Ida P. Rolf. According to practitioners at Rolfing USA, “Rolfing is a system of soft tissue manipulation and movement education that organizes the whole body in gravity.”⁷⁰ Rolfing is used by athletes, patients, dancers, musicians, counselors, and therapists to lessen pain, relax muscles, and reduce side effects of both physical and emotional trauma. Rolfing utilizes a technique similar to massage, however, massage and Rolfing tissue manipulation differ. Massage is used to relax muscles temporarily while Rolfing tissue manipulation is used to improve body alignment and function to relax muscles long-term. One major focus of Rolfing is the concept of Structural Integration meaning that the body is looked at as a collection of tissue instead of separate body parts and function. Research backs up the claim that Rolfing heals the body to utilize body functions in a more efficient and refined way. Rolfing is taught in a series of ten sessions. The first three sessions “strive to loosen and balance surface layers of connective tissue.”⁷¹ Session one focuses on the breath, arms, ribcage, and diaphragm, the second session focuses on the feet and lower legs and the third session includes the relationship between the shoulder girdle and the hips. The middle four sessions focus on the core with session four including the upper legs and the pelvis, the fifth session works with the abdominal muscles, the sixth session working on the function between the legs, pelvis, and back and the seventh session focusing on the neck and the head. Sessions eight through ten combine all the lessons from the

⁷⁰ “What Is Rolfing? How Is It Different from Deep Tissue Massage?” *Rolfing USA*, www.rolfusa.com/rolfing.html, Accessed September 20, 2020.

⁷¹ “What Is Rolfing?” *What Is Rolfing? - Dr. Ida Rolf Institute*, Accessed September 19, 2020, www.rolf.org/rolfing.php.

previous sessions to create balance and support. This practice would not necessarily be usable in the choral classroom; however, a teacher could refer a student that could benefit from this practice.

Compared to the other mindfulness-based methods, there are fewer resources available on Rolfing. Many of the resources regarding this practice are web-resources or journal articles as opposed to print sources. Two web resources include: the Ida P. Rolf Research Foundation, and Rolfing USA. Of the resources that do exist on Rolfing, many had a specific concentration. For example, Rolfing and fibromyalgia, Rolfing and cell biology, Rolfing and spine rehabilitation. These sources were not necessarily relevant to this research, however, they do provide a reference for the types of conditions that improve through the use of Rolfing and how this practice could be used to refer students to a Rolfing specialist.

Myofascial Release

According to an article by the Myofascial Release Treatment Centers and Seminars, “Myofascial Release is a safe and very effective hands-on technique that involves applying gentle sustained pressure into the myofascial connective tissue restrictions to eliminate pain and restore motion.”⁷² Myofascial release serves as an alternative medicine-type method that treats poor muscle function and pain using stretch-like movements and other muscle-relaxing techniques.⁷³ The method was created in the 1960s by a man named Andrew Taylor Still and named by Robert Ward, a student of Ida Rolf, creator of Rolfing. In order to examine myofascial release, we must first learn the definition of fascia -his connective tissue wraps various structures

⁷² ““What is Myofascial Release,” Myofascial Release Treatment Centers and Seminars, Accessed August 30, 2020, <https://www.myofascialrelease.com/about/definition.aspx>.

⁷³ Ibid.

in our bodies such as our muscles.⁷⁴ This method seeks to treat this connective tissue to relieve pain and improve function. Unlike many of the other methods, this method is not backed by scientific evidence.

Of the methods studied in this research, this method has the least resources available on the subject. Most of the resources available discussed the relationship of Myofascial release to physical therapy subjects; however there were more journal resources available on the subject than there were print resources. One useful resource was “Direct Release Myofascial Technique: An Illustrated Guide for Practitioners”⁷⁵ by Michael Stanborough. This resource described that the Myofascial technique was created as a subset of Rolfing, in order to apply the basic techniques to various situations. This method serves as a physical therapy technique that incorporates mindfulness but does not discuss the use of the method to release tension and other issues related to muscular injuries or misuse. This method is a highly physical technique that would not be appropriate to use in the school, however, the teacher could recommend a student see a Myofascial Release specialist if the student exhibits issues that could be remedied through the technique.

Pilates

Pilates is a type of exercise developed by Joseph Pilates in the 1920s. This practice is centered on concepts of body control through movement and positions. According to research conducted by Wells, Kolt, and Bialocerkowski, “Traditional principles of Pilates exercise include

⁷⁴ Michael Stanborough, *Direct Release Myofascial Technique*, Churchill Livingstone, 2004.

⁷⁵ Stanborough, *Direct Release Myofascial Technique*, 2004.

centering concentration, control, precision, flow, and breathing.”⁷⁶ Centering refers to the use of the core and pelvic floor muscles to stabilize the practitioner. Concentration includes focus, attention, or awareness during activities. Control is the attention to precise movement and posture. Precision is the accuracy of technique. Flow is proper transitions between moves. Additionally, breathing is the proper use of breath control during the practice. In Pilates practice, the practitioner uses floor exercises and spring-like equipment, such as resistance bands in order to strengthen and stabilize areas throughout the body. Pilates was originally practiced by dancers, but has since expanded and evolved to fit the needs of a variety of practitioners. Today Pilates exists in a variety of forms and has been combined with a variety of other exercise methods to appeal to a wider audience.

According to an article by Dr. Michelle LaTour, “This [Pilates] has several implications for singing and breathing, mostly by building a singer’s awareness of his or her abdominal muscles, posture, and breath.”⁷⁷ In LaTour’s article, the reader learns a variety of things: 1) anyone can do Pilates, 2) if one cannot do Pilates as advertised movements can be modified, 3) Pilates improves breath and breath improves movement, 4) Pilates reduces stress, and 5) Pilates can aid in injury recovery. These components are valuable to singers for various reasons. Accessibility of exercise is an essential component of incorporating said exercise, if Pilates is accessible to all voice students, the potential for vocal improvement increases. Breathing and body movement/control are at the forefront of singing because Pilates can improve breath and

⁷⁶ Wells, Cherie, et al, “Defining Pilates Exercise: A Systematic Review,” *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2012, pp. 253–262, doi:10.1016/j.ctim.2012.02.005.

⁷⁷ Dr. Michelle LaTour, et al, “Pilates and Singing,” *CS Music*, 26 Feb. 2013, www.csmusic.net/content/blog/pilates-and-singing/.

movement, Pilates could potentially improve singing. While singing requires that the singer can control the body and voice, singing also requires a certain level of relaxation. Injury recovery could also aid vocal improvement should the singer suffer injury from singing or other injuries that affects singing.

A study entitled, “Voice and Pilates: The influence of Pilates on the singing voice,” found that Pilates plays a positive role in vocal production for singers. This study, examined fifteen singers by the use of questionnaires, voice recordings and ENT examination as they experienced Pilates instruction. The authors concluded that “In a relatively short time, simple exercises – performed regularly – have shown a significant impact on vocal quality.”⁷⁸ In this study the researchers noticed physical changes in the singer’s vocal folds and determined that this change occurred due to the postural exercises performed as part of their Pilates practice. Researchers also found that Pilates encouraged greater control of dynamics and “reduce[d] vibratory perturbations of the vocal cords during vocal emission.”⁷⁹ This research shows that not only does Pilates improve breath and movement control, but can also improve vocal fold elasticity, dynamic control and reduce unwanted vocal wavering in phonation.

There is a wealth of information and resources available on Pilates. As with many other mindfulness techniques, a lot of the research available on the subject of Pilates is specifically related to a subject or treatment. Articles relating to singing and Pilates were not hard to find, however, as with many of the other practices, there were no articles relating to Pilates used in the

⁷⁸ Mezzedimi, Chiara, et al, “Voice and Pilates: The Influence of Pilates on the Singing Voice,” *Revista De Logopedia, Foniatría y Audiología*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2019, pp. 141–150, doi:10.1016/j.rlfa.2019.03.004.

⁷⁹ Mezzedimi, Chiara, et al, “Voice and Pilates: The Influence of Pilates on the Singing Voice,” 2019.

choral classroom. While these articles do not directly relate to the use of Pilates in the choral classroom, the background information and findings found in these resources can be directly applied to singing in a choral setting.

Yoga

Yoga is an ancient practice, however, the form of Yoga practiced in the 21st Century is not. This type of yoga stemming from the practice of hatha yoga called Modern Postural Yoga or Yoga for Exercise. Hatha yoga itself is an ancient practice of which the oldest text mentioning Hatha Yoga, called the Amrtasiddhi, was written in the 11th century CE. Hatha Yoga also has Buddhist and Hindu roots, however, in the 20th century, Hatha Yoga evolved to focus on asanas which are physical poses and thus the modern form of athletic yoga began. Today, yoga for exercise no longer contains major elements of the Buddhist and Hindu religions. Instead it focuses on two main components, posture and breath. Swami Kuvalayananda and Tirumalai Krishnamachara taught the subject we know today as yoga for exercise from 1924 to 1989. They combined Hatha Yoga asanas with gymnastic techniques and rid the practice of almost all religious components to create what western practitioners refer to today simply as “yoga”.

Yoga for exercise is a quite controversial subject in both Christian, and Buddhist/Hindu circles. Christians often contest its use in schools due to the Hindu and Buddhist roots, while Buddhists and Hindu’s often show resentment that their religion has been erased from this ancient practice. However, modern yoga for exercise is neither Christian nor Buddhist/Hindu and can be practiced by a person of any faith. Modern postural yoga now exists as a secular practice recognized for its health benefits.

One resource on the subject of modern yoga is William J. Broad's "The Science of Yoga; The Risks and the Rewards."⁸⁰ This text, written in 2012, compiled the plethora of research discussing the health benefits of yoga. Broad began the book with a list of "main characters" or individuals who have contributed to research on the health benefits of yoga, definitions of various yoga styles, and a timeline for major events/developments of modern yoga for exercise. One notable main character includes Sat Bir Khalsa who serves at the Medical School of Harvard University as a neurophysiologist and Yogi. Khalsa proved that yoga promotes sleep and can assist musicians with stage fright.⁸¹ The text covers basic science about the health benefits of Yoga as well as possible risks of injury. While this text does not directly discuss the use of Yoga for musical benefit, information from this text could be utilized in a classroom to explain the reasons for incorporating Yoga into singing practice.

In "Yoga and Singing: Natural Partners"⁸², researcher Judith Carman sought to determine a correlation between Yoga practice and improved vocal technique. In this article, the researcher explained the need for a Yoga practice for voice students to utilize alongside weekly voice lessons in their studio. Carman noticed that common problems found in vocal students include:

"poor posture and alignment; general physical weakness and lack of coordination; faulty or nonexistent breathing technique; unbalanced resonance; an easily distracted mind due

⁸⁰ William J. Broad, *The Science of Yoga: the Risks and Rewards*, Simon & Schuster, 2013.

⁸¹ Broad, *The Science of Yoga: the Risks and Rewards*, 2013.

⁸² Judith Carman, "Yoga and Singing: Natural Partners," *Journal of Singing - the Official Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Singing* 60, no. 5 (05, 2004): 433-41, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?qurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1401831%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

to lack of mental focus on the activity at hand; performance anxiety that interferes with good singing; lack of connection with the meaning and emotional content of the text, character, or music; chronic physical or mental tension that interferes with singing.”⁸³

These common problems, according to Carman, can all be improved with the incorporation of a yoga practice in singing. The researcher also explained that these problems are habits within the student’s life that will not simply be broken with a one-hour voice lesson each week. What the student needs is a recurrent physical activity worked into their daily lives that fosters the improvement and correction of these habits, such as Yoga. This research was not originally intended for a Choral setting; however, a daily Yoga practice can be “assigned” to students in a choral classroom in the same way Carman mentions in this article.

There is not a shortage of resources on Yoga, or even on Yoga and singing. A search of articles related to Yoga and Singing on the Jerry Falwell Library website returns 6124 results. One article discussed the use of Yoga-based warm-ups in a choral setting; however, some of the information presented in this article is inaccurate. The researcher purported that Yoga breathing is exclusively nose inhalation and exhalation while singing breath is inhaled through the nose and exhaled through the mouth, this assumption is incorrect. Yoga breathing is usually inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth while singing breaths should include both inhalations and exhalations from the mouth. This incorrect information calls into question the credibility of the article. The remainder of these resources suggests that incorporating Yoga into a singing practice of any kind would be beneficial to all parties involved.

⁸³ Ivana Pinho Kuhn, “Chorus: Add Yoga to Your Singing Warm-Ups,” *Teaching Music* 13, no. 4 (02, 2006): 32-5, <http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.proquest.com%2Fdocview%2F1520430%3Faccountid%3D12085>.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Upon establishing the purpose, details, and literature regarding the project, it is then necessary to examine *how* the research will be conducted. Determining a process for the project is essential in the early stages to understand necessary preliminary action. Establishing research tools, project design, and project implementation, are just a few of the considerations when establishing methodology. The research plan includes conduct the research in two parts and avoid most ramifications.

Design

The first step of the research is to conduct basic background research on the topic, examining existing texts on subjects including definition of mindfulness, uses of mindfulness in various non-music settings, use of mindfulness in education, and use of mindfulness in vocal settings. This background information will allow the establishment of background knowledge for the remainder of the thesis project. Because there are few resources available regarding mindfulness in a choral setting, mindfulness-based practices in other voice-focused settings will be studied. Mindfulness-based practices as they relate to topics outside of music and voice will also be considered. For example, the history of mindfulness, Alexander Technique, and the Feldenkrais method will be studied as a whole, not just as they relate to music. This information will inform the next step in the research.

For part two of this research, the information learned in part I will be synthesized and implications for choral music education will be discovered. As part of this section examples of ways to incorporate these practices into the choral classroom will be created and guidelines for doing so will be established. This section will include practical applications for mindfulness

practices in the choral classroom that will improve the quality of instruction, focus, vocal production, and the overall experience of choir.

Tools and Data Collection

This research will utilize the Jerry Falwell Library to investigate the connection between mindfulness-based practices and the voice. Part one of the research includes the utilization of the Jerry Falwell Library and a personal collection of texts to identify pre-existing research on the topic of mindfulness-based practices. Part two includes synthesis of the knowledge found in part one and the creation of a plan for incorporating these practices into a choral setting.

Limitations of the Study

This research project will include one means of data collection; background research – which involves limitations. Limitations regarding background research include that said research is limited to research already completed and there are few, if any, resources regarding mindfulness in choral settings. This research follows a historical approach, meaning that it will not include a new data-collecting study of mindfulness-based practices in the choral music education. This means that while knowledge learned in background research may be applied to the choral classroom, these methods will not be tested to prove if they are transferable from a vocal setting to a choral setting.

Questions and Hypothesis

There is a recognizable need for analysis of mindfulness-based practices in the choral classroom. In a choral classroom, students' improvement as they incorporate mindfulness into their vocal routines is observable; through this project this connection will be investigated further. It is predicted that the information gathered in this project will help revitalize the structure of choral classroom in a way that improves the student's vocal ability as well as their

mind-body connection and their relationship with Christ. Mindfulness has profound implications on the choral classroom and this possibility will be investigated. It is hypothesized that mindfulness meditation increases focus amongst choir members, improve vocal production, posture, and mental and physical awareness.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Reasons to Incorporate Mindfulness into Choral Education

Mindfulness is a valuable tool for singing that comes in many forms. Whether it is an elaborate Yoga practice at a studio, or a simple mindfulness exercise on an app, mindfulness has been scientifically proven to improve the function of the body, mind and spirit, and even the singing voice. When mindfulness combines with Choral music, singers become more mentally focused as they watch the conductor, follow the score, hear the accompaniment, and experience vocal production and phonation. Mindfulness allows singers to improve posture, breath, and reduce negative reactions to criticism and judgment. Not only do mindfulness-based practices improve a singer's physical health, but also a singer's vocal health. Mindfulness improves anxiety, stage fright, insomnia, and depression. The healing of past trauma, and stress of social media exposure, are other factors improved by mindfulness. Under a mindfulness-based curriculum students would improve their own personal mental and physical health, allowing them to perform more effectively in a choral setting. A mindfulness-based curriculum could also improve students' vocal health, breath control, posture, mental clarity, and physical awareness, which are all necessary components of improved singing. In fact, there are very few reasons not to incorporate mindfulness into the choral classroom.

Potential Problems

One major potential problem arises when deciding to incorporate mindfulness-based practices into the choral classroom; parent and community attitudes toward mindfulness. Unfortunately in the 21st Century, teachers are often held to a higher standard of accountability than in previous years. Teachers must extensively document communication with both parents and students and carefully evaluate pedagogical decisions to avoid professional and legal

ramifications. Even though data supports the use of mindfulness-based practices in an educational setting, a teacher's ability to utilize mindfulness-based practices in the classroom depends on the social and religious environment of the surrounding community and of the school. Parents and administrators may take issue with a teacher utilizing mindfulness-based practices in the classroom due to religious beliefs or a simple lack of education on the subject. Should this become an issue, a form may be given to a parent allowing their student to "opt-out" of the mindfulness practice and return to class once the activity is completed, or the parent may need to have the data and approach explained to them before they allow their child to participate. You can also incorporate aspects of mindfulness without explicitly stating that you are practicing mindfulness if you feel that this will be an issue within your school. Unfortunately, situations may occur that cause the teacher to discontinue the use of mindfulness in the classroom altogether. Any teacher electing to utilize mindfulness-based practices in the choral classroom must be prepared to defend their pedagogical decision to parents and administration.

Historical Context

When examining the literature, one consistent theme arises; all of the aforementioned mindfulness techniques were developed between 1890 and 1960, with several of the methods developed in the 1920s. Aside from the ancient origins of Yoga, the Alexander Technique is the earliest of the relevant mindfulness techniques as it was developed in 1890. The secular form of Yoga for exercise came about in 1924 as Swami Kuvalayananda and Tirumalai Krishnamachara began teaching a form of Yoga that combined Hatha Yoga asanas with gymnastic techniques. Joseph Pilates developed Pilates in the 1920's to heal from personal injury. Ida Rolf developed Rolfing in the early 20th century and Myofascial Release was developed in the 1960's from the influence of Rolfing. All of these methods were developed around the early 20th century, except

for Myofascial release, which was based on a method developed during this time period. With all of these developments occurring in a short time-frame, one question arises: What historically and socially significant events occurred during this time frame to cause a mindfulness-based revolution?

The end of the 19th century transitioning into the 20th century was a time of progress in society as well as science. During this time advancements to science, art, philosophy, etc. were profound as individuals began to challenge preconceived notions about practically every aspect of life.⁸⁴ Numerous changes to everyday life happened in such a short amount of time. As the Industrial age continued, advancements became more frequent, causing a boom in inventions and discoveries. Three main categories make up major influences to the creation of mindfulness-based practices between the 1890s and 1920s; Advancements to Science, Technology, and Psychology. Several major conflicts occurred during this time that greatly affected these advancements including the Spanish-American War and World War I.

Scientific Advancements

Between the year 1890 and the year 1930, there were almost forty significant scientific discoveries that define life as we know it today. Scientific advancements during this time can be divided into three main categories: medical advancements, advancements to astronomy and astrophysics, and advancements to physics. For this analysis of data, discoveries related to space will be excluded as they are not relevant to the discussion, medical advancements will be the primary focus and there will be marginal mention of advancements to physics. A few major scientific advancements include: the discovery of the virus by Dmitri Ivanovsky in 1892, the

⁸⁴ “History of Technology Timeline,” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/story/history-of-technology-timeline>.

discovery of x-rays by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen in 1895, the virus was named and determined infections in 1898 by Martinus Beijerinck, Einstein developed the theory of special relativity in 1905, in 1906 Sir Frederick Gowland Hopkins suggested that vitamins are necessary for health, Alfred Bertheim developed chemotherapy in 1907, in 1911 Ernest Rutherford studied the atomic nucleus in 1911, in 1912 x-ray diffraction was discovered by Max von Laue, the atom model was created by Niels Bohr in 1913, in 1915 Einstein developed the theory of general relativity, and in 1929 Alexander Fleming discovered Penicillin.⁸⁵ With all of these scientific discoveries related to medicine, it is possible that during this time individuals became more aware of health concerns and issues and sought means to mitigate them.

Technological Advancements

Technology also advanced a sizable amount between 1890 and 1930. These technological advancements allowed for other advancements, inventions, and discoveries in the medical and health sciences. To name a few of the most significant inventions that happened around this time include: the automobile (1885), the stop sign (1890), the smoke detector (1890), tesla coil (1891), the rotary dial (1891), the bottle cap (1892), film projection (1890s), medical gloves (1894), remote control for a boat (1898), the radio (1901), the assembly line (1901), safety razor (1901), hearing aids (1902), air conditioning (1902), the tea bag (1903), the offset printing press (1903), the airplane (1903), the batting helmet (1905), the supermarket (1916), the grocery bag (1918), the polygraph machine (1921), rockets (1926), television (1927), the iron lung (1928).⁸⁶

⁸⁵ “Medical Advances Timeline,” Infoplease, Infoplease, Accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.infoplease.com/math-science/health/medical-advances-timeline>.

⁸⁶ “History of Technology Timeline,” Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/story/history-of-technology-timeline>.

These advancements allowed for advancements in other areas such as medicine and psychology; however, they also made the transfer of information easier through the phone, the radio, and eventually the television.

Psychological Advancements

Around the 1880s individuals began to study psychology in ways that had not previously been explored. In 1883 the first American experimental psychology lab was founded by G. Stanley Hall at Johns Hopkins. Sigmund Freud began practicing psychology in Vienna in 1886, and the American Journal of Psychology was founded in 1887. In the 1890s several experimental laboratories were established in the United States at universities including the University of Michigan, the University of Iowa, and Cornell University to name a few.. In 1892, the American Psychological Association was founded and in 1894 Margaret Floy Washburn became the first woman to earn a Ph. D in Psychology. Freud published numerous articles on Psychology throughout the 1900s including the papers, “The Psychology of Everyday Life” and “Introduction to Psychoanalysis.” In 1911 a paper was published called “Body and Mind: A History and Defence of Animism” by William McDougall and group psychotherapy was developed in 1913. In 1920s, Freud published several texts regarding the Ego and in 1922 a woman by the name of Karen Horney published 14 papers that questioned Freud and his ideas of the female mind. Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky also emerged during this time with Piaget writing “Judgement and Reasoning in the Child,” and Vygotsky creating a subsection of psychology called cultural-historical psychology. It is evident that throughout this time period individuals started studying psychology more in-depth, therefore the connection between the mind and body was made and mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices were developed to improve psychological function.

Implications for Mindfulness-Based Practices

Between the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the advancements to science, technology, and psychology created conditions necessary for the emergence of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices. Due to the inventions created previous to and during this time period, scientists were able to give the world a better understanding of health science relating to both mental and physical health. The boom of research and development in psychology increased awareness of brain function and mental health that encouraged individuals to look for ways to improve their health both mentally and physically. The inventions created during this time frame led to medical and psychological discoveries that highlight the mind-body connection and encourage the use of mindfulness-based practices.

The Effect of Mindfulness on Choral Singing

When studying the effect of mindfulness on choral singing, the researcher explored that choral singing increases mindfulness in singers. Due to the need to follow the director, listen to fellow voices and accompaniment, and follow along in the music, the singer enters a more mindful state. This researcher proposes that if mindfulness is encouraged by the participation in activities necessary for choral singing, then a mindfulness practice performed prior to these choral activities would increase the effectiveness of the mindfulness state achieved in choral activities. Mindfulness and choral singing appear to have a symbiotic relationship in which singing improves mindfulness, and mindfulness improves singing.

Application of General Secular Mindfulness

Integrating a secular mindfulness practice into choral education would result in increased mental and vocal wellness within the ensemble. Whether students participate in a mindfulness practice exclusively in choir class or have a supplementary mindfulness practice outside of class,

students will increase mental presence, mental clarity, and relaxation, which results in a reduction in anxiety, and improved breath control. Another reason to incorporate general secular mindfulness into the choral classroom is improved behavior management techniques. If students participate in a mindfulness practice at the beginning of the choir class, students will then be more mentally present and focused, and therefore less likely to speak out of turn or engage in other disruptive behavior. Students will also be able to clear their minds of other outside stress, trauma, and discomfort, and therefore be more receptive to instruction and have a more positive attitude toward their classmates, their teacher, and the instruction itself. Mindfulness practices can be teacher-led or led by using recordings or apps.

Another way to incorporate this practice into the choral classroom is to have student-led mindfulness sessions. Once students are well-versed in the happenings of a mindfulness session, have students volunteer to lead the mindfulness minute for a specific day. For this method, the teacher would want to plan this ahead of time and give students advance notice so that they could prepare the logistics of the mindfulness minute as well as preparing themselves mentally for leading the class. This could only be done in situations where the teacher trusts the students to be mature and respectful to the practice and to their fellow classmates.

Mindfulness in General Education

The research and data available regarding mindfulness in general education is profound. There are two main uses for the data available on this subject: 1) to serve as a blueprint for choral-focused mindfulness curriculum, and 2) to advocate for the use of mindfulness in the choral classroom to either parents or administration. The data available on the subject of mindfulness in general education proves that mindfulness has a place in classrooms regardless of subject area. Through this research, this researcher deduces that because mindfulness is proven

to reduce stress and anxiety due to past trauma, increase self-awareness and management, and help students focus on gratitude, in the general classroom, then mindfulness utilized in the choral classroom could have similar effects. In addition to the countless mental and physical benefits mindfulness provides students outside of choir class, students will also experience the vocal health benefits of mindfulness which will keep them healthily singing for years to come.

Inclusion of Biblical Meditation and Christian Approaches in Mindfulness

Regardless of a teacher's educational circumstances, the inclusion of mindfulness can be a useful way to bear witness to students. When working in a private Christian school, mindfulness can be used as a way to encourage prayer, intentionality, and "temple"⁸⁷ maintenance. Baring that a teacher in a private school is permitted to discuss mindfulness, the subject can be introduced first, by discussing prayer with the students. A teacher in this situation may begin by asking students how they pray and what are the circumstances surrounding their prayer. Do they assume a certain position? Are their hands clasped or in another gesture? Do they have an order in which they pray? For example, a student may kneel, bow their head, clasp their hands and as they pray they may begin with praises to God, then bringing concerns to God, then give thanks to God, followed by an "Amen". Given this knowledge, the teacher may then bridge the gap between prayer and mindfulness, by explaining that prayer is a biblical form of mindfulness. Continuing to explain, the teacher may include that mindfulness is a means to care for God's temple and a way to help Christians live more intentionally. Next, the teacher would then explain the use of mindfulness in a choral setting and apply the methods to their teaching making sure to include that mindfulness can improve the sound of our "joyful noise" made unto

⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, (NIV).

the Lord. “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises!”⁸⁸

Application of Mindfulness-Based Practices

As evident in the preliminary research, mindfulness-based practices are effective in improving mental focus and clarity among students, as well as improving their overall mental, physical, and emotional health. The Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais methods have implications for improving students’ everyday functions in choir class, such as appropriate, healthy, movement transitions. Body Mapping can be used to help students understand the physical makeup of their bodies to improve physical and vocal actions. Rolfing and Myofascial Release serve as effective treatments that encourage mindfulness and Yoga and Pilates positively encourage mindfulness and physical fitness. Each mindfulness-based practice, while different, serves a unique purpose in improving the health of choral students.

Application of the Alexander Technique

The Alexander Technique offers a variety of useful resources to the choral classroom. When considering incorporating the Alexander Technique into a choral setting, all components of this technique would be appropriate. It is important to note that many aspects of the technique overlap with other methods. Therefore, each of the sections regarding Mindfulness-Based Practices will address the unique and original factors of that method. If a teacher chose, they could exclusively teach Alexander Technique in their classroom. Due to the method’s complex nature; however, the teacher should seek Alexander Technique certification. For a choral educator who does not wish to utilize the entirety of the Alexander Technique, a few aspects of the method are essential to a choral classroom.

⁸⁸ Psalm 98:4, (ESV).

One essential element of the Alexander Technique is the use of behavior modification, such as analyzing and correcting how a singer transitions from sitting to standing. According to this technique, there is a correct way to make this transition, a way that begins with leading with your head and does not include a forced rocking sensation. Having students not only correcting their posture, but also how they achieve posture, is an essential tool in the choral classroom.

Another aspect of the Alexander Technique that is central, but not necessarily exclusive to the method, is the use of visualization to work through “stage fright”. In this technique, students would close their eyes and visualize every step of their performance. Through this technique students would experience the performance before even stepping on the stage, allowing them to better prepare for the anxiety-inducing situation. Another useful way to integrate this method is through the use of visualization practice. For some students it is not always possible to sing out loud and properly practice their music; however, they could easily “rehearse” the music in their head. This technique would require students to replay what they learned in class in their heads, sing through the piece in their heads, or speak or chant their music in their heads. A lot can be accomplished through this method without the singer even opening their mouths. Although it may be difficult to completely integrate the Alexander Technique into the choral classroom in its entirety, adding portions of the method to daily practice can be beneficial.

Application of Body Mapping

Body Mapping is another component originally found in the Alexander Technique that can and should be incorporated into a choral setting. Unfortunately, many students in the 21st Century are unaware of basic anatomy and body functions, much less the anatomy and body functions relating to singing mechanisms. Most likely, middle and high school students are

blissfully unaware of the elements of the vocal mechanism, the difference between the soft and hard palate, the location and use of the intercostal muscles, the inner workings of the resonating cavities that make up a singer's "mask", etc. Without the use of Body Mapping in the choral classroom, students are not able to comprehend teacher instruction because they do not know what these basic singing functions are. For example, a student cannot raise their soft palate if they do not know what a soft palate is or where it is located. Likewise, students cannot feel nor understand the involuntary movement of the diaphragm or the role of the abdominal and intercostal muscles in breath support if they do not know what these body parts are or what their function is.

To utilize this method in the choral classroom, first, have students draw their own perceived body map of what they think "x" body part looks like and where they believe it is located. Have students add other organs, muscles, etc. based on cognitive ability and the functions to be taught that day. Then, collect the student work and briefly examine the body maps as a form of formative assessment. Next, show the students anatomical diagrams to teach them the correct placement and function of these organs, muscles, etc. Finally, the students should redraw the body map in order to fully comprehend the concept. Having the students draw their body maps allows the teacher to administer pre- and post- tests to visually represent which of the students already have an accurate perception of their body map or if they were able to achieve the correct perceived body map by the end of the lesson. Executing a body mapping activity prevents the student from experiencing their entire voice training unable to receive an accurate perception of instruction. All choral instruction should incorporate body mapping of some sort, otherwise, students will not achieve true comprehension of content.

Application of the Feldenkrais Method

The Feldenkrais Method is quite similar to the Alexander Technique as it includes many of the same practices. Both techniques center on correcting injury, retraining bad habits that lead to injury, and both require extensive training to perform. One difference between the Feldenkrais Method and the Alexander Technique is that the Feldenkrais method focuses on which posture, action, or habit is more sustainable for the person practicing the method instead of the “correct” way to perform said posture, action, or habit. This approach to behavior modification may be better suited for a school scenario as students have a wide variety of unique needs. Instead of the teacher dictating the correct way to perform a behavior, the student and teacher can work together to find a way in which the student can correct the poor habit that meets his or her needs.

As with the Alexander Technique, it is not recommended that a choral director use the Feldenkrais method in its entirety in a choral setting, unless that teacher has achieved the proper certification in the technique. The Feldenkrais Method is a complex method that requires extensive training and without such training, it would not be wise to incorporate. A teacher can, however, incorporate certain elements of the method into choral practice and introduce students to the various available methods.

Application of Rolfing and Myofascial Release

Rolfing and the related technique Myofascial release are hands-on manipulative techniques that require a physical therapist trained in said techniques. Due to the nature of these techniques this researcher does not advise utilizing these techniques in a choral setting. Two reasons justify this statement: 1) these techniques should only be administered by a licensed physical therapist trained in these subjects, and 2) these techniques require the practitioner to

physically touch the patient which would not be appropriate in a school setting. The teacher can utilize these techniques in the choral classroom in the following two ways: 1) for educational purposes, 2) referrals for student injuries. In a choral setting, the teacher can provide lessons on various mindfulness techniques and can include the practice of Rolfing and Myofascial Release to retrain movement and heal an injury. If a student experiences an injury from misuse or other singing related injury, the teacher can suggest that the parent take the student to a physical therapist trained in Rolfing or Myofascial Release. Otherwise, these methods should not be used in a choral setting.

Application of Pilates

Pilates is an excellent tool to utilize in the choral classroom. Not only does this practice improve posture and breathing, but it also increases dynamic control, reduces unwanted wavering in phonation, and improves vocal fold elasticity. Through the use of controlled body movements and exercises, practitioners strengthen their core, create a connection between breath and movement, improve posture, and experience relaxation. Pilates is accessible by all and can increase physical and mental stamina and function in all participants even if they have to modify the movements to accommodate for injury or to build up strength. Pilates can be an effective tool in the choral classroom because it improves the students' mental, physical, and vocal health, in a manner that all students can achieve.

When considering which types of Pilates activities to incorporate in the choral classroom, it is important to consider if equipment is a reasonable expectation to require of your students or your school system to purchase. Consider the following: will your school purchase light weights and resistance bands for each student in your program? If so, how will you justify the purchase of these items for one small segment of your lesson? Is spending a large sum of allotted funds on

Pilates equipment a wise investment for your program? If a situation is conducive to the purchase equipment for Pilates practice, then all Pilates activities are available for this instruction. If your school or your students cannot afford resistance bands, small weights, or other Pilates equipment, then the exercises can be modified for use without equipment. For example, students could complete the controlled action and visualize the heaviness of the weights or the tension caused by the resistance band. With or without equipment, Pilates is a valuable tool that can improve student's breathing, posture, and elements of their vocal mechanism and should be incorporated into the choral classroom.

Application of Yoga

Yoga serves as a tool to improve most major problems associated with student singers. This practice improves posture, strength, coordination, breathing technique, mental clarity, and focus. Yoga also promotes understanding of resonance, manages performance anxiety, allows students to connect with themselves and their emotions, and releases tension. Yoga can improve each one of these factors, meaning that virtually every problem associated with young singers can be managed with the integration of a yoga practice.

These habits cannot, however, improve if the teacher only holds yoga classes only occasionally. For yoga to be effective, students must actively participate in a yoga practice regularly. In order to achieve this, teachers and students must balance occasional in-person yoga instruction with "yoga for homework". Students must establish a consistent yoga routine outside of their choral class in order to see results in their mental and physical health as well as their singing. It may not be feasible in every situation for students to practice yoga in a specific way outside of school. Some students may have access to the internet and can download free Yoga practices and follow them at home, some students may have access to Yoga DVDs, other

students may record the in-person class on their phone and use the recording to practice yoga, and other students may need to remember the sequence of the in-person class and lead their own Yoga practice from memory. The teacher needs to be adaptable to the student's situation.

Yoga and Pilates are quite similar in practice as both methods utilize controlled movement, breath control, strategic poses, and fluid transitions between each movement. Pilates utilizes equipment that may not be available in every choral situation, therefore, Yoga can be used in place of Pilates with similar results. Yoga may be a better alternative in a school choral setting as more equipment is required for Pilates, making Yoga a more fiscally available option. Another reason Yoga may be preferable to Pilates is that while both practices improve posture, breath, strength, and stability, and other physical components; however, Yoga places more of an emphasis on emotional wellness.

When incorporating Yoga into the choral classroom, the teacher can approach the subject in one of two ways. If the teacher is trained or knowledgeable about Yoga, they may elect to lead the class in a Yoga practice themselves. If the teacher can do this, this may allow the teacher to specially design the Yoga practice to fit the vocal, physical, or emotional needs of the students on any given day. Teachers who are not as familiar with Yoga may elect to bring in a recorded Yoga practice that the students can follow and the teacher could participate in as well. Teachers could occasionally have entire class periods devoted to Yoga practice, or they could incorporate mini Yoga practices into daily activity.

Implications for Vocal Health

Multiple of the aforementioned mindfulness-based practices improve a singer's vocal health. Essential elements of vocal health include proper breathing, proper posture or alignment, and a balance of tension and relaxation. General Secular Mindfulness, the Alexander Technique,

Body Mapping, the Feldenkrais Method, Pilates and Yoga all address these three fundamental components of vocal health. As we are reminded of the bodymind connection, all body functions are connected including physical functions of the body and the emotional or mental functions happening within the brain. Due to the bodymind connection, in addition to the vocal health benefits of these mindfulness-based practices, the physical benefits of the practices would also increase vocal health in the singer. For example, if a vocalist is experiencing back pain and yoga helps to alleviate said back pain, although the back pain is not directly related to vocal health, the absence of the back pain will allow the student to better focus when singing, stand more comfortably and with improved posture, and possibly to expand the ribcage further in order to take in a larger breath. It is clear that mindfulness-based practices have a positive impact both directly and indirectly on vocal health.

Plan for Mindfulness Integration

To establish the most effective plan for incorporating mindfulness into the choral classroom, each mindfulness-based practice was examined to categorize the practices into their most applicable uses. After examining the various mindfulness practices, their uses and effectiveness, Yoga or Pilates and general secular mindfulness are the most effective mindfulness tools for direct instruction. Meaning that Yoga or Pilates and mindfulness should be directly taught and incorporated directly, in their entirety, into the choral instruction. Components of the Alexander Technique, Body Mapping, and the Feldenkrais Method, should be incorporated in small segments into everyday instruction. For example, teaching students the proper way to transition between sitting and standing and having them practice that each time they sit or stand. Rolfing and Myofascial Release should only be used as referral options for students with injuries or to educate students on potential options for physical and vocal care.

An Average Day with Mindfulness

As students arrive in class each day, they will complete an opening activity on their own in order to help the students “switch gears” from the previous class. Immediately following the opening activity and review of the opening activity, students will participate in a “mindfulness minute”. This mindfulness minute consists of the teacher leading the students in a general secular mindfulness activity such as a body scan or a noting practice. The teacher will invite students to close their eyes, but suggest that if the students feel uncomfortable closing their eyes, they may soften their gaze and either look straight ahead or down at the floor. This allows students to participate in the mindfulness minute in a way that is comfortable for them. Teachers may lead the mindfulness minute themselves or may play a recording of a short mindfulness practice. Following the mindfulness practice, students will warm-up their voices and will be reminded of their awareness of how each placement, breath, etc. feels. Each time a new vocal function is discussed, the teacher will ask the students to complete a body mapping activity. This is so that when the director reminds them of their awareness of certain vocal functions, the students understand the function and location of that vocal function. Throughout the rehearsal, students will practice sitting and standing using the Alexander or Feldenkrais method for transitioning between sitting and standing. Students will practice mindfulness first as a state, however, if this practice is continued in every rehearsal, students will begin to adapt mindfulness as a trait and will be mindfully aware throughout the entire rehearsal for each rehearsal.

Mindfulness Homework

As previously mentioned, asking students to participate in mindfulness-based practices during class time may not be enough to establish productive vocal habits and adopt mindfulness

as a trait. In order to meet this goal, the teacher may elect to assign a mindfulness practice as a form of homework. In lieu of a standard practice chart, teachers would send home a mindfulness practice chart for the students to complete a certain amount of mindfulness activities each week. Each day that the student participates in a mindfulness practice the student would complete an entry answering the questions, 1) How long was your mindfulness practice? 2) What type of mindfulness practice did you complete? 3) How did you complete this meditation? 4) Describe how you felt before and after your mindfulness practice? See Table 1.1 for a sample. Students would complete one of these practice charts each time they practiced mindfulness and they would write a short reflection of their mindfulness practices that week. This weekly reflection would include the following questions: 1) what did you learn about yourself or about mindfulness this week, 2) do you feel like any aspects of your physical, mental, or vocal health improved due to your mindfulness practice this week? If so, how? 3) how will you change your mindfulness practice next week based on what you learned in your mindfulness practice this week?

Having students complete a mindfulness practice chart is one way to encourage students to practice mindfulness outside of the classroom. Through this method, while the teacher is not asking students to practice music, students should develop skills necessary to improve their musical ability and their ability to focus and remain more present during class which could result in increased productivity within the choral classroom. This method may also be effective in situations where students may not have the technology or emotional support at home to practice music. In this situation, students may not be allowed to practice their music because their parents do not approve of them singing or do not want to hear them practicing. Practicing mindfulness, however, does not require students to access technology or a piano, and mindfulness can be

practiced without anyone knowing that mindfulness is being practiced. Therefore, at home, students can improve their physical, mental, and vocal health without ever having to phonate in any way.

An Average Semester with Mindfulness

Mindfulness of some form should be taught in each class throughout an entire school year. For this particular application of mindfulness, the following curriculum schedule will adhere to a block schedule format. This format implies that students will have choir class every other day for an hour and forty-five minutes. For the first five-day cycle, students will be introduced to one new mindfulness skill a day. The opening activity can be a method to introduce the topic of the day or the topic can be introduced following the opening activity. Mindfulness minutes begin each class period regardless of the method to be taught that day.

On the first day, students will be introduced to the mindfulness minute, which includes teaching them about general secular mindfulness, however, students will not learn any other mindfulness practices that day. It is essential that on the first day students enjoy making music together. Having a positive musical experience on the first day of choir class is an essential tool for retaining students and getting them excited about choir. On day two, students will learn the concept of Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais Method as well as common practices of the techniques that should be observed daily. On day three, students will combine concepts from the previous two methods to reinforce comprehension of the three methods. On day four, students will learn about the concept of Body Mapping and will draw basic body map that indicate the lungs, diaphragm, abdominal muscles, etc. This will be done for two reasons: 1) so the students can understand Body Mapping for later use when discussing specific body parts and functions, and 2) so the students can understand the basic body components of breathing. On day five,

students will learn about the physical, mental, and vocal benefits of both Yoga and Pilates. The teacher will then lead the students in a Yoga practice either personally leading the practice or sharing a Yoga practice from a pre-recorded virtual experience. It is following this lesson that students will receive a Mindfulness Practice Chart that will be completed each week for the remainder of the year. Then, students have a basic knowledge of all mindfulness methods to be used throughout the year.

General Secular Mindfulness will be used each day as part of the Mindfulness Minute and components of the Alexander and Feldenkrais methods will be used each day as the students are mindful of their movements and transitions. As part of these methods, students will either self-correct habits or correct habits with the teacher's instruction. Mindfulness days will take place intermittently throughout the school year. On these days the teacher will lead the students in a Yoga or Pilates practice for a large portion or all of the class period. Students will be reminded to incorporate things that they learn on these days into their own personal practice. Yoga and Pilates will be taught in rotation. Toward the end of the first semester, the teacher will introduce potential options for vocal health care outside of choir class. This lesson would include the techniques of Rolfing and Myofascial Release as well as other aspects of vocal health care unrelated to mindfulness.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices serve a valuable purpose in vocal music education. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices improve the physical, mental, and vocal health of students and encourage productivity within the choral classroom. This study sought to draw connections between the use of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in general and vocal education and mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in choral settings. Research suggests that these principles are transferable and mindfulness would be a valuable asset to the choral classroom and choral educator.

Summary of Study

This study attempted to address issues found in the 21st-century classroom. Today, choral students experience increased mental health concerns and decreased attention span, making learning in any environment difficult. Students struggle to focus on tasks at hand due to outside influences such as homework, family concerns, abuse, neglect, and friendship troubles. This study examined the use of mindfulness in the choral classroom as a way to improve student's focus, clarity, and mental state. Through this research, the blueprints for a mindfulness-based choral class were presented in hopes that the learning environment would allow students to be more prepared, focused, and present. Choir classes rely heavily on students paying mindful attention to the sensations created by vocal or physical actions. The study addresses the need for using mindfulness techniques as a lack of these elements causes the student's vocal and physical changes to be arbitrary instead of intentional. In order to improve choral pedagogy, this study provides means to teach students how to be mindfully aware of their vocal practices through mindfulness-based practices.

Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices have been proven to improve student function for individuals in choral and vocal settings; however, there is little, if any, research available on mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in choral education. This study filled the gap between the research available on mindfulness in vocal and general education to allow for mindfulness use in choral education. Through the investigation of various mindfulness techniques, this study provided evidence that mindfulness should be transferred from vocal and general education disciplines to choral music education.

Throughout the research, the question of how mindfulness and mindfulness-based based practices increase productivity in the choral classroom is addressed. The research built upon the concept that mindfulness is effective in general education and vocal settings and therefore could prove influential for choral use. Through this research, mindfulness was adapted to fit the choral classroom, after sufficient research was provided to suggest mindfulness effectively in this setting. Various mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices were examined and suggested for use in the choral classroom. The research also addressed three sub-questions, the answer of which being an explanation of mindfulness meditation, the pre-existing use of mindfulness in vocal settings, and an example of mindfulness curriculum for the choral classroom.

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this research was to investigate mindfulness-based practices in order to improve choral music education. Through the examination of preexisting vocal and mindfulness literature, this research sought to determine if mindfulness has a place in choral music education. The study addressed various mindfulness methods and how they could be incorporated into the classroom. Implications of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in vocal practice were examined. A curriculum was developed in order to use as a blueprint for using mindfulness in

choirs, the target audience being choral music educators. With this blueprint, choral educators will be able to provide more productive and mindful instruction. One additional purpose of this research was to determine ways in which educators can enrich student lives using mindfulness techniques. Through this research, it is found that mindfulness does in enrich our students' lives by improving their mental, physical, and vocal health. Mindfulness in the choral classroom allows students to focus on the task at hand as opposed to the many problems going on in their lives outside the classroom. The skills learned from mindfulness in the choral classroom will benefit them for years to come. The desired outcome of this research is that it will impact the world of vocal music education and encourage choral directors to incorporate aspects of mindfulness into their everyday instruction.

The purpose of this research also included the discussion of mindfulness as it is used in biblical and secular settings, only mentioning other religions when relevant. This study contained marginal mention of Buddhism or Hinduism, only speaking about them as they relate to the roots of hatha yoga. Modern Yoga for exercise was discussed and recommended for practice in the choral classroom, its parent practice Hatha Yoga, and Yoga as an ancient practice were discussed only to explain the context to the type of secular Yoga practiced today. This research only discussed mindfulness, mindfulness-based practices, and meditation as they are used in biblical and secular settings. No discussion or comparison was given between religions and all aspects of mindfulness, both religious and secular were explored. The purpose of this research included determining if mindfulness-based practices can be observed as a Christian, which, according to the research, is not only possible, but encouraged.

Summary of Procedure

In a series of two steps, this research set out to determine if there was sufficient evidence to support using mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices in choral music education. The first step was to examine pre-existing research on the subject of mindfulness which comprised of definitions of mindfulness terms, non-musical uses of mindfulness, mindfulness in education, and mindfulness in voice practices. This preliminary research was used as a baseline for the entirety of the project. The preliminary research does not include many, if any, resources on mindfulness in choral education because there are few available. In part step two of the project, the preliminary research will be synthesized and applied to a choral music education setting. The findings of the effects of mindfulness in vocal and education settings were adapted to meet the needs of students in a choral setting. An example curriculum was developed, demonstrating various ways mindfulness can be incorporated into the choral classroom.

For this research, I utilized the Jerry Falwell Library, my personal collection of texts, and borrowed texts from colleagues in order to examine pre-existing literature. This preliminary research was the only form of data collection, which presents limitations. There were few, if any, resources available on mindfulness in the choral education setting, therefore all data collected was through a historical approach to research. This historical approach did not include any new data-collecting. Knowledge gained in this research was adapted to fit a choral setting; however, the adaptation has not been tested in a quantitative or qualitative study. The hypothesis proved true, as there is sufficient evidence to suggest that mindfulness could improve physical, mental, and emotional health in choral students. This research filled a need for incorporating mindfulness techniques that are proven effective in education and vocal settings, into the choral classroom. The information gathered in this project has the potential to revitalize the structure of choral

classroom by improving students' wellbeing and mind-body-spirit connection. This study has shown that mindfulness has profound implications in the choral classroom. Mindfulness does in fact increase focus amongst choir members, improve vocal production, posture, and mental and physical awareness.

Summary of Findings and Prior Research

This research investigated the effectiveness of mindfulness used in a choral setting. Mindfulness proved to be a useful method for the choral classroom that can be used in a variety of unique ways. Mindfulness improves several common issues found in the choral classroom including, vocal health, breath control, posture, mental clarity and focus, and physical awareness. Mindfulness also improves the mental and physical health of students, even helping to alleviate anxiety and depression related to past trauma. There is one potential problem with incorporating mindfulness in the choral classroom, the problem being a lack of understanding, but this problem can be mitigated by educating parents and administrators on the subject of mindfulness, or introducing the principles of mindfulness without labeling them as mindfulness.

The historical circumstances surrounding the development of mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices are significant. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices were developed between the years 1890 and 1930, the world events during that time can explain the relevance of this creation. During this time period there were a variety of scientific, technological, and psychological advancements that improved understanding of health science. Scientists began focusing on the mind in addition to the body, making way for the understanding of the mind-body connection. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices were developed amidst, and as a result of, these discoveries and advancements in psychology.

Mindfulness and singing appear to have a symbiotic relationship of sorts. Choral singing is improved by the use of mindfulness and mindfulness is increased when participating in choral singing. Choral singing requires the participant to be present and focus on a variety of stimuli at once, therefore encouraging mindfulness simply by participating in a rehearsal. In addition, a vocalist who practices mindfulness regularly may find it easier to be successfully mindful when participating in a choral rehearsal, because they have already developed mindfulness as a trait.

Incorporating general secular mindfulness into the choral classroom proves to be a useful tool for increasing mental presence, clarity, and relaxation which can lead to decreased anxiety and increased breath control. These techniques can be done using apps or teacher or student-guided mindfulness activities. The use of this technique will not only improve students' mental and physical health, but will also improve their vocal health. General secular mindfulness also improves behavior and therefore can aid in behavior management. General secular mindfulness is used in the general education setting to reduce stress and anxiety related to past trauma, increase self-awareness, and encourage positive thinking and gratitude among students. The use of mindfulness in the general education classroom can be used as a blueprint for incorporating mindfulness in the choral classroom.

Mindfulness can be an effective tool for Christians and Christian educators as well. For Christians, mindfulness encourages presence during prayer, intentionality, and care for his or her temple. Mindfulness can be used in a choral classroom whether the choral director works at a public or private school although justification may be required for teaching mindfulness in private schools. In private school, prayer can be used as a bridge to teach students about mindfulness. Mindfulness is a healthy way to draw closer to God by improving your physical, mental, and spiritual health.

The Alexander Technique and the Feldenkrais method are valuable instruments for change in the choral classroom. These methods, however, should only be taught using components of the methods, unless the director is a certified Alexander or Feldenkrais teacher. Two important components of the Alexander Technique to include are visualization and behavior modification. Body Mapping should also be used to help students understand the location of mechanisms within the body. Behavior modification is also used in the Feldenkrais method, however, in this method, students must find their own “correct” way to move instead of being instructed the “correct” way to move.

Rolfing and Myofascial Release are effective mindfulness-based healing techniques; however, they should not be utilized in the choral classroom. Teachers can educate students on the uses and benefits of Rolfing and Myofascial Release, but the teacher should not practice them within their class. The teacher may also recommend these practices to students who could benefit from them. Rolfing and Myofascial Release should only be practiced by Physical and Massage Therapists certified in each respective method.

Pilates and Yoga hold profound implications for the choral classroom. Pilates is proven not only to improve physical and mental health but also to improve aspects of the vocal mechanism. Yoga corrects virtually every problem associated with student singers. Through Yoga, students can improve resonance, decrease performance anxiety, increase connection to personal emotions, relieve tension, and improve posture, strength, coordination, breathing technique, mental clarity, and focus. Yoga and Pilates both serve a purpose in the choral classroom and can even be added as a supplemental practice outside of class.

In this research, an outline of a mindfulness curriculum was developed. This curriculum incorporated the mindfulness techniques in one of three ways. The first way mindfulness was

integrated is through direct instruction. In this example, Yoga or Pilates and general secular mindfulness would be taught through direct instruction. The second way mindfulness can be integrated is through the inclusion of portions of the method in daily instruction. Alexander Technique, Body Mapping, and the Feldenkrais method would be taught in this manner. The third way mindfulness practice would be included is through education and referral. Rolfing and Myofascial Release would be taught in this manner. Despite the method of instruction, all of these mindfulness techniques have a place in the choral classroom.

Recommendations for Future Study

As mentioned in the limitations of this study, the research investigates pre-existing literature regarding mindfulness and applies it to a choral setting, without providing a qualitative or quantitative study. Future research should include a qualitative or quantitative study about the use of mindfulness in choral music education. This research could be conducted regarding several subjects. One example of further research includes testing the model curriculum developed as part of this research. With approval from the International Review Board, a researcher could implement this curriculum in a school choral program and test the findings throughout a semester or year. A second example would be to research any of the mindfulness-based practices. Again, with IRB approval a researcher could implement any one of the mindfulness-based practices in a choral setting to provide measurable data on the effectiveness of the method. This could be done individually for each method. Another example of further research is similar to the previous example, testing each one of these methods separately and comparing and contrasting the methods to determine the most effective method. This process would require IRB approval as well.

There is more work to be done in the way of mindfulness for choral education research. The effectiveness of mindfulness in a choral setting shows promise and should be investigated further. If choral educators can provide students with a safe environment that allows them to develop mentally, physically, and vocally into healthy adults then that is something the choral community should strive for and investigate. Mindfulness and mindfulness-based practices hold profound implications for the choral classroom and these implications should continuously be investigated.

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APPENDIX

Table 1.1 – Sample Mindfulness Practice Chart:

Session 1:

How long was your mindfulness practice? _____

What type of mindfulness practice did you complete? (Circle One)

Yoga Meditation Pilates Other: _____

How did you complete this meditation? (Circle One)

Self-led Guided Meditation Video Other: _____

Describe how you felt before your mindfulness practice:

Describe how you felt after your mindfulness practice:

Table 1.2 – Sample Mindfulness Reflection Chart

Reflection:

What did you learn about yourself or about mindfulness this week?

Do you feel like any aspects of your physical, mental, or vocal health improved due to your mindfulness practice this week? If so, how?

How will you change your mindfulness practice next week based on what you learned in your mindfulness practice this week?

Table 1.3

Curriculum Outline

Day 1: Mindfulness Minute (General Secular Mindfulness)

Day 2: Alexander Technique and Feldenkrais Method

Day 3: Review

Day 4: Body Mapping

Day 5: Yoga and Pilates

Every Day Structure:

- 1) Opening Activity
- 2) Opening Activity Review
- 3) Mindfulness Minute
- 4) Vocal Technique (Warm-Ups)
- 5) Rehearsal (Integrating components of Alexander and Feldenkrais)

Mindfulness Days:

- Yoga Day (2 times a semester or more)
- Pilates Day (2 times a semester or more)

*Rotate between the two