did not do anything

stories of
apartheid
schooling

the inequities of the world intrude into your classroom

"It's just not in your control, and you'll drive yourself crazy dwelling on these things."

jeopardize your career

Allsup, R. E., & Shieh, E. (2012). Social justice and music education: The call for a public pedagogy. *Music Educators Journal, 98*(4), 47–51.

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Safe Space for LGBTQ Students in Secondary School Choral Programs: A National Survey
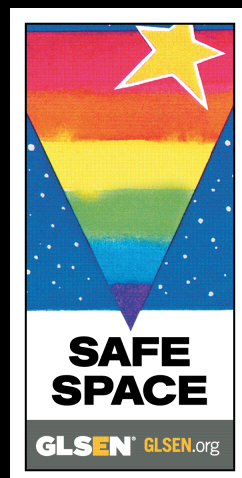
Society for Music Teacher Education Symposium
Greensboro, NC
18 September 2015

Defining "Safe Space"

- GLSEN: "a welcoming, supportive and safe environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students… For many students, simply knowing that allies exist can be a source of support."

SAFE SPACE
GLSEN® GLSEN.org

Defining "Safe Space"

- Hendricks, Smith, & Staunch (2014)
  - Safe spaces are "learning environments in which students will be more likely to freely express themselves… [and foster] purpose-driven student commitment, musical mastery, and a sense of self-actualization and 'flow'" (p. 36)

Literature Snapshot

- LGBTQ students face many negative consequences (e.g., bullying, truancy) due to their gender-sexual diversity in K-12 schools (Aragon et al., 2014)

- Transgender students experience higher levels of victimization than their LGB peers (Greytak, Kosciw, & Diaz, 2009)

Literature Snapshot

- Middle school band students reported little bullying within the band room but were "victimized at higher rates outside the band classroom than inside the band classroom" (Rawlings, in review)

- 30% of band students in NCAA Division I marching bands experienced some form of hazing (Silveira & Hudson, 2015)

"I think a lot of the times, people in choral environments don't talk about LGBTQ+ issues because they think, 'It's performing arts. So many people are gay in this industry that if you're in any kind of performing art, naturally you're accepting.'

But the truth is that not everyone is. And if you assume that people are accepting just because they're into performing arts, that makes it difficult to move forward and create a safe space because everyone is assuming acceptance and therefore no one is talking.

Not only that, by not making clear it's a safe space, people also continue to believe a lot of stereotypes in the industry (especially with males)(…) If teachers in middle school and high school were more open about their acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, not only would it create a safe space but it would create a gateway to help disband stereotypes."

Method

- Mixed-method survey of collegiate singers who self-identify as LGBTQ.
  - T/F, Likert-type, four free response
- *N* = 1,123 collegiate choral students
- Explored their perceived levels of safety and support within their secondary school choral programs.

- What was the role of school choral programs in providing safe spaces for LGBTQ singers in middle and high school?

- What were the lived experiences of LGBTQ singers who participated in middle and high school while negotiating their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression?

- Did participation in secondary choral music impact the "coming out" processes of LGBTQ singers?

- How can choral music educators create safe space?

Sexuality   Gender
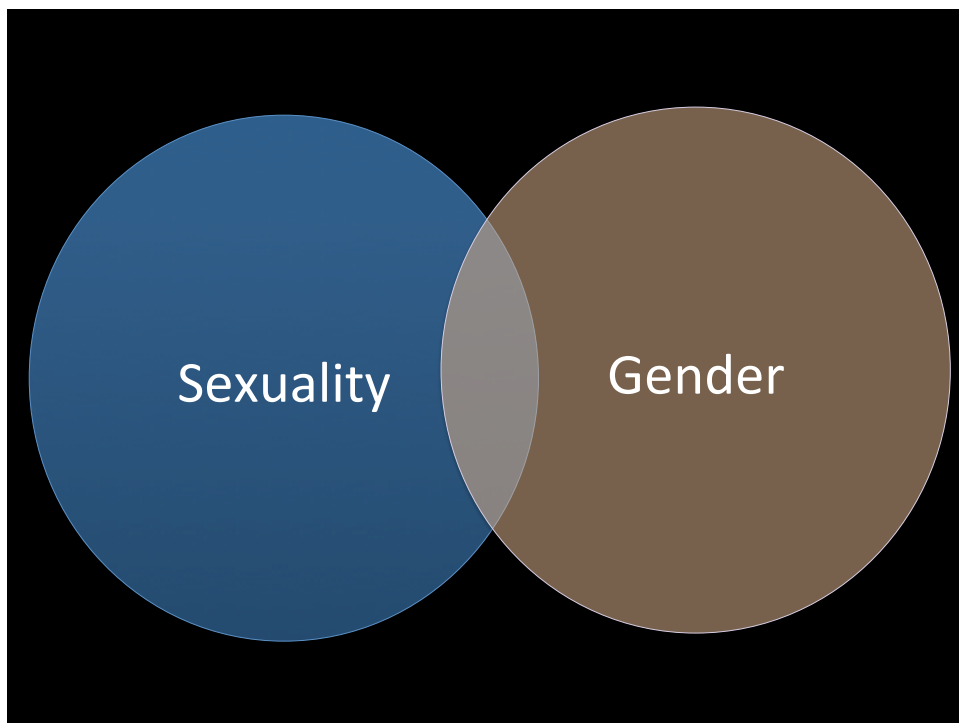
Terms

L . G . B . T . Q

- Sexual Orientation *(who one is attracted to)*
  - Gay (442 respondents)
  - Bisexual (351 respondents)
  - Lesbian (115 respondents)
  - Straight (7, LGBTQ due to gender identity)
  - Not listed (147)
  - **1,123 valid responses**

Survey Gender Options

androgyny

what most people think the gender spectrum is

what the gender spectrum actually is

- Cisgender female
- Cisgender male
- Transgender
- Intersex
- Gender non-conforming
- Questioning
- Not Listed

- Gender Identity and Gender Expression
  - –Binary
  - –Cisgender: if your gender identity matches your assigned birth sex (990 respondents)
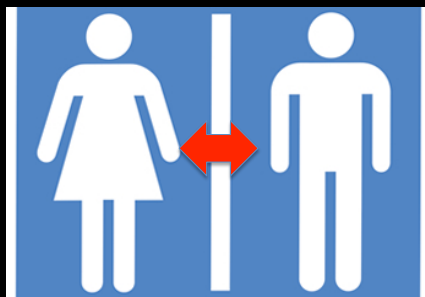
L . G . B . T . Q   Terms

- Gender Identity and Gender Expression
  - –133 of our respondents express gender in ways that are outside the traditional gender binary (11.84%).
  - –Trans*: includes transgender, gender non-conforming, gender-questioning, etc.

L.G.B.T.Q Terms

Gender norms/Gender roles

Socially constructed

Culture/context specific

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

THE NUMBERS

Safe Space

•But…only 19% of respondents actually disclosed their LGBTQ identity to a choral teacher while in secondary school.

- Did you experience bullying/harassment by peers during activities sponsored by the choral department (e.g., rehearsals, concerts, tours, etc.)?
  - 22% said yes.
- Were you bullied or harassed by choral peers while outside of the choral environment (at lunch, after school, between classes)?
  - 37% said yes.

The Middle School Choral Experience

- Did your middle school choral teacher(s) have rules prohibiting hate speech toward LGBTQ people?
  - 57% said no
- Did you have a middle school choral teacher who openly encouraged acceptance of LGBTQ people while teaching their classes?
  - 21% said yes

The Middle School Choral Experience

- Would you suggest that a questioning student at your junior high/middle school confide in the choral teacher?
  - 68% said no
- My middle school or junior high school choir room (the physical space) was a place at school where I felt safe as an LGBTQ student.
  - 30% said no

The High School Choral Experience

- 48% felt safe expressing their LGBTQ identity within their high school choral programs.
- 65% describe the choir room (the physical space) as a place where they felt safe as an LGBTQ student in high school.

The High School Choral Experience

- Did your high school choral teacher(s) have rules prohibiting hate speech toward LGBTQ people?
  - –51% said no
- Did you have a high school choral teacher who openly encouraged acceptance of LGBTQ people while teaching their classes?
  - –52% said yes

Gender non-conforming, trans*, and gender-questioning respondents felt less safe than did their other LGB peers.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS:

WHAT THEY SAID

Places and Religion
What Teachers Did Well
What Could Be Improved

"My middle school was a religious school that taught that gays were the reason the world is falling apart, so it was not only not a safe space, it was a dangerous place. The choir was filled with boys who didn't want to be in band and they were never disciplined for their homophobic comments. I think the conductor was scared of getting fired for being pro-LGBTQ."

"It was just never talked about. And being in the Bible Belt, I was under the impression that I had a problem."

Places and Religion
What Teachers Did Well
What Could Be Improved

"My middle school choir director always challenged our ways of thinking, taught us that there were many types of love, and encouraged us to accept others."

"[My high school choir director] made a point of starting out the year making sure that hate speech of any kind was not to be tolerated. Music was the core to everything. If you could make music, it didn't matter who you were attracted to or identify as."

"Personally, the bond with my teacher in high school was the most important factor for me. Choir was a positive experience in every way because he was very understanding. He made music be the most important factor of choir, not sexuality…I think it is really important for students to be able to confide in their teachers, especially music teachers*, because music is a way for people to connect with others as well as themselves."*

**Places and Religion
What Teachers Did Well
What Could Be Improved**

"There was never any mention of LGBTQ people at all, and any bullying went unchecked - overall there was an erasure of the LGBTQ identity. The first step would be acknowledgment of the identity and then to have rules specific to that identity against bullying in order to facilitate acceptance and to create a safe space."

"I worry about choir being inherently cissexist. In my college the choir is divided into a mixed choir and a women's choir. I was [placed] in the women's choir even though I do not identify as a woman. I have had similar experiences throughout my singing career. I wish directors were more willing to divide by voice part than by sex or at least perceived gender."

WHAT MUSIC EDUCATORS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS CAN DO

- *"The teacher [could have addressed] issues such as bullying and discrimination openly to all of the choirs. It seemed as though a 'no bullying' policy was implied but never broken down as to what constituted bullying, harassment, and discrimination…"*

…As technology advanced, there was a wider range of means of communication that was not covered in a teacher's syllabus. There was a rule that talking behind someone's back was not allowed, but it didn't include Facebook, Snapchat, group texts, etc."

Encourage preservice and inservice teachers to institute policies regarding hate speech, bullying, or harassment.

Enumeration

Tim Estberg, New Trier High School

"If any student feels that our classroom is in any way uncomfortable, he or she is strongly encouraged to speak with me as soon as possible. Together, we will create an environment in which each of us can grow and learn in a safe place for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, class, level, or physical or mental ability."

"One time in our select women's choir, we were singing a love ballad and he was trying to get us to feel the music better. He said 'Just imagine how you feel when you're with that person you love. Think about how much you feel about that guy, or girl, or whomever you love. Just imagine the emotions.' For him to not go to that automatic, hetero-normative idea of girls liking guys almost made me cry. I felt so safe there."

"A trope that has become standard choral parlance is referring to TB voices as 'men' and SA voices as 'women.' As a trans* person singing in a choir, this makes me feel awkward and uncomfortable. I sing in a section of men, but I am not a man and I don't want to be called one. This misgendering [sic] has diminished and disregarded my identity in many facets of life. I would encourage choral teachers to abandon this vernacular."

Words matter. Semantics matter. What we say can help to create an inclusive environment.

"My high school choir director was gay and tried to make sure we didn't go through what he did."

If possible, music educators and teacher educators could come out to their students…as LGBTQ or as an ally.

"It might sound silly, but the safe space sticker makes all the difference in the world. Even if you don't talk about it, knowing your teacher won't tolerate hate makes a world of emotional difference."

SAFE SPACE

GLSEN® GLSEN.org
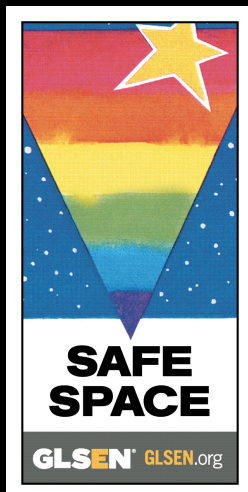
Post "safe space" stickers or signs outside in classrooms and/or offices

"*I hated having to wear the dress. If you want a standard uniform, allow the members to choose which one they wear. Forcing everyone with a vagina to wear a dress is bullshit.*"

Increasingly, choral programs will discover the need to examine requirements mandating gender-specific concert attire.

Choral teachers should have a plan for how to accommodate trans* singers who want to sing a voice part that matches their gender identity.

"Choir was just a place where I felt like I could be myself."

Thank you!
Questions?

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Email Josh OR scan the QR code to download the session slides.