

**Singing for Identity, Relationship, Wellbeing, and Strength:
Three Francophone Girls Negotiate Adolescence, Gender, and Minority Identity**

**A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Education
in the Department of Educational Psychology
and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon**

**By
Gisèle A. Lalonde**

© Copyright Gisèle A. Lalonde. November, 2009. All rights reserved.

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree from the University of Saskatchewan, I agree that the libraries of this university may make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for copying of this thesis in any manner, in whole or in part, for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor or professors who supervised my thesis work, or in their absence, by the head of the department or the dean of the college in which my thesis work was done. It is understood that any copying or publication or use of this thesis or parts thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of Saskatchewan in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my thesis.

Requests for permission to copy or to make other use of material in this thesis in whole or in part should be addressed to:

Department Head
Educational Psychology and Special Education
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive
Saskatoon, SK
S7N 5X1

Abstract

This study investigated three francophone adolescent girls' experiences with singing. A qualitative, narrative research approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Murray, 2003) was used to increase understanding about the benefits of singing, with a particular interest in exploring singing as a potentially positive means for adolescent minority-culture girls to successfully negotiate multiple aspects of identity, that is, adolescence, gender, and culture. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the participants to share their experiences, and describe what it is like for them to sing. Data were analyzed with The Listening Guide (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003), a relational analysis responsive to the narrative and authentic voices of participants, and used to generate "I" poems and identify themes. Three ways of singing were identified – private informal, social informal, public formal – as well as three themes, evoked with the metaphors of: *Rhythm* (singing and experiences of identity), *Harmony* (singing and relationships), and *Melody* (singing, wellbeing, and strength). Findings confirm and extend the small but growing research literature on the psychology of singing, and have implications for those interested in working with youth using a strength-based perspective focused on positive youth development (Larson, 2000).

Acknowledgements

In carrying out this project, I am reminded of how success depends on the effort, contributions, and support of many people. I would like to acknowledge all those people who played an integral role in helping me reach the completion of my dissertation.

First and foremost, I am grateful to the three young women who participated in this study. Your willingness to share your personal experiences involving singing and your openness to this project were greatly appreciated. You are three passionate, bold, beautiful, and inspiring young women! I truly enjoyed my time spent with you throughout all of the steps of this process, whether that was in person, in audio, on paper, or in thought and spirit!

Thank you to my supervisor, Jennifer Nicol. I could not have dreamed of a better fit for me personally and for my research topic. Your patience, encouragement, and steadiness allowed me to push through despite obstacles and setbacks. Your knowledge, guidance, and commitment throughout my journey as a student and researcher are sincerely treasured.

I would like to acknowledge my committee members: Stephanie Martin for your deep understanding of specific aspects of my research and your genuine interest and encouragement; Wilfrid Denis for your openness, curiosity, and connection to the francophone element of my research. Your detailed questioning always brought me to a deeper level; Dianne Miller, external examiner, for offering your support and feedback, and sharing your expertise.

I would also like to acknowledge le Conseil des écoles fransaskoises for their support and positive encouragement towards my goal of pursuing graduate studies.

Thank you to my parents for instilling in me certain values and beliefs, which have led me to reaching so many goals throughout my life, including this one. For always believing in me, trusting and supporting my decisions. I cannot express how much I am grateful to you both! Mille Mercis!

And finally, thank you to my husband Stephan. Graduate studies began in the infancy of our relationship. This journey and our relationship were thus somewhat paralleled in that as I complete this thesis, we are just beginning a new life together as husband and wife. Furthermore, we have lived many life-changing moments together these past four years and this academic process in particular has not always been easy for me, nor you for that matter. Yet, through it all, you have grounded me, loved and supported me unconditionally. I thank you for your numerous hours of editing and your openness to discussing my ideas and reflections about my research. Mostly, I thank you for being an inspiration and for always believing in me!

Dedication

I dedicate my thesis to all women, young and old, who sing. May you always sing authentically, passionately, and boldly. Let your voices be heard.

Table of Contents

Permission to Use.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Table of Contents.....	v
Chapter 1: An Introduction.....	1
My Story.....	1
The Present Study.....	5
Purpose.....	6
Research Question.....	6
Note on Voice Terminology.....	6
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
Identity Conceptualization.....	8
Adolescence.....	11
Adolescent Girls and Voice.....	13
Cultural Identity in Minority Adolescent Girls.....	15
Singing, Connecting With the Authentic Voice.....	17
Conclusion.....	20
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	22
Qualitative Inquiry.....	22
Narrative Research.....	22
The Listening Guide.....	23
Procedures for Gathering Data.....	23
Recruitment of Narrators.....	23
Interviews.....	25
Journal Entries.....	26
Data Analysis.....	26
Representing Data.....	29
Criteria for Quality.....	30
Fairness.....	30
Reflexivity.....	31
Positionality.....	31
Reciprocity.....	32
Constructivism.....	32
Ethical Considerations.....	33
Chapter 4: Results.....	34
Three Singers and Their Lyrics.....	34
Émilie.....	34
Sarah.....	36
Liane.....	39
Three Ways of Singing.....	41
Private Informal.....	41
Social Informal.....	42
Public Formal.....	42
Summary.....	46

Three Themes.....	47
Rhythm: Experiences of Identity.....	47
Adolescent Rhythm.....	47
Gender Rhythm.....	49
Francophone Rhythm.....	51
Singer Rhythm.....	54
Summary.....	56
Harmony: Relationships and Singing.....	57
Family.....	57
Friends and Peers.....	59
Audience.....	61
Higher Power.....	62
Self.....	63
Summary.....	64
Melody: Wellbeing and Strength.....	64
Self-Expression.....	64
Self-Esteem.....	67
Enjoyment.....	69
Coping and Healing.....	71
Summary.....	74
Reflection.....	75
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	76
Summary of the Findings.....	76
Integration of Findings With the Existing Literature.....	77
Singing and Being an Adolescent.....	77
Singing and Being a Girl.....	78
Singing and Being a Francophone.....	80
Singing and Wellbeing.....	81
Other Findings.....	81
Singer Identity.....	82
Taking Risks.....	83
Singing and Relationships.....	83
Singing Facilitates Coping and Healing.....	83
Ways of Singing.....	84
Singing in French versus English.....	85
Strengths of the Current Study.....	85
Limitations of the Current Study.....	87
Implications for Counselling Practice.....	88
Implications for Future Research.....	91
A Final Note.....	93
References.....	94
Appendix A: Recruitment Brochure.....	102
Appendix B: Interview Guide.....	104
Appendix C: Journal Writing Handout.....	105

Chapter 1: An Introduction

My Story

As I embark on this journey of discovery of adolescent francophone girls' singing experiences, I feel I have to reflect upon my personal journey and what has led me to this inquiry, as my experiences cannot be completely separated from the study.

I should begin by telling you that I am a woman, a Fransaskoise, Saskatchewan-born, French Canadian, living in a province where my language and culture are one of many prolific, non-visible minorities. I am also a singer, a student, a counselling professional, a teacher, a daughter, a sister, a friend, a spouse, and I could go on and on. However, reflecting on my past, from childhood through to adolescence and into my initial years of adulthood, certain things really stand out for me.

Whether from another country, Québec, or even within Saskatchewan for that matter, I often have people tell me, "I had no idea there were French speaking people in Saskatchewan, never mind communities!" There are francophone communities in Saskatchewan; I grew up in one of them. This small francophone community, unlike most, but part of a handful of others, not only has a French school, but also grocery stores, community associations, businesses, and French speaking people who ensure that the French language and culture is very much alive and well. Many other communities only bare their French name today, the French language having disappeared. Yet a few remain and according to the Government of Saskatchewan (2009), the history of Saskatchewan's Francophone presence dates back to the 17th century when France had an influence on almost all of North America. Another migratory shift toward Saskatchewan and the other Prairie provinces began in the 1920's whereby the settlers from Eastern Canada as well as Europe (France, Belgium, and Switzerland) created small villages, setting up schools, businesses, and parishes (Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, 2009). Today, more than 16,000 Francophones in Saskatchewan still use French and more than 50,000 residents of Saskatchewan are able to communicate in French (2009). The population of Francophones in Saskatchewan, according to Statistics Canada (2006), is under two percent, to give the reader an idea of the context in which Francophones live in.

Up until 1960, French-language education was not allowed in Saskatchewan (Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, 2009). During the 1970's, the francophone community of Saskatchewan established a series of cultural centres and the people began to refer

to themselves as Fransaskois (2009). Moreover, in 1982, Fransaskois parents began a long process to obtain governance of their own schools, which became a reality in 1993. Today, there are twelve francophone schools across the province and “the Fransaskois community is solidly rooted in the province and is reflected in its sense of identity and belonging.” (Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, 2009)

Although I was born Fransaskoise, I never really began contemplating this until the age of twelve. Before then, I just went about speaking with family and friends, going to school, playing, watching television, listening to music, all primarily in French. Then a slight shift occurred whereby I began to see beyond my French bubble and began to recognize and enjoy my uniqueness and Frenchness. Playing sports against English communities, beginning to integrate English social networks into my life were some of the things I experienced, which as a result, made me strangely more aware of my own French identity. Being a Francophone was special to me because I felt a sense of belonging to my community, my friends, my school, my family, and at times my Frenchness set me apart from my English counterparts. For example, when our girls’ volleyball team went out to play in other communities, we were known as the “Frenchies”. We had French cheers and were proud to be different. Consequently, our team always seemed to have a special bond that kept us unified.

Being a Francophone was, for the most part, wonderful. I can only recall one incident that was quite difficult. The year after I graduated from high school and was away traveling, certain people from my community, including my father, were working hard to bring a francophone school to our community. However, many people, mostly Francophones themselves, were strongly opposed to this idea. That did not stop this small group from following through with building the school. However, for some years, this small group of Francophones paid an ugly price. They were excluded, and often socially rejected by their own community and their “friends”. This incident was difficult for the community as a whole, especially for my immediate family. Strangely enough, there were even opposing views in my extended family. This caused additional tensions for many years. The experience, however difficult, never made me question my francophone identity or distance myself from it. If anything, it gave me the chance to appreciate my roots and respect and honour that part of me.

I have always loved being Francophone! I felt greater opportunities to do more things such as participate in associations or music activities, and I was able to connect with different social

groups because of my francophone identity. For example, I met other francophone singers and musicians from around the province and the country through various workshops or competitions. Being Francophone even opened the door for me to travel and study in another part of our country. It is special to me, and I have always been connected to that part of my identity, whether instinctively as a child or more consciously throughout my adolescence and adulthood.

The other part of my story that seems significant to mention relates to singing. Since I was a little girl, I have loved to sing. I loved anything that had to do with music, singing, or dancing for that matter. I remember singing along with my grandmother. She always seemed to be humming a tune or singing a song. As far back as I can recall, I remember spending hours and hours listening to my parents' great selection of vinyls. In wonderment, I engaged the stereo and listened to the music... loud. I danced in the living room, or just sat in a little wooden rocker, wearing gigantic headphones that were almost bigger than my head, completely covering my ears, passionately singing along to the lyrics and melodies. Although most of the music was in English, there were a few records in French. The older I got, the more music I listened and sang to. When I was about ten or eleven, I began discovering popular music through the radio and acquiring my own cassettes. Whenever someone had questions about a particular song or artist, they would turn to me, as I almost always had an answer. The role of music in my life only increased through my early teenage years. I sang and performed more frequently and with the advent of compact discs, began to build my own music collection.

With the onset of adolescence, I was beginning to discover my cultural pride and identity. Singing played a major role because when I sang in French or with other Francophones, I felt like I belonged and could express myself fully. However, regardless of the language I chose to sing in when I was home alone or with friends, singing was a way to communicate, cope, and heal. It was part of who I was and intricately woven into the francophone, adolescent, and girl facets of my identity. When I could not express hurt, anger, or fear through words, I could always sing. Singing cultivated my voice as identity and let it shine through rocky and troubled times and through moving, loving, and inspiring times. For that, I am grateful.

Two major pieces in my life are obvious to me when looking back at my adolescence. The first is my cultural language and identity, the second is singing. These two fundamentals, whether separated or connected, were integral aspects of my stormy and adventurous adolescent years. They grounded me, sparked passion within me, and helped me discover who I was and

what kind of road I would choose to take on my life journey. They also continue to shape the person I am to this day.

I embark

I feel

I have to reflect

I should begin

I am a woman

I am a singer

I could go on

I reflect

I was born Fransaskoise

I just went about

I began to see beyond

I experienced

I felt a sense of belonging

I have always loved being Francophone

I was able to connect

I have always been connected

I was a little girl

I loved to sing

I remember

I can recall

I would sit and play music

If I was not dancing

I was sitting, singing

I sang more and more...

I was beginning to discover

I sang in French

I felt
I belonged
I was
If I could not express
I could always sing
I am grateful

The Present Study

I could not help but wonder about francophone adolescent girls in Saskatchewan today. I was fortunate to teach some of them before pursuing graduate studies, but never had the opportunity to interact with them on more personal issues. I wondered if these girls experienced some of the same things I did as an adolescent. Do they feel marginalized, silenced, or unique by the fact that they are a) adolescent, b) girls, and c) a cultural minority? Do some of them find meaning in singing? Are these different aspects of identity expressed through singing? Is singing an everyday resource that helps adolescent francophone girls navigate the intersecting vulnerabilities of adolescence, culture, and gender? These are some of the questions that intrigued me and merited further exploration. I wanted to provide an opportunity for girls to be heard, expressing in words, their relationship and connection to singing as francophone adolescent girls.

The literature regarding adolescent girls suggests that this can be a challenging time of life (Arnett, 1999) as well as a positive and constructive one (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 2002). Other research explains that adolescent girls' worlds may be further complicated by cultural pressures (Pipher, 1994), and the silencing, masking, or hiding of adolescent female voices (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995), that is their unique expression of oneself (Zimmerman, 1991). Adolescent girls who are part of a cultural minority, like a francophone living on the Prairies for example, face even greater risks of being marginalized and silenced, not able to express their true self (Moshman, 2005). It is therefore important to listen to and encourage the expression of these girls' authentic voices to help them develop as healthy young women. Singing may be one way in which to meaningfully create these opportunities; it may be a gateway for adolescent francophone girls to remain connected with themselves.

Music, particularly singing, can be a powerful tool for healing (e.g., McClure, 1998) and expressing feelings and emotions (Monks, 2003). However, literature in this area is limited. Some research specific to singing and wellbeing, or singing and its benefits to the physical, psychological, and spiritual levels of development in adolescence exists (e.g., Ashley, 2002; Clift & Hancox, 2001); however, research specific to adolescent minority culture girls is not available.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore francophone adolescent girls' singing experiences, thereby addressing a gap in the literature and giving adolescent francophone girls a stage and a microphone with which they could share their stories, and inform readers of their journeys and experiences of singing. By exploring their experiences, I hoped to acquire greater understanding of singing and its role in the lives of francophone adolescent girls who negotiate multiple, intersecting identities; extend the research literature; and consider implications for programs and services delivered to francophone adolescent girls. This research is important and significant because it includes a group of individuals who have been excluded from previous studies and contributes further understanding about how singing can be a highly meaningful, positive, health-promoting activity.

Research Question

Supported by the extant literature, as well as my own experiences, the present study used narrative inquiry to explore the impact and meaning of singing for adolescent francophone girls. The guiding research question was: What is the experience and meaning of singing in the identity negotiations of francophone adolescent girls?

The next four chapters include a review of pertinent literature (Chapter 2), an explanation of the research methodology (Chapter 3), followed by the research findings (Chapter 4), and a discussion of the findings (Chapter 5).

Note on Voice Terminology

The term "voice" requires some explanation and exploration because it appears in various contexts throughout the study and has thus, a few different meanings defined as follows:

Speaking Voice – The literal definition of the word voice is the sounds that are made when people speak, shout, laugh, cry, etc.

Narrative Voice – Participants’ stories and experiences told during the interviews.

Singing Voice – The musical quality and sound produced by the voice, while singing.

Unique or Authentic Voice – In this context, Voice is used symbolically. Voice is unique to the individual and plays an essential role in communication (Wiens, Janzen, Mott, & Claypool, 2003). According to Uhlig, “The human voice is our earliest, most unique and most natural instrument for primary expression and communication. It is also our most intimate instrument and gives us the opportunity to make contact with ourselves and our environment.” (2006, p. 15) Voice is thus a vehicle for expression; it is like a mirror of each and every personality (Uhlig, 2006). Paul Newham (1998) offers a description of the voice:

The voice is the expression of who we are and how we feel. In the timbre of a person’s voice you can hear the subtle music of feeling and thought. The ever shifting collage of emotions which we experience infiltrates the voice with tones of happiness, excitement, depression, and grief. The human voice is also one way in which we preserve our identity and the voice and psychological state of an individual mutually influence each other (p. 24).

Loss of Voice – Voice is also used symbolically in this context. The “silencing of the self”, alternately referred to as “loss of voice”, is one of the numerous challenges to girls’ social, interpersonal, and emotional wellbeing (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002). Feminists and relational psychologists have recognized, since the early 1990’s, that loss of voice is a “significant threat to healthy development” (p.112). Silenced voices or silencing of the self is the withholding of genuine self-expression, censoring authentic feelings and ideas in relationships “for the sake of maintaining self-presentations of ‘socially acceptable’ feelings and opinions” (p. 121). When adolescent girls silence their self, they lack assertiveness and willingness to take risks in relationships (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002).

Listening Guide Voice – In this qualitative method of analysis, whereby the researcher reads and listens to the data, each listening brings the researcher into relationship with participants’ “multilayered voices” (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 159), including the narrative voice and the

authentic or unique voice. When voice is used in this context, both narrative and authentic voices come together.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides an exploration and overview of theory and research in five areas related to this research. First, a general overview of identity and its conceptualization is presented, followed by a particular look at how identity is considered for the purpose of this study. Next, an exploration of the following four areas is discussed: a) adolescence; b) adolescent girls and voice; c) cultural identity in minority adolescent girls; and d) singing, connecting with the authentic voice.

Identity Conceptualization

Many disciplines focus on the topic of self or identity, debating its nature and varying in their conceptualizations and understandings (Kearney, 2003). Kearny (2003) examined four major approaches regarding identity and provided a clear summary of each of the approaches, which are outlined below.

An enlightenment bounded identities model derives from the “Enlightenment” philosophers, principally John Locke (Kearney, 2003). This view is rationalist and assumes that people have a “fixed individual identity with a theoretically unproblematic relationship to their culture and community” (Kearney, 2003, p. 36). This is the concept of a self-contained individual and it acknowledges that we experience reality in a unique body. Researchers and theorists such as Erikson, Phinney, and Rotheram also contributed to this way of thinking, that identity is an aspect of human consciousness, which remains static and stable throughout one’s life (Kearney, 2003). Moreover, this view released people from the notion that there is not a natural order of things.

Social models of identity recognize the powerful influence of others on our sense of identity. These models “attempted to address the problems of the nature of identity and in many cases overestimated its social nature” (Kearney, 2003, p. 55). Freud and Marx, amongst others, contributed to these models of identity, stating that a person has not one self, but rather several selves that correspond to widening circles of group membership.

The postmodernist models of identity began to develop in the 1960’s and 1970’s in many fields of Western European academic life (Kearney, 2003). This model hypothesizes a creative and constantly changing view of the self as we respond to rapid social and technological changes. Postmodern thinkers such as Giddens and Hall avoid grand narratives of historical progress and “see identity, culture, and community as mutable, hybrid, and diverse and open to

conscious change” (p. 36). Many of the movements that accompanied the postmodernist models of identity were critiqued as naively optimistic; although, some great achievements also stemmed from them.

Social psychologists speak of ‘storied’ identities in examining how collective memories are constructed, and how predominant narratives inform on an individual’s sense of self. The distinction between individual and social identity is questioned. Storied identities involve a process by which “we make sense of our past life and the present by constantly updating our narratives to produce coherent narratives of self” (Kearney, 2003, p. 55). Sarbin, Carr, and White have contributed to these theories, which are premised on the understanding that narratives are a product of complex inner dialogues where “the different, often conflicting discourses are orchestrated into a coherent sense of self” (P. 54).

Of the four approaches, the enlightenment concept seems to overlook the social nature of identity, whereas, the social models ignore the individual’s “ethical responsibility for their own actions or their part in the construction of their own identity” (Kearney, 2003, p. 55). The postmodernist models underestimate the force of cultural memory and the need for a coherent and continuous self. Although, each approach has something valuable to offer in regards to understanding identity, the remainder of this section will focus on the social psychologists’ storied lives approach because of its assumption that individuals are able to give their life a sense of meaning and direction by creating narrative. This approach is appropriate for the present study because of its psychology background and congruence with a qualitative, narrative methodology.

According to Chaitin (2004), “Identity has both personal and collective aspects, and is a dynamic process that unfolds over the person’s lifetime” (p. 3) developed in the course of social interaction and experiences, incorporating representations of the past (personal history), the future (possible selves), and the present (Brewer & Hewstone, 2004). Identity has been defined as a coherent story a person tells about him or herself (McAdams, 1990) and is assumed to be unique, different from any other, and private; that is, fully knowable only to the self (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998). Furthermore, identity can be described as a circular process, which continues throughout one’s life (Polkinghorne, 2000). Personal identity is not something we establish once and live with for the rest of our lives; it is not something discovered once and for all. Rather, personal identity is a continuous process of creation throughout one’s life; it is a process of becoming, which can be characterized as verbs, rather than nouns,

continually trying to understand who we have been, who we are, and what we can become (Polkinghorne, 2000).

We constantly construct and reconstruct our selves to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future (Bruner, 2004). This idea comes from narrative theory, the approach taken in this study. Narrative theory also assumes that people tend to highlight the multiple, fragmented nature of personal identity in their stories (Bruner, 2004). Moreover, some theorists believe it is not until adolescence that we begin to really think about identity (McAdams & Janis, 2004), constructing life stories that provide our lives with unity and purpose. The cognitive development, that only begins to occur in adolescence, is “instrumental for the emergence of identity” (p. 162). McAdams (1988) also argues that formal operational thinking in adolescence helps to supply the cognitive abilities for identity exploration.

According to Budgeon, (2003) constructing a narrative of the self “is to locate oneself along a trajectory that gives a coherent shape to past, present, and future” (p. 49). She goes on to say that the construction that is generated by this process “highlights what is significant or meaningful to that individual at the particular point in time when he or she articulates a narrative of the self” (p. 50-51). The narrative can therefore vary across time and space, and in this sense, one’s self-identity is never complete or stable, and understanding identity as a narrative may be a useful strategy for opening up the concept of identity to investigation (Budgeon, 2003).

In this study, using narrative is a means for adolescent francophone girls to make meaning of their “self”, to explore their experiences involving singing in terms of who they have been, who they are, and what they will become, assuming that their narrative will only highlight what is important to them in that particular time and space. Additionally, the self-stories are “a special kind of story that each of us naturally constructs to bring together different parts of ourselves and our lives into a purposeful and convincing whole” (McAdams, 1993, p.12).

Adolescence

In western developmental psychology, adolescence has been described as a period of storm and stress, of alienation and separation (e.g., Arnett, 1999), although other authors have described it as a “harmonious evolution in which positive feelings about self and family are extended into the larger realms of peers and society” (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 2002, p. 249). The word adolescence comes from the Latin verb *adolescere*, which means “to

grow” or “to grow to maturity” (Rice, 1996, p. 3). According to Rice (1996), adolescence “is defined as a period of growth between childhood and adulthood” (p. 3) that is “gradual and uncertain” (p. 3). More recently, this transition to adulthood has included an additional developmental stage of emerging adulthood that is proposed to bridge adolescence and adulthood (e.g., Arnett, 2007).

According to Arnett (1999), adolescence is characterized by three elements. First, adolescence seems to be a time when adolescents experience conflict with their parents, rebelling against and resisting adult authority. Second, they tend to have mood disruptions, their moods swinging from one extreme to another in short periods of time. Third, adolescents also have more risk behavior than in childhood or adulthood because adolescence is a time likely to involve experimentation and exploration. Therefore, adolescents are more likely to cause disruptions of the social order and to engage in behavior that might harm others around them and/or themselves. In light of these characteristics, and even amidst the storm and stress of adolescence, Arnett noted that adolescents might also take pleasure in many aspects of their lives, be satisfied with their relationships, and hopeful about the future.

The risks encountered by adolescents do not make them feel helpless. In fact, adolescents have the cognitive capacity to consciously sort through who they are and what makes them unique (American Psychological Association [APA], 2002). A search for an identity and meaning is one of the main purposes of an adolescent. Some authors describe this as a “quest for wholeness” (Garrod et al., 2002, p. 7), a discovery and creation of self that leads to a deeper self-understanding. This process of identity exploration and consolidation involves “experimenting with different ways of appearing, sounding, and behaving” (APA, 2002, p. 15).

Each adolescent is unique and explores his or her identity in distinctive ways. One might adopt a certain style or appearance, or use sports, drama, music, or poetry to explore identity. Researchers agree that unless it is harmful or threatening to their life or health, this experimentation is important and positive, and in fact, adolescents who fail to experiment may actually be at greater risk of developing unhealthy behaviours (APA, 2002). According to Garrod et al. (2002), finding one’s way during adolescence is a challenge because “even under the best of circumstances, adolescents travel an exquisitely poignant journey through difficult developmental terrain” (p. 249). Listening to the voices of individual adolescents is important in order to gain a greater understanding of their experiences today. Furthermore, “it is amazing how

many youth are hungry to discuss these issues with a trusted adult, and how few are offered the opportunity” (APA, 2002, p. 15). It appears thus, that adolescents want adults to reach out to them and allow them to talk about or express what it is they are experiencing as adolescent individuals.

Adolescent Girls and Voice

Western research suggests that adolescence may be a turbulent time for many adolescents; with adolescent girls especially likely to experience psychological problems during this developmental period (e.g., Gilligan, 1991; Pipher, 1994). Adolescent girls may demonstrate “a marked increase in episodes of depression, eating disorders, poor body image, suicidal thoughts and gestures, and a fall in [their] sense of self-worth” (Gilligan, 1991, p. 13), all of which impact identity formation. Despite these provocative findings, little research has been done that illustrates and confirms the silencing of young adolescent women (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002).

The research relating to adolescent girls and understanding the ways in which gender-related factors interact during the adolescent period is limited, and much of what does exist is not current and/or lacks “a clearly defined focus, methodological approach, or theoretical framework” (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002, p.115). The discourse in the early and mid 1990’s was that an adolescent girl’s world exists in a challenging social context: “Girls are under pressure from without and within to shape themselves in accordance with the dominant cultural ideals of femininity and womanhood or of maturity and adulthood” (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995, p. 23), an environment said to create tension because “the ideals of womanhood and femininity are those of selflessness”, and “the ideals of maturity and adulthood are those of separation and independence” (p. 23). The complexity of an adolescent girl’s world can also be unheard and misunderstood because “girls for the most part are not heard in public, or if heard are generally spoken about in the third person” (p. 1). Consequently, adolescent girls’ identities are at risk of being masked, constrained, falsified, and suppressed. Although the adolescent period remains a challenging developmental time for girls, the dynamics today may be different due to an increased profile of young female singer/songwriters and many websites devoted to promoting girl power.

Adolescent girls tend to “cover up” as they reach adolescence; covering up in order to manage their bodies, their feelings, their relationships, their knowing, and their unique voices (Gilligan,

1991). Authentic identities cannot develop nor flourish if adolescent girls hide behind masks that are adopted to please others. According to Pipher (1994), “wholeness is shattered by the chaos of adolescence. Girls become fragmented, their selves split into mysterious contradictions” (p. 20). Furthermore, as girls mature and internalize the message that it is not socially acceptable to express their views and assert their authentic voice; the result may be silence and a loss of a sense of self (Taylor, 2004).

Carol Gilligan conducted several studies with American adolescent girls and described them as losing their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, and their sense of themselves and their character during adolescence, and as struggling between speaking and not speaking, knowing and not knowing, feeling and not feeling (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Gilligan and her colleagues speculated that there is an inner division and sense of confusion in adolescent girls, which disconnects them from their true expression of self. Nevertheless, the researchers described that hearing adolescent girls’ unique voices, demonstrates a “clear evidence of strength, courage, and a healthy resistance to losing voice” (p. 3).

More recently, Spinazzola et al. (2002) used narrative inquiry to examine silencing and resistance during adolescence. Sixty girls constructed narratives about their perceptions of same-aged girls portrayed in a series of documentary photographs, which were then analyzed with the goal of identifying thematic dimensions of silencing and resistance elicited by the study photographs and developing a coding system to detect and describe these themes in narrative data. The major findings indicated that most girls withheld genuine self-expression for the sake of maintaining “socially acceptable” feelings and opinions. The participants described feeling as though they were often ignored or dismissed when trying to express themselves honestly and openly. They also used external standards to judge themselves, striving to attain unrealistic or damaging social ideals (Spinazzola et al., 2002).

Simmons (2002) used narrative inquiry and the “Listening Guide” (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg & Bertsch, 2003) to investigate the culture of girls’ aggression manifested through bullying, whereby anger is rarely directly articulated. On the contrary, girls’ aggression is revealed through nonphysical, indirect, and covert forms such as backbiting, name-calling, exclusion, and rumors. Simmons interviewed girls between the ages of 10 and 14 in several schools. The interviews permitted girls to tell their stories, usually ones of victimization where memories of pain surfaced. The researcher was flexible during her interviews, letting the girls

move where they wanted to and not having them follow the researcher's agenda. The integration of narratives and the Listening Guide, and creating an encouraging space for girls to feel, experience, and uncover knowledge, such as in Simmons' book, is a valuable way of representing girls' genuine narratives of their personal experiences.

It appears that without the help of supportive adults and positive role models, holding onto authentic voice or reclaiming lost voices and lost appreciations of strengths can be difficult for adolescent girls. "For girls at adolescence to say what they are feeling and thinking often means to risk" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 217), that is, being willing and assertive enough to withstand the societal pressures that exist. Connecting with one's authentic voice, whereby adolescent girls feel confident and comfortable enough to communicate, assert, and express thoughts, feelings, or opinions is not an easy task, according to the literature. Yet, it is essential for girls if they are to live as healthy adolescents and healthy women. Growth, during adolescence, requires courage and hard work on the part of the individual (Pipher, 1994). It also requires a protected and nurturing environment in order for girls to develop to their fullest potential. In light of the research on girls, it seems essential that they be able to create and maintain relationships with one or more trusted adults in order to navigate through the inconsistent ups-and-downs, even rough waters of being a girl and becoming a woman. The supportive adults may play an important role in empowering adolescent girls.

Cultural Identity in Minority Adolescent Girls

According to Moshman (2005), the development of a positive personal identity depends on a sense of ethnic identity that is strong and stable. The problem for adolescents from ethnic minorities is that their culture is not always valued or appreciated by the dominant culture they live in. Ethnic identity development often involves assimilation, marginality, separation, and/or biculturalism (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Assimilation is when the adolescent chooses to identify solely with the culture of the dominant society and abandons his or her culture, while marginality is defined by the absence or loss of one's culture of origin and the lack of involvement with the dominant society. Separation is when the adolescent or person of ethnic minority does not interact with the dominant society and biculturalism is characterized by strong identification and involvement with both the dominant and traditional culture (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997). Of these four types of participation, biculturalism, or integration, is the most positive and healthy way of development of identity and self-esteem in adolescence

because the adolescent can easily move back and forth between the minority and majority group. This allows them to be active participants, contributing to both groups, therefore decreasing the internal conflict adolescents may feel in trying to fit in both groups (Landry & Rousselle, 2003).

Integration to and involvement in the dominant culture is important, as is developing and maintaining one's own sense of ethnic identity (APA, 2002). Giving up or rejecting one's ethnic culture can negatively impact self-identity (Rice, 1996) because the person rejects or ignores an integral part of him or herself. A minority ethnic identity adds further complexity to adolescent girls' lives and their expression of selves. The literature states that encouraging traditions and practices of a cultural group as well as identifying with the music, rituals, and history associated with one's culture, helps build a sense of belonging and positive identity (APA, 2002). However, what is probably even more important for adolescent girls is being able to connect with their culture and express themselves honestly and with ease.

According to Levasseur-Ouimet (1994), the francophone adolescent living in a minority culture must develop a sense of pride regarding her culture and language, as this increases the value and strength of ethnic identity. An adolescent's sense of cultural belonging is associated with developing a resilient identity; that is, an identity that is resistant to adversity and robust in face of life's challenges. Other researchers suggest that to build a cultural identity, the adolescent needs to both differentiate herself from others, especially adults, as well as integrate with others, especially peers (Alberta Education, 1998). The need to find a balance between these two tensions is an important developmental process for francophone girls as it will increase resiliency, that is, their capacity to cope with stress in a positive and healthy way, as well as promote a strong and affirmative sense of self.

One study investigating voice and identity in a bicultural and bilingual milieu found that an environment supportive of biculturalism is one way for girls to begin to figure out who they are in relation to their cultural identities (Spira, Grossman, & Wolff-Bensdorf, 2002). A group format with a number of sessions was used to promote discussion with thirty-five Hispanic girls between the ages of ten and fourteen in hopes of improving self-esteem, limiting high-risk behaviour, and fostering a positive attitude toward school. There were approximately six to eight girls in each group session. The analysis upon which findings emerged involved several readings of the transcribed tapes. The first reading was an exact and literal reading; the second was interpretive, whereby researchers attempted to look for the underlying meaning of the themes.

The third reading examined the data reflexively, looking at the interactions between speakers and the role of the researchers presence. The researchers found that there were instances in which the girls shared their feelings in the supportive environment; however, there were also instances in which they deliberately chose to keep silent because they feared a loss of connection. The researchers hypothesized that a bicultural and bilingual context may help to “immunize these girls against the cultural and gender-linked imperative to silence” (p. 134). By giving the girls opportunities to speak up and voice their feelings in a variety of contexts, which supports and values multiple cultures, the girls may find richer opportunities for expression of self.

Despite the additional challenges experienced by minority culture adolescent girls, Pipher (1994) suggested that these challenges are also potential resources for positive development:

Strong girls manage to hold on to some sense of themselves in the high winds. Often they have a strong sense of place that gives them roots. They may identify with an ethnic group in a way that gives them pride and focus, or they may see themselves as being an integral part of a community. (p. 265)

The struggles of adolescent minority-culture girls are perhaps different and possibly more demanding than those of adolescent minority-culture boys because there are two kinds of silencing, gendered and cultural pressures and expectations that silence the expression of girls’ authentic voices (Fisher & Silber, 1998). From this perspective, helping girls find ways to speak their thoughts, their feelings, their opinions, is clearly valued and important.

Singing, Connecting With the Authentic Voice

“Music, an ancient and uniquely human creation, is valued by all cultures” and its importance is “enshrined” in literature (Unwin, Kenny, & Davis, 2002, p.175) with evocative descriptions such as “soothing the troubled beast and being the food of love” (Unwin et al., 2002, p.175). Singing is an aspect of music that has effects on mood and emotions (e.g., Unwin et al.), which may even “help individuals achieve greater life satisfaction through stimulating emotional awareness, fostering social competency,” (Bailey, 2003, p. 19) as well as encouraging social connection and strengthening sense of self (DeNora, 1999). Even as early as the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th, singing was seen as powerful in that it inspired cheerfulness and promoted good health (Hunter, 1999).

Warren (1993) described the creative arts, in general, as a way to “feed the soul” (p. 4), meaning that the creative arts motivate individuals to engage the emotions and feel freed. The

creative arts can help adolescents access their individual capacity to feel and imagine (Eisner, 1992) as well as to express, which is crucial in developing one's identity. Furthermore, expressing through the creative arts can help adolescents identify and connect with their own culture (Hanna, 1992). There is a rich literature regarding the benefits of creative expression (e.g., McNiff, 2004; Warren, 1995) as well as music as therapy (e.g., MacDonald, Hargreaves, & Miell, 2002; Nelson & Weathers, 1998; World Federation of Music Therapy, 1996). Moreover, research shows that music is connected with perceived personal wellbeing.

Nicol (2006) offered a personal narrative in an article describing the meaning of music throughout three stages of her life. The author's story reflected different ways in which music has accompanied her and how music-making may be quite beneficial for an adolescent girl: "music gave me a way to express myself safely and stay connected to an inner adolescent world of emotion and tumult. I could play loud and ugly, or I could play soft and pretty". Nicol also evoked the notion of the piano as an instrument that gave her a voice during this challenging developmental stage called adolescence.

Although literature specific to exploring the unique and singing voices, and singing experiences related to health is less prominent, there is some research that suggests that singing can be therapeutic as well as promote a sense of wellbeing. McClure (1998) explored the healing power of singing in her doctoral dissertation, which used a hermeneutical research design to incorporate Jungian psychology, voice therapy as part of music therapy, and cultural anthropology. The researcher presented a clinical voice therapy case from her own music therapy practice and looked at the individual and cultural process of moving from inhibited and uninhibited vocal sounding and emotion through the assistance of an animal figure. She noted that the speaking and singing voice is an instrument that comes from within and that voice "has the power to reveal and conceal who we are" (p. 41). The expressed voice can be transformative, creating change in all aspects of life whereas the repressed or inhibited voice can reveal a lack of confidence, low self-esteem, and an inability to express oneself (McClure, 1998). By extension, singing as part of an adolescent girl's daily life might be valuable and provide "a vehicle to express what is worthwhile within themselves" (Bailey, 2003, p. 29).

Singing appears to be more prominent amongst girls because they participate in activities involving music and singing more than boys do (Ashley, 2002). However, two studies specifically focused on male singers. One study (Ashley, 2002) investigated the experiences and

meanings of boys' singing in a church choir. His rationale for focusing on boys only was that there is a significant gap in the literature regarding boys and singing, and that evidence in research shows that at school, boys are reluctant to participate in music, particularly singing. The findings of Ashley's study suggested that the participants enjoyed singing because it made them happy and it engaged them on a spiritual level. Another study (Faulkner & Davidson, 2006) used interpretive phenomenology to examine the experience and meaning of singing in the everyday lives of Icelandic men in a large male choir. Eleven men were interviewed in order to explore the role of singing as a central construct of self and gender identity. Findings indicated that singing had an extensive role in the men's everyday lives and that when describing "...its function in personal relationships and communication, in self-therapy, in spiritual and aesthetic experiences, in work and leisure, the men place singing firmly at the core of self" (p. 228). All kinds of settings and spaces become appropriate for vocal behaviour such as birthday parties, dance floors, mountain huts, barns, silos, and so on. Furthermore, for some men, singing is a fundamental way of being together and a part of their family's core identity.

Clift and Hancox (2001) conducted two studies exploring the perceived benefits of choral singing by surveying male and female university students who were active participants in choirs and asking whether they had benefited personally from their involvement in the choir. A large majority of respondents agreed that they benefited emotionally and socially. About half of the respondents also agreed that singing benefited them in some physical way as well as spiritually. Findings also showed that women were significantly more likely to experience benefits for wellbeing and relaxation. However, of all of the participants in the study, 81 percent were female, an indication that university college members of the choir were mostly female.

Research specific to adolescent girls' singing experiences is limited; however, one qualitative study explored the experiences of a group of adolescent singers in a school setting (Monks, 2003). The aim of the study was to investigate students' perceptions of self in relation to their singing voice and vocal performance. Thirty singing students between the ages of 11 and 17 participated in a longitudinal study whereby they had a weekly half-hour lesson. Fifteen students participated in case studies and were asked to give their own assessment of their vocal progress, and 15 students participated in a performance scenario, taking part in an informal concert and commenting on the video of their performance. Although the study focused primarily on the technical aspects of the voice and performance, some findings indicated that a sense of vocal

identity revealed a close relationship with the sense of self because singers were often more concerned with personal vocal development than with public acknowledgement through passing exams or doing well in competitions.

More and more research is being done on the benefits of singing for general wellbeing (e.g., Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002; Ashley 2002) and this trend should continue, as evidenced for example, by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada's recent funding of a 7-year multi-collaborative research initiative into singing called Advancing Interdisciplinary Research in Singing (AIRS; see <http://vre.upei.ca/chimes/>). One group of researchers will focus exclusively on the relationship between singing, wellbeing and health, and extend current findings that singing affects health and healing by impacting both body and mind: e.g., having positive effects on emotions, bringing about states of relaxation, and thus helping with depression, anxiety, and fatigue, as well as improving physical health such as muscle tension and breathing capacity (Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002).

Conclusion

Taylor, Gilligan, and Sullivan (1995) described the authentic voice as "... a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting the inner and outer worlds." (p. 69) and argued that positive psychological health, for adolescent girls in particular, involves being able to speak one's experiences, to tell one's truth and perspective, and to be able to do so in a safe place with safe company. Adolescent girls, who learn to silence their voices in response to family, culture, or societal pressures, may find themselves disconnected from their own authentic experience and knowledge. According to McClure (1998), "the process of discovering oneself as a unique individual separate from, yet linked to, in definable and sometimes indefinable ways, one's culture, era, and family" (p. 101) is important because it assists one in finding autonomy and identity in relationship to the other. Moreover, the process of finding one's stance vocally, in relationship to others, may be accelerated by voice therapy or singing in "an arena where an [adolescent girl's] authentic self and voice are nurtured, literally and metaphorically" (p. 101).

The idea that singing is therapeutic, and that utilizing the voice in specialized therapeutic techniques can be useful, is not a new one (e.g., Austin, 2001; McClure, 1998). While much research looks at technical training aspects of the voice (Wiens, Janzen, Mott, & Claypool, 2003), or therapeutic uses of singing such as with adults who have experienced childhood trauma (Austin, 1998) or who have been diagnosed with cancer (Young, 2009), other researchers have

focused on perceived personal wellbeing attained through singing (e.g., Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002; Ashley, 2002). The benefits of singing are numerous and involve various aspects of the self such as emotional, social, physical, and spiritual (e.g., Ashley, 2002; Wiens, Janzen, Mott, & Claypool, 2003). Singing seems to relax, increase mood, boost confidence, and allow for self-expression, amongst other things (e.g., Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002; Clift and Hancox, 2001).

Given the need for adolescent girls to find ways of expressing themselves in order to affirm and assert who they are, as well as remain connected to their inner adolescent world, and reach out to others, more research about healthy and positive ways of doing so is needed. Singing may be a way of empowering and allowing girls to be open, confident, strong, and authentic. It may enhance their personal wellbeing on several levels, increasing their potential to be physically, psychologically, socially, and spiritually healthy. The physical and social dimensions are more straightforward than the psychological dimension, which includes the mental, emotional and intellectual aspects. The spiritual dimension refers to the values and beliefs at the core of one's being, including a sense of purpose and belonging to something bigger.

However, research on singing as a benefit to personal wellbeing remains limited. What is more, research relating to adolescent girls' experiences of singing for wellbeing is even more restricted. More research is needed to understand how young women cope with normative yet adverse circumstances such as adolescence, gender, and culture, and how they emerge with confidence and optimism. The existing literature suggests that adolescent girls who live in a situation where their culture is of minority may be at risk of being silenced and face challenges in successful relationships (e.g., Spira, Grossman, & Wolff-Bensdorf, 2002; Rice, 1996). Evidence also shows that singing has many benefits for a person's development, emotions, and identity (e.g., Faulkner & Davidson, 2006; Monks, 2003).

The present study's intention was to discover what it is like for some adolescent francophone girls to sing and what it means to them. Through personal narratives I anticipated that the participants would highlight what was significant and meaningful to them at that particular point in time. The study was guided by the following research question: What is the experience and meaning of singing in the identity negotiations of francophone adolescent girls?

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose in conducting this qualitative study was to describe the experience and meaning of singing for a small number of francophone adolescent girls. Such insight would increase understanding about the benefits of singing experiences for adolescent francophone girls, the possibility of singing as a positive means of negotiating the multiple aspects of identity including adolescence, gender, and culture. The following chapter provides a detailed description of the research methods used to complete the study. Also presented in this chapter are the processes and procedures used to gather, analyze, and represent the data. Finally, evaluation criteria and ethical considerations are discussed.

Qualitative Inquiry

In trying to find a meaningful way to do my research, I found myself “dancing among” different methods and perspectives (Greene & Freed, 2005). Although searching for the appropriate method of inquiry was challenging, it was clear from the beginning that my research would be qualitative. Qualitative inquiry focuses on meanings and interpretations, and discovers these “by insisting on careful description” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 114) of everyday experiences. It is a process that “emphasizes understanding the subject’s point of view” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 261). As a researcher wanting to explore francophone adolescent girls’ singing experiences, I felt that qualitative inquiry, informed by constructivism, was most appropriate. Constructivism is a philosophical perspective that considers the ways in which human beings “individually and collectively interpret or construct the social and psychological world” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 19) in specific linguistic, social, cultural, and historical contexts.

Narrative Research

A narrative lens complemented the methodology because narrative inquiry is “a dynamic approach to understanding human identity and the process of making sense of our ever-changing world. Our personal and social identity is shaped around the stories we tell ourselves and tell each other about our lives” (Murray, 2003, p. 110). I anticipated that the personal and collective memories and perspectives of the francophone adolescent girls would be revealed in their personal stories of experiences with singing, and that the layers of their stories would involve gender, adolescence, culture, and how singing related to these aspects of their identity.

Offering francophone adolescent girls the opportunity to tell their stories was my way, as a researcher, of providing them with a vehicle, both to be heard by others and to hear their own

individual stories. In the literature, identity is recognized as being a central part of development and an important task for adolescents (e.g., Steinberg, 2002). Some authors proposed that identity is a life story and that life stories serve to make sense of people's past, present, and anticipated future (e.g., McLean, 2005). Life stories are continuously constructed and reconstructed by making meaning of past experiences (McLean, 2005). A narrative lens, in this case, was used to further explore francophone adolescent girls' experiences of singing.

The Listening Guide

Having examined and considered several research methods, I came to realize that what seemed most significant and central was a process that “keeps respondents' [authentic] voices and perspectives alive” (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p. 119). The Listening Guide, an interpretive method developed for examining narratives, is an approach focused on participants' narrative and authentic voices (Brown, Tapan, Gilligan, Miller, & Argyris, 1989). A voice-centred relational method with roots in clinical and literary approaches, interpretive and hermeneutic traditions, and relational theory (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998), the Listening Guide provided a structure to examine the meanings of the many parts of the interview narratives, as well as the whole narrative. It was a way of reading, rather than coding and matching “responses to a predetermined set of criteria” (Brown et al., 1989, p. 146). Hence, it was my belief that a qualitative perspective such as this one, a holistic one, would allow me the depth and breadth, increasing understanding of adolescent girls' experiences. The steps of the Listening Guide are discussed in the data analysis section.

Procedure for Gathering Data

Recruitment of Narrators

Francophone adolescent girls living in the Saskatoon area in Saskatchewan were recruited using purposeful sampling. This method, whereby “information-rich cases [in] which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (Patton, 2002, p. 230) was most suitable for this research. Purposeful sampling increases the likelihood of generating a rich description of the phenomena under investigation. In this study, participants were selected based on their experience with the phenomena: singing experiences related to identity. Each participant had to be a francophone adolescent girl between the ages 12 and 18, be involved with singing regularly (formally or informally), consider singing to be an important part of her life, and additionally, be willing to reflect on their personal stories, have the time and

interest in participating in the study. The latter selection criteria are identified by Morse and Richards (2002).

Literature found amongst industrialized nations on adolescent development generally defines adolescence to be between the ages of 10 and 19 (APA, 2002); however, I sought participants no less than the age of 12 in hopes that an older group would be mature enough to share and describe stories regarding their singing experiences. According to an American expert on psychological development during adolescence, Steinberg (2002), the development of abstract and hypothetical reasoning does not commence until the age of eleven or twelve. Although research may vary, for the purpose of this study, the age of twelve seemed to be an appropriate benchmark age to participate in this study. In addition, participants were francophone, this being defined as someone who spoke French and who had at least one parent with a mother tongue of French. The decision to restrict participants on the basis of female gender reflects the lack of research regarding the experience of adolescent girls (Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002), the experience of girls as a cultural minority (Dibben, 2002), the experience of singing for girls (Dibben, 2002), and how gender shapes all of these experiences. Furthermore, I narrowed the research focus in hopes of gaining in-depth knowledge about girls' singing experiences.

Brochures inviting participants and describing the study were displayed in the francophone cultural center as well as in two schools of the francophone school division (Appendix A). I also networked with several of my francophone colleagues to pass on the research brochure to potential participants. Interested individuals were asked to contact myself directly, either by phone or email. A face-to-face meeting to acquire written, informed consent, followed an informal written assent and consent via email. Participants under the age of 18 had a parent/guardian give informed consent. Participants and guardians had the option of signing English or French consent and assent forms.

Three francophone adolescent girls volunteered and completed the interview process. Two of them were 17 at the time of participation; therefore they had one parent sign an informed consent form. The other participant was 18 and did not require a parent's signature. I originally had a fourth participant who was 14 years old. I had explained the project to her and had spoken with her mother. Assent and consent forms were brought back to me; however, the day of the interview, the potential participant called to say that she was no longer interested in participating. The three participants were white, middle-class adolescents, from rural and urban settings who

lived with their families. Two of the participants lived with their biological mother because their parents had been separated for some years. The other participant lived with both of her parents. One of the participants was catholic and heavily involved in her religious community. Another participant was also catholic but had not practiced for some time, while the third participant did not mention a specific religion. One of the participants was in French immersion, while the other two were in French schools. They presented as well adjusted, not mentioning any serious personal psychological issues, although they did discuss challenges and obstacles they had faced and overcome in the past. Given that they were older adolescents, almost young adults, their maturity may have played a role in the sophistication of their narratives during the interviews.

Interviews

In-depth interviews were used to generate data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), in-depth interviewing is “interviewing designed to get a rich understanding of the subject’s way of thinking” (p. 259). These interviews are usually long, an hour or more, less structured than most interviews and “involve the researcher probing into topics that the subjects bring up” (p. 259). Furthermore, in-depth interviewing often involves more than one session with each participant. These types of interviews were appropriate for the present study given the purpose of understanding adolescent girls’ experiences of singing related to their identities.

The adolescent girls were asked to consent to two semi-structured, individual, audio-recorded interviews lasting 45-75 minutes each. I developed a series of questions as a guide for the interview process (Appendix B). As the girls were francophone and were able to communicate in French, the interviews were conducted in French. However, I made it clear to participants that they were free to speak in the language they preferred and felt most comfortable with. Interviews were transcribed directly in French. I chose not to directly translate to English in the transcription process due to the possibility of loss in meaning in translation. However, the quotes used in the findings were later translated into English. The interviews were conducted mostly in French, yet participants’ often switched back and forth between French and English. Additionally, participants’ singing experiences were not always necessarily in French because adolescents living in Saskatchewan do not always have access to French music or singing experiences in French. All of the interviews were conducted in participants’ homes except for one participant who preferred to do them after school in her school, in the music room.

Once the first interviews were fully transcribed and summarized, copies were forwarded to participants prior to meeting for the second interview. They were then asked to read these materials in preparation for the second interview so that they could respond to their perceived accuracy and offer any clarification or corrections they saw as necessary. Further examples or insights that might have arisen between the two interviews were also solicited during the second interview. A short third meeting was held in order to ensure an agreement on the second transcript, summary content, and the participant's intended meaning. The participants were also given opportunity to add, change, and alter any of their quotes before signing the data release authorization form. For the most part, participants did not have any changes to make or add. However, Sarah had one clarification to make from a passage in her first interview.

Journal Entries

In addition to being interviewed, participants were asked to write personal journal entries describing and reflecting on their experiences with singing. These were completed between the consent meeting and the first interview. The goal of this exercise was to have the adolescent girls describe, think about, and reflect on their singing experiences and how these related to being a francophone adolescent girl. The girls were directed to write about actual singing experiences and a handout sheet with possible questions to be answered and topics to elaborate was provided at the consent meeting (see Appendix C). Although this source of data ended up under utilized due to the lack of depth and repetition of what was said during the interviews, the advantage of these journal entries was that the girls had the opportunity to begin the reflection process before our interviews, which could have contributed to them being more relaxed and conversational during the interviews.

Data Analysis

Analysis is a complex process in qualitative research (Thorne, 2000) in which the researcher interprets the data and transforms it into a meaningful representation. As a researcher, I sought understanding of the experiences of singing for francophone adolescent girls and wanted to bring my understandings and interpretations, together with theirs, in order to represent in a truthful and sincere manner, the girls' narrative and unique voices and experiences. My approach to analysis was similar to a "bricoleur's" approach. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) described this term:

The interpretive bricoleur [who] produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation. The solution

[bricolage] which is the result of the bricoleur's method is an [emergent] construction which changes and takes new forms as different tools, methods, and techniques of representation and interpretation are added to the puzzle. (p. 4)

My "bricolage", in this case, the data, was transformed and interpreted through holistic readings of the transcripts, and the use of the specific analytical steps described in the Listening Guide.

According to Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, and Bertsch (2003), "the listening guide is a method of psychological analysis that draws on voice, resonance, and relationships as ports of entry into the human psyche" (p. 157). It is a way of sorting out different voices that run through a personal narrative, as a means of discovering and coming to know the inner world of another person (Gilligan et al., 2003). This method of analysis appealed to me in that it is focused directly on voice, that is, "the unique expression of oneself and one's perspective" (Zimmerman, 1991, p. 226). Brown and Gilligan (1992) created this method of analysis while working with adolescent girls and it has since been used many times by feminist researchers (e.g., Belknap, 2000; Rogers, 1993; Todorova & Kotzeva, 2003).

The Listening Guide method of analysis consists of a series of readings and "listenings" to the data. Each listening brings the researcher into relationship with a participant's "multilayered voice" (Gilligan et al., 2003, p. 159) and distinct aspects of the participant's expression and experience. In the first "listening", the researcher attends to the plot. I began by reading and looking at the story that was being told by each participant. I listened for the main events, recurrent images, metaphors, and contradictions. In the second part of the first reading, I also read for myself. That is, I placed myself, with my own particular background, history, and experiences, in relation to the person that was being interviewed. The first reading or listening of the interview texts represented an attempt for me to come to know my response regarding the participant and her story.

In the second reading, the researcher listens for the information related to the "I" voice. This reading focuses on how the participant experiences, feels, and speaks about herself. I used a coloured pencil and highlighted certain passages and statements in the transcripts, whereby the participant had used the first-person pronoun. This process centered my attention on the active "I" which was telling the story and helped me tune into the participant's voice and listening for what she was really saying. It was a way of coming into relationship with her. The next step of this process was to create "I" poems. I highlighted the first-person "I" within the passages, along

with the verb and important accompanying words that went along with it. Furthermore, I maintained the sequence in which the phrases appeared in the transcript. I then chose certain sections in the transcripts, which had several first-person pronouns that followed each other, pulled out the “I” phrases, keeping them in the order they appeared in the text, and placed each phrase on a separate line, like in a poem. In order to choose the two or three poems from each participant, I examined all of them, and chose a section related to singing for each of them. I also chose an “I” poem that compliment their contrapuntal voices to add to the Results chapter.

The contrapuntal voices are examined in the third and fourth “listenings”. This step focuses on the understanding of the different layers regarding the participant’s experience. These range widely, depending on the nature of the particular study. It is with this step that the researcher can begin to identify, specify, and sort out the different strands in the interview that may speak to the research question. In this study, I examined psychological distress and psychological resilience related to adolescence, gender, culture, and singing. I underlined parts of the transcript that spoke to resilience and distress in different colours. The final step in this process consisted of composing an analysis based on the multiple readings (Gilligan et al.). In using this method, I was able to be in direct relationship with the adolescent girls as I “listened” to them, rather than categorizing and quantifying the text of their interviews (Gilligan et al.). What's more, I think this voice-centered approach provided a more genuine description of the adolescent girls’ unique voices.

The use of narrative summaries further allowed the girls’ voices to be heard. Narrative summaries are “a method for synthesizing qualitative research findings that involves using a consistent writing style to create a brief description of each [person]” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 553). Constructing the narrative summaries offered another means of analysis, which also included participants’ feedback throughout the analysis. Once I had completed the Listening Guide process, as well as written brief narrative summaries for each participant, I began to reread the transcripts, and highlighted comments that I felt would be relevant to possible categories or themes. Next, I identified possible themes related to singing (e.g., adolescence, gender, francophone identity, resilience, relationships, wellbeing) and sorted the highlighted quotes into their appropriate category.

I met with my research supervisor to discuss the themes I had been working with and was able to go back, refine, further elaborate, and clarify three major themes that emerged along with

three different contexts in which the participants sang. The themes were chosen because of the richness of the quotes and thick description of participants from the interview transcripts. Using Gilligan's Listening Guide, narrative summaries, and descriptive categories for themes, I simulated what a "bricoleur" would do and I hoped that I was on the right path to providing an insightful representation of three francophone adolescent girls' experiences with singing.

Representing Data

According to Gilgun (2005), qualitative researchers have a "marvelous range of choices" in how they convey their findings (p. 261). Choosing the appropriate medium of representation sounds exciting, but it is not an easy task. Representing data is a complicated process involving transferring the knowledge to the readers in an evocative and meaningful way (Nicol, 2008; van Manen, 1997). I felt responsible for conveying an authentic description of my participants' experiences and remained open to the possibilities of representation.

I wanted my participants' authentic voices and stories to be heard. I therefore needed to consider how to stay as true as possible to their unique voices in order to represent it in a meaningful and interesting way. I also wanted to honor the individual, show respect, invite participation, and share discovery with them (Greene & Freed, 2005). Arts-based research is a way of handing over creativity or the research content and its interpretation to the research participant. According to Huss (2005), this type of research empowers the participant and the relationship between researcher and participant. Moreover, this seems to be gender and culturally appropriate as it enables participants to represent themselves (Huss, 2005). I wanted to find a creative way to represent the data that would respect the participants, but also "grab" (Gilgun, 2005, p. 261) the readers, inform and perhaps even enlighten them.

Transferring knowledge generated in a qualitative study should be done in an evocative manner in order to capture the core of the experience and reveal it. Verisimilitude is a term used in qualitative research, which implies "a style of writing that seeks to draw readers emotionally into research participants' world views and leads them to perceive a qualitative research report as credible and authentic" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 558). It is a criterion for a "good literary study" whereby the writing seems "real and alive" (Creswell, 1998, p. 256). A vocative text is neither final nor declarative; it is suggestive and thoughtful and aims to engage readers and touch them personally (Nicol, 2008). Furthermore, it is a style of writing that draws the reader into the experience in such a way that it can be "felt" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 171). Keeping verisimilitude in

mind, when representing the data of my study, was essential both in terms of establishing credibility and evoking felt knowing.

Findings were represented through the use of narrative summaries, I poems, themes, and direct quotes. These venues seemed to represent the participants' narratives and authentic voices, illustrating their personal stories and experiences of singing in an authentic manner. I had originally hoped to add more creativity in the representation of the findings, such as writing a song that spoke to the meaning of participants' experiences with singing. However, it seemed more appropriate to stay with each of their unique stories. I used song-based metaphors in the development and representation of the different sections of the results. Metaphors helped me to understand and make sense of the elements in the data. My process included sketching different representations, or making visual maps and diagrams of the data in order to grasp its essence. This allowed me to experiment with the findings and understand them in terms of a song and its different elements (Nicol, 2008). Thus, the results include three themes: rhythm (identity), harmony (relationships), and melody (wellbeing and strength), and the participants and their stories are introduced as being the lyrics of the song.

It is my hope that this research will be accessible and usable to other professionals, counsellors, parents, and adolescents. The findings of this study will therefore be published in English and hopefully in French, and be presented to other counsellors and teachers in various workshops and conferences. Furthermore, it is my intention to disseminate this knowledge through my professional work and practice as a counsellor.

Criteria for Quality

Establishing the legitimacy of the present study could have been done by using a set of criteria established specific to qualitative inquiry (e.g., Lincoln, 1995) or by choosing criteria from different sources in order to best suit the research (e.g., Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I chose the latter, which is the "bricoleur's" approach. Some criteria that spoke to the present study were fairness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000), reflexivity (Schwandt, 1997), positionality (Lincoln, 1998), reciprocity (Creswell, 1998), and constructivism (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005).

Fairness

The concept of fairness was important in order that the unique voices of my participants stay true and authentic. Fairness is thought to be "a quality of balance" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 180) whereby perspectives and unique voices of both researcher and participant should be

evident. Ensuring that all narrative and unique voices in the inquiry effort have a chance to be represented fairly and with balance is key in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). During the interviews, I had questions to guide participants; however, I allowed participants to tell their story the way they wanted. This was a way to maintain balance between my voice and those of the participants. Moreover, during the interviews I used excerpts and quotes from the transcripts, ensuring that nothing was embellished or misrepresented as I organized the data into themes. Engaging in dialogue with participants about my analysis and representation of the data also helped to represent authentic voices and experiences.

Reflexivity

My responsibility as a qualitative researcher was to be aware of my biases and personal assumptions and to share these with the readers. The process of reflexivity was a fundamental part of the research, especially when analyzing and representing data because “it points to the fact that the inquirer is part of the setting, context, and social phenomenon he or she seeks to understand” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 136). Reflexivity is a “critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation” (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 31). A continuation of my own reflective process was thus valuable both for credibility and as a strategy for analysis. I did this by keeping a journal throughout the process. Writing about my responses after every interview also allowed me to be aware of my biases and personal assumptions.

Positionality

Positionality is a “criterion for judging the worthwhileness of knowledge. [It] takes account of the social location of the research participants, and seeks to bound and frame knowledge in terms of where and from whom it came.” (Lincoln, 1998, p. 22). In this sense, the knowledge created in the study had its own context. It evolved out of a specific time and place. Hence, the representation of the data or the text is only partial if compared to other participants, in different social or cultural locations (Lincoln, 1995). The participants were not representative of all francophone adolescent girls and their experiences were not generalizable in a statistical, quantitative sense. However, the research represents a glimpse at singing experiences in a specific time and place with a few individuals who experience this phenomenon. I tried to document both the participants’ positionality as well as my own for readers.

In terms of positionality, I took into account and was sensitive towards my own positioning in

the specific research context. My interests and commitments to this research were personal; I was once a francophone adolescent girl who sang a lot throughout adolescence. Nevertheless, I was aware that I could not let my personal opinions, beliefs, and expectations get mixed in with the research data. Throughout the process, I reminded myself that my experiences were separate from those of participants, while still recognizing the benefits of my personal relationship with singing as a francophone in understanding the experiences of the participants.

Reciprocity

According to Lincoln (1998), “reciprocity and caring are ... criteria, which exhibit great fit with emerging relational models of research” (p. 23) and they “fit well with the idea of sharing the perquisites of privilege and power.” (Lincoln, 1998, p. 23) Additionally, these concepts address the need “for the participants in the study to receive something in return for their willingness to be observed and provide information” (Creswell, 1998, p. 248). The findings I generated and co-constructed were a representation of an interactive process between the participants and myself, whereby we mutually felt a sense of trust and care. Furthermore, I hoped that the study would benefit each individual involved in the process in becoming more self-aware and self-understanding. My relaxed, curious, informal, and respectful approach during the interviews provided a safe and supportive environment for participants to share their experiences. This process gave the three adolescent francophone girls an opportunity to contribute to research that is meaningful to their daily experiences. It also was of personal benefit to me because I was able to combine my research with my love for singing. All of this enhanced the trustworthiness of the study as well as its ethical integrity.

Constructivism

As a researcher who relates to constructivism and interpretivism, I have an “epistemological position that regards aspects of the human environment as constructed by the individuals who participate in that environment, and thus asserts that aspects of social reality have no existence apart from the meanings that individuals construct for them” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005, p. 551). Understanding my participants’ meanings and experiences depended on their context, culture, and the rapport between us (Morrow, 2005). I felt that my own identity as a francophone woman gave me a certain advantage as the researcher in this project. I think that I had a certain preparation “to enter the field in a credible manner” (Morrow, 2005, p. 253) because I was not an

outsider, nor a stranger to the field. Credibility of the findings was therefore enhanced via the quality of the data.

As a beginning researcher and a beginning counsellor, I was by no means an expert. I expected to come across challenges throughout my journey. However, my engagement with this research was deeply rooted and genuine, and I hope that through my respect towards my participants, and constant reflexivity, I developed something audible, for all of the unique voices involved in this experience. I am aware that as a researcher and as a human being, I had a subjective view. I am also aware that I influenced my participants as well as my own interpretations. Recognizing this was important in order to judge the trustworthiness of my research and I believe there are valuable criteria that I used in order to respect my participants, their stories, experiences, and authentic voices.

Ethical Considerations

The present study received ethical approval from the Behavioural Research Ethics Board at the University of Saskatchewan. Participation in this study was voluntary and strategies to maximize confidentiality and anonymity were made aware to participants through the informed consent process. The consent form outlined the purpose and procedures of the study. Although this study was judged to be of minimal risk, participants were informed of potential discomforts or risks. At all times, participants knew they were free to decide what they would or would not disclose, and could, choose not to answer any questions. They also had a right to withdraw at any point during the study. For one of the potential participants, this was her choice. The consent form also outlined the steps that were taken to protect participants' confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were asked to choose pseudonyms for themselves and direct identifying information was altered or excluded from the quotes. Finally, they were asked to sign consent for the release of transcripts once they had read a draft of their narratives and discussed any additions, deletions, or changes they wanted. The consent forms, recorded audio interviews, and transcripts will be securely stored in the office of the supervising researcher, in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education for five years, and then destroyed.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, findings are described. First, the three participants are introduced briefly along with selected “I” poems created by following the steps of The Listening Guide to extract and combine quotes from the participants’ transcripts. Next three ways of singing are presented followed by three themes: Rhythm (Identity), Harmony (Relationship), and Melody (Wellbeing and Strength). I used song-based metaphors to provide an evocative, rich way of presenting the data.

To protect participant confidentiality, participants chose their own pseudonym, and all identifying information was altered. For example, specific names of people and places were changed or omitted. Finally, participants’ individual narrative and unique voices have been preserved in the writing that follows. This choice, as opposed to the use of a singular, more “global” voice to represent findings and experiences, was made to value each participant’s own unique lived experience and retain the context of those experiences.

Three Singers and Their Lyrics

This section introduces the three adolescent francophone girl singers. Lyrics tell a story and capture a feeling. They can be powerful and even inspirational. In this case, the lyrics are those of the three participants. Each participant is introduced and then evoked with “I” poems, an evocative means to present information in a non-traditional form. These “I” poems centre attention on the person who is telling the story: in this case, the participants.

Émilie

Émilie was the first participant interviewed. I had never met her; although, she was a grade 12 student in one of the schools I work in. Émilie had been singing since the age of two. It all began with her mother who used to sing to her and her siblings in French. She described her first experience, at the age of three, on stage with her mother. Émilie had vivid memories of this event and said this first experience was most significant for her. She later became known in her community as a singer. Teachers would ask her to sing at school events, she sang in church, and of course at home with her mother. Moreover, the majority of her singing was in French. More recently, she had written a song about her brother who had committed suicide. Writing this song took her two years, and at the time we met, she was preparing to perform it at a francophone event. I was struck by Émilie’s confidence and positive self-esteem. Her story really demonstrated her strength and ability to bounce back after challenges and losses.

I created two different “I” poems from Émilie’s transcripts. The first one portrays Émilie’s difficulty identifying with the girl in her. She enjoys spending time with the boys, yet does not really fit in with them. However she does not feel like other girls. The reader can hear the participant’s narrative and unique voice wanting so much to be accepted. Many times Émilie used “I don’t” or words similar to these, focusing on the negative aspects of her experience. The end of the poem reflects her ability to move between male identity and female identity, the last line led me to believe that although she had succeeded in connecting with the boys and girls, she still struggles with this aspect of her life.

I was friends with all the guys

I got along

I liked playing

I was a girl

I had a bit of difficulty

I went with girls

I’m just one of the guys

I don’t cry

I’m just not sensitive

I get over things

I won’t hold grudges

I don’t care

I’ll just go

It’s in the past

I am like that

I feel a lot like that

I don’t get offended

I don’t like to gossip

I prefer playing football

I wanted to be accepted

I was

I made myself a boy

I’m a mixture of both

I'm pretty okay with it

Émilie's second I poem shows her confidence and love of singing. This poem is powerful in that the verbs are in the present tense and positive. As I pulled this poem from her transcript, I could not help but smile. I think this poem is a good representation of Émilie's confidence. It also demonstrates the importance of singing in her life.

I couldn't live without singing

I can't

I sing all of the time

I am frustrated, mad, happy,

I sing

I do every day

I sing when

I am alone

I don't know

I will sing

I will just sing

I feel

I'll start getting into the singing

I will remember

I know

I will start to sing

I am happy

I am like

I love singing so much

Sarah

Sarah was the second participant and also a grade 12 student. Her story was rich and moving. Sarah has always sung, but in her younger years, it was usually done boisterously, to get attention from others. When she was ten years old, she was singing quietly on the bus one day when a girl complimented her singing voice. This was the first time Sarah thought she might have a talent. Shortly after, she began getting involved in musicals. She knew she loved to sing,

mostly in English at this point in her life, as she did not begin to sing in French until about the tenth grade. There were a few times in Sarah's life where she had suddenly stopped singing. These were related to her difficult and painful experiences. However, it was through singing that she was able to release and let go of these past experiences. Sarah described the releases as powerful healing moments. I was impressed by Sarah's maturity, confidence, and strength.

I created three "I" poems from Sarah's transcripts. The first two describe Sarah's experiences involving adolescence; however, they contradict themselves. In the first poem, Sarah is very confident about her adolescence and although she recognizes she is different, she seems to be at ease with it. In the second poem, which was taken from the same interview a few pages in, the reader can detect uncertainty. Sarah struggles between wanting to be an adolescent and liking where she is at, yet not really fitting in. The contrast between these two poems illustrates Sarah's unique perspective and effort in trying to manage and work her way through adolescence. It illustrates the complexity she faces as an adolescent.

I am really different

I know a lot of things

I do funny kinda things

I do Reiki

I am really different

I am really accepted and integrated

I am not really adolescent

I find adolescence is easy

I like being an adolescent

I don't want to be 30 right now

I want to be 17

I want to experience adolescence

It's hard for me

I want to be 17

I want to take my time

I don't want to be 25

I want to be 17
I want to be at school
I want to be with my high school friends
I always wanted to be my own age
I like being an adolescent
I have troubles being an adolescent
I am not there
I want to be there

The third poem was also taken from the first interview. I selected it because it represents Sarah's resilience, that is, her courage and ability to overcome difficult situations. Furthermore, it illustrates how singing is a powerful tool for Sarah in coming to terms with, and letting go of her past.

I knew
I would be able to do it
I was really blocked
I couldn't practice
I came back
I had one week
I just took everything that happened
I let go
I adored that
I wanted to cry
I don't know
I really felt
I was my spirit
I was my soul
I don't know the difference
I felt like that
I took all these events
I'm not letting this affect me

*I love singing way too much
I just sang*

Liane

Liane was an 18-year-old girl who had just graduated from high school a few months prior to when I first contacted her. She was the last participant I interviewed, although she was the first person I thought of as a potential participant. She was familiar to me as a former student while I taught, and I knew that she enjoyed singing. When I asked Liane to tell me more about singing, she said she liked to sing alone, at home, and often in the shower, in both French and English. Over time, singing became increasingly meaningful in her life. It brought Liane out of her shell, giving her more confidence. The positive feedback and encouragement she received when she first began to sing really motivated her and gave her the assurance to continue. Although, Liane had a quiet and reserved side, she was also able to express herself with passion and strong opinions on topics that interested her.

The first “I” poem was taken from Liane’s first interview and is from a passage where she was describing her experiences of playing soccer in a city league, and the challenges she faced partly due to being a Francophone. She did not fit in with most of the girls on the team because most of them were from English schools. Liane found herself relating more to girls of other minority cultural backgrounds who were often also on the outside. She felt she had more in common with them and that they were easier to approach. This poem is important because the theme of fitting in and making friends came up several times throughout Liane’s interviews.

*I played soccer
I would go see the girls that were different
I didn't know the other girls
I was shy
I didn't know
I felt
I had more in common
I understood their point of view
I was just like*

*I don't want to lose my time
I want to stay with the girls who want to talk to me
I felt
I don't have friends
I was a bit like the outcast
I felt rejected
I didn't take it personal
I thought it was the age
I would make friends when I'm older*

The second poem illustrates Liane's experiences with singing. In the first half of the poem, I noticed her anxiety, uncertainty, and the process she underwent to get into the moment of singing in front of others. The second half describes that after she was warmed up, the singing experience was powerful because she was able to relax her mind and thoughts, and feel the moment. The experience was quite spiritual for Liane in that she was so involved and taken by it.

*I know
I begin
I am all nervous
I am not certain
I do the first song
I am a little liberated
I am more comfortable
I don't know
I sing
I forget everything
I sing
I forget that I exist
I am not worrying
I am focusing
I sing
I feel like my heart is jumping out of my body*

I feel my body will follow the music
I feel like I am not in my body
I feel like it's just my spirit talking
I'd say a little spiritual

Three Ways of Singing

There are many different ways in which singing can be experienced: for example, singing in the shower, singing around a campfire, or singing on stage in front of ten thousand people. All three examples involve singing within varied settings. Exploring the different ways of singing helped me identify different meanings and purposes. In the present study, three ways of singing were described by the participants: private informal; social informal; and public formal.

Private Informal

Private singing, such as singing in the shower, felt uninhibited and liberating; this was a truly personal way of singing. Participants described this kind of singing as informal, laidback, and relaxing because there was room for error and mistakes. Liane said:

Singing in private is a little like, just like, you can do what you want and you don't have to worry about it not going good together and it's just like you can do anything. You experiment, so you don't know what will happen. It's like an experiment in a laboratory. You try things and if it works, it works. If not, it's like, what was that that I created?

[laugh]

Experimenting freely and creatively was significant for the participants. Singing alone allowed them to improvise freely and be creative. Liane stated that she improvised more in private, "I feel freer to experiment when no one is around. I can just go crazy." Nothing held participants back when they were in their own company; they were able to sing as loud and with as much expression as they wanted. Émilie described it thus:

Singing by myself, when no one is around, is the best because that's when I get to experiment. Oh, I'd like to be able to sing like this, so you wait until no one is around, then you try, and it doesn't work that good the first time, but the more you practice, the better you get and your voice has the chance to mature in that sense because you are trying different things, so it gets better. You can try songs that are a little too low for you or just a little high and it like works your range.

Participants did not go into detail about the language they were singing in; however, when singing privately and informally, they sang to a variety of music including English Popular, Country, and/or Rock music, and French Traditional and Popular music, amongst other styles. What is noteworthy is that singing privately gave these adolescent girls a certain freedom and release. For Liane, “it’s being more yourself when you sing in private. You just let things go.”

Social Informal

Another way of singing was singing in camaraderie, like around the campfire with peers and family members. This was the social and informal way of singing described by participants. It was similar to singing in private because participants still felt at ease; however, it differed in that it was done in the company of others, such as family, friends, and acquaintances. Trust and/or intimacy were necessary for the adolescent girls to feel comfortable enough to sing in this manner. Participants sang in French and English in these settings, depending on the situation. For example, Émilie sang in French with her family for the most part, while singing in English when with her youth group. Émilie described the following experience of social informal singing with her family:

At home it was much more fun and relaxed. You weren’t there to impress anybody. It didn’t matter if you sang a note off key or something, like who cares. When we sang traditional songs with my mom, that was good. I liked that because I thought, okay, I can sing this pretty good. Acadian songs are fun. That’s my style of music. So then we had fun. Sometimes I would be on the piano and I would sing at the same time. I really enjoyed that.

The idea of being less than perfect when singing informally and socially was further noted amongst participants. Competency and skill were usually associated with singing in public, not when singing with friends and family. It was perhaps easier then, to be oneself and comfortable when singing in informal, social settings. Sarah illustrated this idea: “At school, if I sing, it’s just to be loud. I never sing well unless I am on stage.”

Public Formal

Singing in front of an audience and performing was another kind of singing shared by participants. This was the formal and the public way of singing described, which clearly contrasted with the previously noted forms. Stress and nervousness came with this type of

singing, yet participants still found the courage to get up on stage and enjoy their experience. Liane described what it was like to sing on stage:

I know that when I start I am very nervous, and not sure if I am going to be good, but after I've started singing the first song, I am freed of myself. I just start getting more comfortable doing it. And I don't know what I feel when I sing. It's just like, in front of people, I forget everything. I may be looking at the people, but it's not really registering. (...) It's a good feeling. It's just... you are just there. You're playing your guitar and singing and it's good, it's really good when you have a successful experience, like if the band played really good and everyone says you sang well.

In order to get comfortable, Liane did require some time, however once she did feel comfortable, she seemed to forget she was in front of an audience. At that point she was feeling and living in the immediate moment.

Participants described feeling unsure before a performance; yet if they were able to start on the right track their insecurities would vanish, as in Émilie's experience: "In public, I am always nervous and tense when I start. (...) If I am singing well, I'll relax, but if I am thinking that I am not doing a good job, then it just goes downhill." Another important factor to having a positive experience of singing in public was dependent on what the adolescent girls were singing. If the songs suited them and they connected to them, it made a significant positive difference. Émilie explained how song choice was a factor that could affect her overall public experience:

In public, I am forced to sing rock songs and my voice is just not made for that. I am more like Country and Christmas carols, stuff like that... softer, traditional. My voice is a lot better when I sing songs like that. So when I was in bands and that, I was kinda like, that's when I was really nervous because I wasn't confident with the songs even before I went on stage. I didn't like that. But when I am on stage with my mom or something like that, I'm at ease. I love that. Those are songs I like to sing.

The adrenaline, excitement, and all other emotions seemed to build together to create an amazing and intense experience for these young singers. Therefore, singing in front of an audience could also be a more powerful experience than singing privately. Moreover, the rush of energy that came after the performance was also an exhilarating feeling, as Sarah described:

When I sing in public, it's even stronger. Like it's just the feeling of being mollified. It's even more vibrating. I can actually feel it. Like it's just more tingly. Umm, it's probably

the adrenaline high that I am on. Cause you're up, you go as high as you can, however high you can get, like through your voice or whatever, cause people don't care. They just want me to sing. And then once you're done, you're just like "Ahhh!" [sigh] and you just kinda want to slide down. (...) It's a great feeling. The best high comes after the performance because then you realize what you just did. And you're like "oh it feels so good". It's just like a soccer game.

Anxiety was often experienced by participants. Fear and nervousness could often flavour a performance, amplifying the intensity of the experience even further. Liane talked about one of the first times she performed:

And I had never really sung in front of people so it was like "OHH!" I was extremely nervous. And I was trembling a bit and it was like the butterflies and you want to go to the bathroom. But you don't really need to go. You are just so nervous that you think you have to go. (...) At first I was so nervous that I didn't even play the right thing. And [the band] made changes that I wasn't ready to play yet because I was used to playing a certain way. (...) So I tried to do it but I think I made mistakes here and there and so the band had to adjust to me. (...) But they weren't too hard on me. I was still very proud that I had done it. (...) I don't think that, like if I had never done this, I don't know if I would have actually started singing in public because I was really shy. So that changed everything. I thought maybe I should continue. I really liked everything, it was super interesting and I learned a lot. It was just like a really huge experience. I still remember it so it was really significant.

Although Liane made mistakes and felt a lot of anxiety in her first experience on stage, she remembers it today as being significant, and cherishes it dearly. Hence, the fearfulness and uneasiness felt at first did not seem to prevent nor discourage participants from continuing to perform. Émilie also described being very distressed and anxious before a performance:

It was nerve-racking. I was so, so nervous when I forced myself to go in front of an audience of people I knew and that I see often enough. (...) And when you go on stage you always think, "what are they gonna think of me?" There are always some who won't like you and some who will, and others will be in the middle, whatever. (...) I didn't really like singing in front of the school. I was always forced to do it because the teachers asked me. But every time I would go and sing in front of someone I knew, it was like,

okay, even if I sing well, they will say that I didn't do good. They will never like what I do. So, I always had troubles performing after that because I was always shy. I was always like, people are going to judge me and they won't necessarily like what I do.

Fear of being judged or ridiculed by the audience was an aspect of performing that concerned participants. If their confidence was down, they tended to worry about what the audience would think. However, if they trusted in their singing during performance and released the anxiety, they generally felt a much stronger and satisfactory performance, therefore, enabling them to connect more intuitively and responsively to their audience, like in *Émilie's* situation:

Every time I would go on stage, I was always too self-conscious. I thought, "they're all going to hate me" and stuff like that. And I would embarrass myself because I was too nervous or I would forget my lyrics or hit the wrong notes because I couldn't hear myself because the speakers weren't loud enough or something. (...) But I learned that the more I let myself go on stage and you know, just be myself, the more people liked it. Because if you feel nervous, others will know. It's not gonna give out the right vibe. It will just be boring. But if you're like outgoing and all crazy, all over the stage, you're reaching out to people. They'll be like "hey" and they're gonna feed off your energy.

Slowly with the years, the anxiety felt by participants when singing in front of an audience appeared to have faded. The more experience these adolescent girls had performing, the more confidence they gained, and the less anxious they became. However, this had some disadvantages as well, whereby participants did not feel enough excitement before and during a performance. As Sarah related:

I don't know if I've numbed myself, like I said before, to being nervous on purpose. I don't know if my body actually is still nervous but I am really good at not being nervous. Like, I just don't know, because I abused myself a lot when I was younger with just going in front of people and just doing it, doing it. And finally, it's just like "I'm not nervous... at all". And it kinda sucks when you're not nervous. (...) I'm just not. And then I miss when I go, like I went on stage yesterday, and in front of, I don't know, 100 people, and I'm acting, whatever, it just doesn't phase me. It's like those people aren't real and I almost don't like that cause it doesn't feel real anymore. The fact that I don't get nervous makes it less real.

It appeared that a small dose of stress when performing provided just enough adrenaline and energy required for a positive experience.

Another element that defined public singing, was its structure. Whereas singing alone allowed participants to improvise, singing in front of an audience was like a formula to be followed. The formula was sometimes nice to have because it was less work. Liane spoke to this:

In public, it's more like you follow a structure and a certain way of playing. You will be less likely to do whatever, and it's more like you know what you're going to do. You know exactly what you will do, and that's good. (...) In that sense, it's easier because everything will go well if you just do it that way. It's like, you could compare it with work. You know how to do your work so you know you will do a good job and you will get paid after.

In terms of the language used when singing in the public formal way, Liane and Émilie sung mostly in French, seeing that they were in French schools and participated in francophone activities involving singing, which were often promoted in and integrated within the schools. Sarah, on the other hand, sang in both French and English, being from an immersion school. However, Sarah chose to integrate into the francophone community as of Grade 10 and become more involved with performing in French.

Summary

Three ways of singing emerged from the three adolescent girls; each different and serving a different purpose. Liane said:

There are things about singing in private and singing in public... Both are good but there are differences that make you perhaps like more of this or more of that. I don't know.

Umm, I like both, but it really depends on what I am searching for in that moment.

It appeared to be difficult to explain specifically, the differences between the ways of singing because it was not something participants had ever really thought about. Furthermore, they did not seem to prefer one over the other. They knew they enjoyed singing and that included the various ways of singing. Each way was unique and had its own enjoyment, satisfaction, and significance. Even the challenges faced at times were not enough to walk away from singing. On the contrary, the challenges seemed to provide valuable learning experiences for participants, including opportunities for self-reflection and for improvement in confidence, skill, and creativity.

Three Themes

“Music creates order out of chaos: for rhythm imposes unanimity upon the divergent, melody imposes continuity upon the disjointed, and harmony imposes compatibility upon the incongruous.” -Yehudi Menuhin (n.d.)

Three principal themes emerged from the interviews with participants. The first theme, Rhythm, was about identity and the adolescent girls’ stories of adolescence, gender, and culture; as well a fourth identity as a singer. Harmony was the next theme, singing as a way of being in relationship. The third and last theme, Melody, focused on the participants’ experiences of wellbeing and strength associated with singing.

Rhythm: Experiences of Identity

Rhythm is the heart of music, providing tempo, flow, and momentum, propelling and driving the music forward, structuring melody and harmony. The beats and pulses circulate with strength and consistency, despite their complexity and variance in structure or intensity. Like rhythm, identity is who we are in a particular moment. It is however, a continuous process of creation, constantly moving and evolving. At times, identity can even be disrupted or lost before it resumes again. This theme illuminates the participants’ stories of identity; specifically, the aspects of identity related to being an adolescent, being a girl, being a francophone, and being a singer. Singing appeared to be an important fourth identity, directly tied to all of their intersecting identities and a significant part of their integrated self as a whole, adding meaning and purpose.

Adolescent rhythm. All the participants seemed to share a common experience of not fitting in and of being different than other adolescent girls. For example, each participant perceived themselves as more mature than their peers. Liane said, “I always knew that I was more mature than most people in my class. Like, it doesn’t show on the outside, but like in my thoughts and actions towards them, umm, I thought I was one of the most mature.” Sarah described herself as follows:

I think that as an adolescent, I am really different than the others because I find that others think I am more advanced. It’s not really maturity for me, it’s just that I know a lot of things. I don’t know how I know a lot of things, but people find me really... not adult but wise. Like an old soul. I was often called an old soul and I do funny kinda things. I practice Reiki since I am 16 years old so... That’s not really normal. (...) So I’m not really adolescent.

Émilie thought her interests and experiences differentiated her from other adolescents:

I'm someone who doesn't need to live through experiences to know. Like I've never, I don't drink, I don't smoke, I don't do drugs, I'm really catholic and really into my religion. I really like that and I don't really like going to parties, I find that pointless. It's boring. I guess you could say I'm not your typical adolescent.

Although participants felt unlike other adolescents, they also enjoyed being adolescent.

According to Émilie, adolescence was a period of self-discovery, "it's the time where you find yourself, where you find your identity." Liane also thought of adolescence as a special time involving exploration and discovery, "it's really fun because you meet lots of people and it's supposed to be the time in your life where you try lots of new things, and discover all sorts of things."

Although Sarah did not wish she were any older or younger, her words also suggested how confusing and challenging it was for her to be an adolescent:

I like being an adolescent. Like I don't want to be 30 years old right now. I want to be 17, I want to experience adolescence, but it's hard for me. Like I want to be 17 and take my time. I have friends who say they want to be 25. I don't want to be 25; I want to be 17. I want to be in school, with my high school friends. I like being a teenager, but I have troubles because I am not there. But I want to be there. It's like the opposite.

Émilie believed adolescence to be "the best and worst time of your life because there are so many changes and it goes so fast." She especially enjoyed the extra freedom she gained in her adolescence, "you have the choice to go have fun with your friends, going out on weekends, playing sports, being at school". Adolescence was a time of being able to experiment without having to face too many consequences:

For me it's the time where you learn the most. It's when you have the chance to experience things, but if you make mistakes, it's not a big deal because you know you have your parents that are your safety net kinda thing. You can always bounce back from it.

Although adolescence did not require Émilie to be responsible in an adult sense, "it's the best because you don't have to pay bills and things like that", Liane, in contrast, thought she was beginning to grapple with adult responsibilities as an adolescent,

It's really a time in your life where you have to make a lot of decisions and you begin to understand what it is to be an adult. (...) I find that when you are young you don't have to make a lot of decisions. And when you are a teenager, your parents give you more choices and room to make decisions. That's why I think decisions are an important part of being an adolescent. And some are easy and others difficult.

Being an adolescent seemed to require participants to make more mature decisions, alongside the realization that they were not yet fully responsible like most adults.

In summary, although participants thought they were somewhat different than the average adolescent, they reveled in the fact that this stage of life allowed them the freedom to experiment and make a few decisions on their own. It seemed that even if there were many challenges associated with adolescence, these adolescents recognized benefits such as freedom and autonomy.

Gender rhythm. Participants had many perceived notions about teenage girls and teenage boys. They seemed to be grappling with black and white understandings that clearly differentiated girls and boys. For example, Liane associated maturity as being a female characteristic:

I think that being a girl is really like, we are always more mature than the boys. The reason for that is that we just have to be. I don't want to be sexist or anything, but I just get the impression that we have to be more mature than them because as of a young age we have to get used to and organized with our body. We know we have the responsibility of making good choices; otherwise, the consequences can be a lot worse. Like a guy can't get pregnant, so it's not as important to him. I think that's one of the reasons why girls are generally more mature than boys.

Liane thought that being female automatically meant having to be more responsible. She explained this with the following classroom example:

Let's say a girl and a guy are being disciplined. The girl will probably accept the consequences and you know, just not make jokes at the wrong time, and better judge when it's time to be serious and when it's time to take your place and things like that. I think it's good sometimes. I think it's good the way we are, that girls are more mature. But we have a tendency to have less of a sense of humor. I think there is a balance between that and that's just how it's supposed to be. (...) I noticed this a lot during my

adolescence just with my friends and stuff. Often, the guys would not take suggestions seriously when the girls were like, it's serious, you shouldn't laugh and make jokes. But they were like whatever. Sometimes I would get frustrated with them and I was like why can't they just change and mature. But at the same time I can't blame them because they are like that. It's just who they are.

Whereas maturity was generally perceived as a positive attribute, Liane also felt that maturity got in the way of being able to relax, have fun, and laugh.

Sarah associated jealousy, superficiality, even promiscuity with the typical teenage girl:

She can be jealous. I don't understand jealousy. I've never felt jealousy. I don't know the feeling. I am not jealous; I am not boy crazy. I can't be boy crazy. I can like boys, but I can't be like... liking someone for me is just like, cool. It's not "oh my god, oh my god!" and talk about they guy all the time. I like talking about philosophy. I like, I love astrology. (...) And there are girls who always wear their makeup, who are always pretty. I'm like "eh". I see through the surface of people. Even myself. I don't like seeing me superficial either. (...) Typical girls are just really different. There really like slutty a bit. I'm not like that.

On the other hand, Sarah appeared to be confident and proud that she was different and unique:

I don't have girl problems. I am a bit of a tomboy in that I can understand the girl spirit and the guy spirit. (...) I am not the girl who is "Ahhh! What are you doing?" (speaks in a high pitched voice). I don't know how to explain it. I like talking with people, connecting with people. I like knowing what they think. I am not the girl who will submit to anything either. No, I like being equal. I like being free. (...) I am not the typical girl. Lots of girls can say that, but for me it's true just because everyone says it too. I find that I am different, and lots of people think it as well.

Sensitivity, oversensitivity, and perpetuating gossip were the characteristics Émilie believed to be present in most girls; however, as she did not experience these, she identified more with teenage boys:

I'm just one of the guys almost. When they see me they know that I'm not gonna cry because they know me. You know, I don't cry. Like, it takes a lot to make me cry because I'm just not sensitive that way. I almost have the same emotions as the guys. I get over things real quick and I won't hold grudges. Like if something happens, the next day I'll

just go “hey, how’s it going?” kinda thing. It’s in the past. (...) Like I don’t get offended really easy and I don’t like gossip that much.

Émilie’s older brothers teased her about being a girl. She wanted to be accepted by them; however, they often told her she was too much like a girl. Their influence seemed to have a significant impact on Émilie because she tried hard to fit in with her brothers, while finding it equally difficult to fit in with girls:

I never really wanted to be a girl, like you know what I mean. I grew up with two brothers and they always told me “why can’t you be more like a boy?” Finally, I was a tomboy to boot” I didn’t wear dresses, no makeup, nothing. (...) I always thought that wearing dresses meant to be all prim and proper. You couldn’t go play sports. You couldn’t have fun, right. Being a girl was boring basically. That’s what my brothers put in my head when I was young. And it was really hard for me because all my friends wore dresses and put makeup on. They did their hair and I came to school with short hair, or if it was long, it was in a ponytail every day. Like I didn’t care. And I didn’t have that in common with the girls.

The participants often felt like they were not typical girls, yet it pleased them to be different because of the strong, negative stereotypes they associated with their gender. Sometimes, the participants preferred to be like boys. Émilie said, “I almost made myself like a boy and now I’m comfortable. Yeah, I’m just a mix of both really. I’m pretty okay with it.” Coming to terms with and trying to understand the stereotypes that affected participants as young girls and teenage girls was not easy; however, participants felt they were content with who they were as girls today.

Francophone rhythm. The francophone beat was solid in the participants’ lives because they cherished this aspect of their identity. Being francophone seemed to provide a sense of belonging, pride, and a way to explore their roots and their heritage. For Sarah, connecting to her francophone roots only began in adolescence:

I didn’t take French seriously until I was in Grade nine because I met a guy from Québec. (...) I learned more and more and I wanted to speak French. It kinda started because of him. (...) That’s where I became really proud of my francophone identity. (...) Then I started singing in French and just started to get more involved.

Whereas her Anglophone roots connected her to the more unpleasant parts of her past, her francophone roots were like a new beginning, connecting her to a new life. When asked what this francophone life was like, she said:

It's a lot more relaxed than my Anglophone life. There is less stress in French because for me it's still... Life is new in French compared to English. I guess you could say that my English life has been tainted so much. Even by swear words and I don't know. Every bad thing I've heard in my life has been in English. (...) It's really, really like a whole other life. (...) I express myself differently in French than I do in English.

Émilie also valued her francophone roots and with time, attached more importance to them:

For me the francophonie has always been a big part of my life. Like with my mom, she is really strong on that. She always tried to show us the francophone pride. (...) I'm just really proud to be a francophone. I love it. Anybody who asks me, I'm like, oh yeah. (...) And it's a little stronger now. When I was little, I wanted to speak in English, but once I started growing up, I really saw what the francophone culture was and then it clicked in me.

Participants also felt a certain special kinship and uniqueness because of their French heritage. Their strong sense of belonging to the francophone community helped them enjoy and promote participation in it, as Liane described:

As a Francophone, I try to do as much as I can for the community. I try to do a lot. I always try to promote activities and to meet new francophone people. (...) Everybody I knew was practically a Francophone and if I hadn't done activities, like with the school and the francophone youth association, if it wasn't for them, I don't think that... I don't know that I would still be a Francophone today. (...) It was really a big part of my development. It's a really big part of my identity, and if I hadn't learned French, I wouldn't be the same person. And I feel a little special in the sense that I know French, I am Fransaskoise. It's really something special because there aren't a lot of Fransaskois, so you're really lucky when you have that chance. For me it's something very important.

The positive experiences and stories involving participants' francophone heritage exceeded the negative ones. Nevertheless, there was still the challenge of fitting into the majority Anglophone group. When participating in activities outside of her francophone community, Liane sometimes felt like an outsider:

Sometimes it was difficult because we would sometimes get discriminated by people who did not understand what it was to be Francophone, especially in Saskatchewan where we are a minority. And for example, I played on a soccer team and it was difficult to make friends because they were all school friends or they were all Anglophones. So, often I would go see the girls that were different, like the Chinese girl.

Making friends was not always easy in activities outside of school. Hence, Liane felt a kinship and easier connection with girls who also came from a different cultural background.

Singing deeply connected participants' to their cultural roots. It was actually a key factor related to their fulfillment of being francophone, as Émilie described:

The fact that I sing in French is one of the things that connects me most to the francophonie that makes me feel more Francophone. Many people will say they can speak French, so they're Francophone. But for me, it's my whole learning process of singing and stuff. It was all in French. So it really taught me about the francophone culture and it's really that that brought me closer to my francophone roots. I think that's the number one thing. It's really the music that helped me get a foundation for my francophone identity. That's what made me proud to be a Francophone.

Singing also connected Liane to her francophone heritage. It appeared to enhance her sense of pride and respect:

That was another way, I'd say, that I could promote our culture and our language and I think that it's a big part of our francophone youth, to sing and to participate in activities involving music. We have many opportunities to do so. And I really like singing in French. (...) I want to sing more in French because French is something I just couldn't abandon. I'll always choose French over English if I can.

Singing enhanced her pride, demonstrated respect, and showed commitment to her culture, and was a way of being immersed in her francophone background.

Participants enjoyed singing in French because it was unique and different than singing in English. Sarah started singing in French only a few years ago and noticed a difference between singing in both languages:

I love singing in French more than in English. There is something special because the words are more... I don't know how to explain it but it's more beautiful. (...) When I

sing in French I am not (her name pronounced in English), I am (her name pronounced in French). I don't know, I can't explain it. You'd have to be in my shoes.

The uniqueness felt when singing in French was also experienced by Liane. She treasured how it increased her sense of belonging to the group:

Singing helped a lot because it brought me closer to certain... like I did more things and met more youth who sang in French. Therefore, in some way, it brought me closer and it's really interesting to see other people sing in French, who decide to do so even though they can sing in English. (...) It kinda gives you a special something.

Likewise, singing in French was a pleasant discovery for Sarah:

I started talking in French then I saw the opportunities to sing in French. It was something new, and in Grade ten, I began singing in French. I liked it so much. (...) I really like the songs in French. Maybe it's because I had good French examples that were a big influence for me.

Although singing did not appear to have a strong connection to the participants' adolescent and gender identities, it appeared to be intricately woven into participants' sense of being francophone, and provided many opportunities for involvement with, and connection to their cultural roots. It added to their pride and gratification of being Francophone.

Singer rhythm. Participants described singing as being intrinsic, something that came naturally, and moved through them continuously and steadily. Émilie said:

(Singing), it's just something you do on a daily basis. It's almost like, I don't like to say habit, but you know what I mean. It's like automatic. Yeah, really, because if you need to eat kinda thing, you just do it. You don't really think about it, and for me and music it's like that. It's what I want to do. Every time I need to do my Saturday chores or my homework or anything. I know that doesn't compare because it's like, who wants to do their homework, but it's like the first thing I think of when I come home. (...) It's just something I do every day. It's like a part of my life almost.

When participants were asked about how singing contributed to their everyday life, they answered firmly and enthusiastically. Sarah also described singing, "like eating. That's like habitual. Like I don't even notice that I'm singing. It's like breathing. And I'm not singing all the time but it's just like another habit, like if I feel like singing it just comes out."

Émilie could not recall when singing became so important to her, although clearly its influence started in childhood: “since the age of, oh my gosh... singing was always like natural. Everyone in (name of her community) knew that I sang kinda thing.” As time passed, singing became more and more significant to Liane:

I did it more often, almost every night. When I started high school it really became something that, I played all the time, and I sang and I wanted to write songs. (...) After school sometimes, during lunch hour or during recess or something... It’s something that we did often and almost all of the time.

Singing at home was a natural and comfortable thing for the participants to do and their families accepted this. Each seemed to have a sacred space and time for singing. As Liane mentioned, “often when I am at home alone I sing. Umm, in the shower too. I think that is the place I have sung the most in my life (laugh).” Émilie described her experience as:

Once my parents have left [the house], like I can’t help it. I’m always like, music. And they know because they’ll be like, okay, we are leaving you alone now; you can do your chores. I’ll be like, okay, yeah right. They’ll come back and the house will be just as dirty as when they left because I had been singing the whole time, two or three hours, and playing the piano or the guitar or something.

Moreover, friends, and the community also knew that singing was an inherent part of the participants’ lives. As mentioned earlier, Émilie was known as the singer in her community, “It was always me who... the teachers always asked me to sing something. At my Kindergarten graduation, I sang O Canada. Any song that had to be sung, I sang it.” Sarah too was known by her community and school as the girl who had potential to sing and to be very good at it.

Singing was powerful and participants felt it physiologically. Émilie related, “sometimes it’s just like...wow... you know. You can feel it inside of you and it’s like in your stomach and stuff like that. I don’t know, it’s like the energy just wants to pop out of you.” Due to their significant, intrinsic connections with singing, participants said they were vulnerable when singing in front of others. It was like they were completely exposed to others. Émilie described a situation she experienced as a young girl when other girls were jealous of her singing:

When I was younger, like in elementary, it almost caused problems because there were girls who teased me because I sang. I think they did it because they wanted to sing, but it was always me. And the more I grew older, the better it got because they started to

understand that that is who I am and that it won't change. And they accepted it and now they are like "oh, sing this for me, sing this for me", so I don't know, it's like a way for them to connect with me.

Singing allowed the girls to reveal themselves to others as well as learn and grow from their experiences. Sometimes they were exposed to negative feedback or judgment. As Émilie said:

Well, that's where I, it's where you learn the most. It's like going to perform and sing and stuff, that is what made me vulnerable to the public and it's what opened me up and like "okay, here I am". It forced me to show myself, and it gave others the opportunity to really pick at something that was very personal to me. Singing was always something that I held close to my heart. And if you told me that I wasn't a good singer, like that really hurt. I knew that I wasn't extraordinary, but it didn't mean I sucked right? I was still decent. (...) So that was really hard but if it wasn't for that, I probably wouldn't have learned as much as I learned. I wouldn't be the same person right now. This put me in growth situations, like to just grow.

The self-discovery and growth that occurred through their singing experiences seemed to have outweighed negative or hurtful comments. Sarah, for example, said her singing voice represented her truth. It seemed to be a door that opened and allowed her to be herself, and let others see her true self.

The [singing] voice is the only thing for me where I am so vulnerable that all my truths come out. So, like I can't disguise it as much as if I was just talking. (...) When I sing, I can't lie. (...) It's just, that's as personal and as close to my heart that they can get. Or like to my real essence, it's through song. I don't know why. It doesn't matter what I'm saying, it's the voice that comes out.

She talked about her essence, which seemed to reflect an inner self, an inner rhythm, a fundamental and essential aspect of something within her.

Summary. Rhythm, like identity is always present, in motion and moving as well as providing structure and order. Participants told stories that revealed complicated experiences about their adolescent, gender, francophone, and singer rhythms, that is, the multiple parts of their identity. Their stories were told as separate, particular experiences in time; but they co-existed in a common story of self. Although each rhythm may have different pulses and varying beats, these diverse rhythmic patterns exist together, a drum circle of creative, authentic, singing

voices combining to manifest a musical unity. Participants' stories were valuable in illuminating their sense of self in relation to the four aforementioned aspects of identity.

Harmony: Relationships and Singing

Vocal harmony requires that two or more singing voices come together to sing. When two or more people sing in harmony, different voices connect, layer, adding depth and color to the melody, creating pleasing or displeasing combinations and blending of sound. Harmony supports the melody and gives a song texture and mood. Harmony is necessarily relational. Voices singing in harmony are interdependent and interconnected, just like two or more people in a relationship. The theme of harmony is about relationships impacted by singing; how singing helps create, build, and maintain relationships, as well as provides opportunities for sharing, connecting, and for finding and creating new harmonies.

Family. Singing was part of participants' relationships with family members and the adolescent girls' relationships with their mothers figured prominently. Strong musical connections between participants and their mothers were described. Sometimes the mother offered invaluable support for their daughters' singing. Liane said, "it's really my mother who encouraged me to [participate in a francophone singing/songwriting workshop] because I told her I wanted to learn how to write good songs, and sing. And she told me I should do this." In Émilie's experience, her mother's positive, francophone influence dated back many years:

Ever since I was two years old [my mother] sang songs to me, like since I was a baby, she sang songs, but at the age of about two, I began to sing with her and I was always very excited when she came to sing songs to me. (...) Before going to bed, I would hear her sing to my brothers and I'd just get hyped up for it. (...) When I was about three years of age, that was the first time I went on stage in front of an audience. (...) My mom asked me if I wanted to come and sing a song with her. It was the only song I knew by heart so I went with her, and I was pretty excited.

Other times, the girls described a lack of encouragement and support, feeling like their mother did not fully understand their singing and its importance. Sarah described feeling distant and misunderstood:

My [mother] didn't find me good. Like I sang often like just with my mom, we were in the car. She didn't say much, but I sang, I loved singing. (...) I don't think that, I don't feel that she understands how special singing is for me. When I sing, it's just like, "she's

been singing for a long time.”(...) I don’t want to say she doesn’t appreciate it cause I think she does, but not as much as I do, which is fine but like if, I sang for Mother’s Day, I sang her a song, she’d be like “oh, that was really good” but for me it was like you didn’t realize how special that was.

Sarah wished her mother would better understand the meaningfulness and significance of singing for her. Perhaps then, their relationship would be stronger and deepened because Sarah would feel more connected to her mother.

At the end of her last interview, Sarah did describe a powerful moment concerning her and her mother that was evoked by music and singing. She was living several provinces away from home and her mother for a few months. On this one occasion, singing allowed her to enter into relationship with her mother, and realize that she was deeply connected to her. She described this memory with great detail, talking about where she was, what she was doing, and what she was singing: “Nobody could hear me. I was alone in the car and I just sang that song. And it felt so good. And then my mom called the next day and she was like, ‘Are you singing that song?’ I was like yeah, I had it stuck in my head all day.” The bond between Sarah and her mother deepened in that moment because Sarah was singing a song entitled ‘The Mother Song’ and her mother, who had rarely heard the song before, was also thinking about it. Sarah continued:

That was really special cause that’s when I realized how connected I was to my mom cause me and my mom were not on good terms before [my trip]. So when I got back, it got a lot better. I went through a little bit of time where it was harder again, then it came back out. And yeah, it was really nice. That’s really emotional for me when I found that out, that she could hear me. I was like, Oh my God. Because you always have, you’re always gonna be ethereally connected to your mom but then again, I’ve never appreciated her in my life. And so that really helped me. Especially cause it was called ‘The Mother Song’.

Recalling this experience was emotional for Sarah. Throughout this description in our interview, Sarah was moved to tears and her tone of voice was soft and peaceful.

Émilie suggested that there seems to be a special bond between mothers and daughters who sing together. She described it as powerful and memorable. Furthermore, the singing relationship between mother and daughter seemed to sufficiently influence Émilie that she wanted to keep singing:

I really, I love that. I don't know, I really, really love that. It's me and my mom who sang things like that that really made me want to sing and play any type of musical instrument. It's really my mom who is my source of inspiration.

Singing also aided in preserving and maintaining relationships with family members who had passed on. The relationship between Émilie and her late, older brother was significant because he committed suicide a few years back. Although this tragic event will be discussed in more detail in the Melody section, this quote demonstrates how Émilie stayed connected to her brother through song:

Well, like when I sing about my brother, like it can almost connect me to him again. You know, it's like he's there with me. It's hard to explain but, it's so difficult to explain. (...) Like I said, the flashbacks and stuff like that. It's like you're back into that moment. And you can remember so much, like so vividly. (...) You can feel so, so happy. And it's like you just spent those five seconds with your brother again.

Friends and peers. The harmony of song that existed between the girls and their family members also existed with their peers or friends. Participants were able to enter into peer relationships through the common interest of singing. Émilie talked about how it helped in socializing, connecting with and making friends:

It was something I had in common with the girls. We liked singing, so, the songs probably weren't the same, like the taste of music (...) like they liked romantic songs and stuff like that and I preferred, I didn't really like the words in the song. (...) So [singing] kinda helped me be integrated. It's kind of a way for people to relate to me.

Just as meeting people and making friends occurs by being on the same volleyball team or participating in the same band, Liane related that singing seemed to provide a similar sort of access for her, "singing helped a lot because it brought me closer to certain...like I did more things and met more youth who sang in French. (...) It helped me to make a lot more friends. And it was really a way to socialize."

Singing also played a role in the girls romantic experiences, helping them relate with male peers. Singing appeared to intensify experiences involving strong feelings for another person. As Sarah described:

There was this one time... (...) I was sitting with [name of her guitarist] and we were playing, oh I don't know, songs in the special needs room, and my exchange student was

there too. She was sitting beside me and it was the first time she heard me sing. And then, she didn't know that I had a crush on someone. She didn't know that. (...) And then, he walked into the room and when I opened my eyes, Oh God, I had never been that nervous when singing. Like, you want a vivid feeling of what was going through my head. I was like "Okay keep singing, keep singing". Then the focus was going. Oh God, I was awful. I was so paranoid, like you don't want the person to know. And, the voice is the only thing for me where I am really vulnerable, and all my truths come out. (...) I've never felt so connected to somebody other than like that moment. Because he was sending like, I could just feel the sending back of vibes cause he knew now [that I liked him] through that and I just, I don't know. It was just a really powerful moment for me. (...) That was my most prized moment, my most precious moment.

Sarah's experience was exciting and nerve-racking; however, she remembers the moment being significant because she was able to express her feelings for the adolescent boy through her singing voice. She may not have had the courage to do so had he not walked in on her while she was singing. This was a moment in which singing allowed her to interact and experience a meaningful relational moment with someone she really liked.

The participants did not always find it easy to make friends. Sometimes this was due to shyness or not being able to fit in. Whatever the reason, this did not seem to be the case when singing was involved. When participants found peers who also liked to sing, they could spend hours doing so. As such, singing in the company of friends could become a favourite past-time. As Liane said:

[Music and singing] was a big part of our relationship. Often, even at school, when we could, we did projects where we could write song lyrics or sing songs. And often, during recess, we would play music and it's like, most of our time was dedicated to playing music and all of that.

Moreover, the topic of singing could come up in a conversation and create an automatic bond. Émilie believed that singing was an easy way to enter into relationship when both parties were interested in it:

They would be talking about songs, and I was like, oh I know that one, I know that one, I know that one. (...) Yes, it is through singing songs we knew [that we connected] and I

will always ask someone, like do you know this song, and then we'll start singing it together or something like that.

Strong friendships seem to be created and maintained through singing. However, when friendships ended because of certain circumstances, the loss felt was much deeper. As explained by Liane:

I wasn't able to find [a friendship] like that at school because it was all the same people that I knew from my youth, but every person brought something different and so instead of having just one friend, because I knew that I wasn't going to find another person that would, that I could do so much with. So, I just started talking more with others. (...) It's like I had separated the tasks between different persons.

Despite their loss, it appears that participants were able to recover by connecting with other peers who were also interested in activities involving singing and music.

Audience. Experiencing relationship through singing also occurred with unknown listeners and audience members. Participants talked about receiving feedback and recognition after performances and after singing casually, and described this as extremely positive and rewarding. These relationships were very different than those discussed previously. The girls described the common experience of entering into brief relationships, often with strangers or acquaintances. For example, Sarah described the following incident:

There was one day, I was on the school bus and was singing, like just nice and really soft so that no one could hear me and there was this girl who said, "oh, you have a nice [singing] voice". I was like, "What?". And that was the first time I put that thought in my head, that I could be capable of singing. I said, "hmmm, maybe."

This momentary connection was significant for Sarah as it left her thinking that perhaps she was a good singer, which represented a connection with and expression of her essential core.

The attention received after a performance involved relationships with members of the public and this attention was usually positive and flattering. As Liane said:

After [the performance] when the people came to talk to me, everyone who was there with me, as well as the public, came and were like, "that was really good". So that was the part that was encouraging. It was also nice to hear the professional musicians say "you're doing good. Keep doing it. You have good songs."

The more attention they received, the more participants seemed to enjoy singing in front of others. Sarah said: “I always loved to sing. I loved the attention. I love attention. So if I sing, it’s just to sing or to hear myself sing, and for others to react.” The harmonies produced in these experiences were the girls’ voices, layered with the reactions and attention of the listeners.

Émilie spoke about how relationships with the audience helped her to overcome shyness and fear on stage, “It helped me, that performance, because I got many compliments afterwards. After receiving all of those compliments I was always like, I want to do this! I want to do this!” Experiencing such relationships may not have produced as intimate or long lasting connections as with family or friends; however, these interactions appeared noteworthy in improving self-confidence as well as allowing the girls to connect a little more easily and effortlessly with unfamiliar people. As Liane described:

I had less difficulty in talking with people because they came to me [after a show] and were like “oh, you are really good at singing”. And that was kind of like an icebreaker and I was like “oh thank you, what is your name? bla, bla, bla” So, that really helped me socialize with others, so I had to be less shy and go to others. And the more I did it, the more I found I could approach other people.

Higher power. Participants’ experiences of being in relationship with a higher being or higher power, also appeared to be strengthened through singing. When Liane needed reassurance or needed to feel connected to her higher power, she turned to singing:

When I sing I feel like my spirit is talking. (...) I would say it’s spiritual. It’s like it would be a religion for others. Like they probably feel that way when they are praying; the same way I feel when I sing. (...) It gives me a feeling of being more complete and understanding a bit more. As if you were a little closer to the purpose, but you don’t know what the purpose is. But you are closer to what you’re looking for.

The harmony of singing and spirituality was sacred and special to the participants. Sarah described how her relationship with God helped her overcome difficult situations, and singing was how she felt she could enter into this relationship:

It was when I was singing specifically to God, not that I’m gonna bring religious matters into this but I was just specifically singing to my future, my higher power or whatever you want to call it. Like that was really helping me get through things.

These connections to a higher power through song were unforgettable and powerful and seemed highly intimate, and comprised of trust and meaningfulness.

Self. The other type of singing-facilitated relationship mentioned by participants was with oneself. Singing improved the bond with self, providing the girls with nurturance, honesty, and integrity. Singing revealed much about the stage of life participants were at, as well as let them know about themselves in a truthful manner. As Sarah revealed:

I feel more in tune with myself, because it comes from my heart. When I'm singing, I know that I'm on the right track. And like, when I'm singing good, I know that I'm on the best track I have. Pathwise. I've realized that before though. If I've had a bad day or something, I'm singing just really awful. (...) It's helped me be more true to myself.

In this sense, the idea of harmony is illustrated as a form of connection with oneself, of being in tune with the self. It appeared that when they sang, the participants were directly in relationship with the self, and felt very comfortable. Liane described it as almost entering into a different mental, physical, and spiritual state:

When I sing I forget that I exist a little. It's as if everything that is around me is just there and it doesn't have anything to do with what's going on with the guitar. It's like my guitar and my voice. It's a little separated from the rest of the world. It's like my body doesn't exist. All of the things around don't exist except the music. The moment. I am not worrying about what I look like, or if my feet are cold, or anything like that. I focus on what my music is saying and how that feels. (...) When the song is over, it's like, "pssshhhht" you come back to the world and it's like "whoa". It's like waking from a dream.

The participants said that their spirit was alive when they sang, and again, Liane talked about feeling like she was in a different state of being:

When I sing, one thing is for sure, I feel a little like my heart is jumping out of my body. And I feel like my body will just follow the music. (...) I feel like I am not really in my body and that my spirit is right in front of me doing everything. It's like everyone was watching my spirit. (...) I feel like it's my spirit that is talking.

The girls further described how, with singing, they were able to mature and change yet also stay connected to a sense of self, something constant. When Sarah spoke to this effect, it sounded as though singing was like a best friend who stuck by her in the good times and bad:

As I developed my own personal character, my voice was developing too. It was changing with me, through any phase. It helps me through it too, so I guess when you're a teenager you go through a million different phases. A million! Like I can't understand why the mind has to go through those phases, but it does. And yeah, it really, it was always there. It was always true. It's almost like when I was lying to myself, that was always true and I couldn't hide it. It was kinda the light in the darkness of me.

Summary. Harmony requires at least one other singing voice and in this study, is extended beyond the musical relationships in a song. Singing informed the girls of their relationships with family members, friends, the audience, a higher being, and with the self. The participants shared experiences whereby singing helped them to enter into, as well as be in human relationship. Singing provided opportunities for connecting, sharing, socializing, growing, and being. The interweaving of different singing voices was just like walking hand in hand with someone you cared about or being with friends and laughing, crying, playing... The participants' relationships were deepened and strengthened, and for participants, all of this transpired with the help of singing.

Melody: Wellbeing and Strength

Melody is an essential and quickly identified part of song, a rainbow of notes which evokes emotions, a tune that you hum to yourself as you walk down the street or wash the dishes. The following theme of wellbeing is about the participants' singing experiences in terms of self-expression, self-esteem, enjoyment, coping, and healing. Just as singing a melody involves the main singer who expresses the notes with emotion, elements of resistance and resiliency are expressed in individual and like a melody, lingering, ruminating in the subconscious after it is heard. Melody is the hook, the substance of the song, which connects you and often remains in your head long afterward.

Self-expression. Expressing feelings and emotions through singing was important to the participants. Sarah said that whether it is with the words of the song, or with the sounds and vocalizations, singing was a way to connect to feelings and express them, "I love to express myself with song. I like singing without words, like just freestyling a little. Not like rap, no, I just like singing what's on my mind. (...) It's a tool. It's just another way of expressing myself." Émilie explained her experience with self-expression through song as follows:

Before I begin to sing it's just like, okay if I am alone at home let's say, I will sing anything, like not even a song that exists. I will just sing words that express how I feel and put them in a song. And then after that I'll start getting into the singing part of it. Then, I'll remember other songs that I know are more fun and I'll start singing that and by the end, I am just happy because I am just like, I love singing so much, and then because I am singing, it will just put me in a good mood.

In the end, this process of singing and self-expression always seemed to be positive for participants, helping them manage their emotions, and improving their mood.

Releasing specific emotions through song was another valuable process for participants. This was something they enjoyed doing by themselves, as Émilie related:

Well if you are angry you are tense right? You're ready to hit something so when I am singing, I will move my arms or whatever and just kinda get all into it and it will relax me because it's as if all the stress leaves when I sing. Like you know what I mean? Like when you just belt it out like it just relaxes and calms me. Like my body becomes more... whatever kinda thing. (...) It depends how frustrated I am. If I am really angry, it could take half an hour but if it's just a little frustration, it will take like ten minutes. And I have to be alone. I won't just do that in front of anybody. If there are people around, I will just play the piano.

Although, Sarah said it was challenging to talk about her feelings, singing allowed her to do so with no trouble:

I sing in any kind of mood. So, it expresses my feelings even more. Like how I'm feeling in that moment. So it all depends on the songs and then I'll just kinda flow it out. So it's just a way of letting my emotions go and not keeping them inside. Cause people can use facial expressions or, I'm a very non-verbal person when it comes to expressing my emotions. But then with a song, who cares. I mean because they're not going to be able to tell that I'm letting something go or I'm feeling a certain way because a song's a song.

It appears that singing was a valuable tool for participants to release negative emotions such as anger and frustration, something that was not easy to do verbally, nor with others.

When participants expressed the feelings of a song that they were performing, they related to the emotions that the song conveyed. Liane shared that doing justice to the song meant she needed to be connected to what the song is saying:

I always choose music for the emotions I am feeling in that moment. (...) When I sing, feeling good is really like being in the moment of the song. It's like when I feel I've done a good job, it's when I performed a song well. It's when I really entered the role and put a lot of emotions, and for example, if I sang a song that was really sad, I would sing the song and feel a little sad myself after. It's not that I want to feel sad but it's just that I have to (...) It'll only be good if I am expressing what the song is supposed to convey. Moreover, Liane sometimes did her own songwriting to gain a better picture of other people's perspectives. This activity seemed to help her identify with and appreciate differences in others:

I try to put myself in the emotion of the song and umm, sometimes I write a song to better understand what it would be like to live the life of someone else. (...) I really wanted to understand what it would be like to be a criminal. Someone who had hurt his family or killed someone, so when I wrote that song, I was trying to bring out the emotions as if I had done it, and how I would feel.

Participants mentioned feeling empathy and compassion with what the song writers were conveying in their songs, and with what the songs' characters were experiencing. Again, this process seemed to help them connect to the song and be better able to express it in their own way, as stated Émilie:

The emotions that someone could go through in certain situations, like I can almost connect to that. Almost like, if you have to act angry even though he's not technically mad. I really think about it and like you kinda get yourself into that role. Like, if you were someone being abused, you know, you could almost feel the pain, like the depression. You just kinda get sucked into that when you sing a song. And then like, if there is someone who is happier, you know, it's really the music that helps me to connect with something. If the music is really good or something, then I'll be able to feel it more, and the words too.

Self-expression through song proved beneficial for the participants because they were able to release emotions, manage their mood, and better understand the human nature. For Émilie, expression through singing happened often, "Ah, I couldn't live without singing! Like I can't. I sing all of the time. If I am angry or frustrated, or happy, like anything, like I sing."

Self-esteem. Singing impacted the participants' self-confidence in a positive way and contributed to their self-esteem. Émilie explained what she thought it meant to have a good self-esteem and why it was important:

A good self-esteem is being comfortable with who you are, and what you look like. Being able to not take personally verbal assaults from others. And to be able to reassure that, like, everyone is beautiful. Everyone is smart, and some are incapable of seeing that. And usually those that can't see this are those who don't have good self-esteem.

Participants valued good self-esteem, yet described themselves as unsure of their own selves at different periods in their life. For example, Liane said she started off as being a timid young girl, "I didn't really want to talk to others unless they wanted to talk to me. So, others didn't want to talk to me because, well I don't blame them (...) it's hard to talk with someone who is really shy." In spite of this, Liane decided to begin singing in front of an audience, and thus attributed her gain in confidence to singing:

I think it's really an experience that maybe changed... it was really like, it unleashed a different life for me. So, if I hadn't done this activity, I probably wouldn't have done as much music, and have a band. And socializing, I would be a lot less... I would have a lot less friends. I would still be timid and I wouldn't have been able to do all of the things I did in high school. (...) Now I am able to talk in front of a camera and it's okay. (...) I can easily talk on front of a group of people, but before I was really nervous. (...) I did a lot of things on stage so... I think this is the event that showed me that I can do this. I should do it more often.

These adolescent girls wanted to become more confident. Émilie for example, used singing to help her overcome her shyness, "I always loved singing and I always wanted to... I always wanted to break out of my little shy thing and I thought if I do this, I'll be able to. So it did help me." Eventually, Liane was also able to break free from her timidity the more she sang. She compared this to flying, "I would say it's like the first time a baby bird tries to fly. And you know he will probably fall a few times, and at one point, he will eventually fly. So it's like, I can fly. Cool!"

As a young girl, Sarah too described herself as lacking confidence. Yet, with time and perseverance, she began to trust in herself. When I asked her about the role of singing and self-esteem, and whether singing helped, she said:

You know what? It kind of did because in the beginning, I wasn't that good of a singer. Just like I wasn't that strong of a person. My insecurities, like I was really, really insecure when I was younger and so I was a bully and everything. I was really crapped I guess. (...) And I wasn't that good of a singer to begin. But then I kept going and I kept growing and as I grew, the singing came along with me cause it's just something you carry with you, even if you don't sing for like a month or something.

Sarah received different messages about her singing from different people. Some said she was a good singer while others stated the opposite. Nevertheless, she decided to ignore the negative comments and persevered, knowing that someday she would get better at singing in front of an audience:

I am good. I don't know. I was never good at judging if I was good. I knew that one day I would be good so... I don't really practice; I practice only before a performance. (...) I had a lot of potential. I was the girl with a lot of potential to be really good, but I was never discouraged if nobody gave me any compliments or gave me negative ones.

Émilie proudly shared that she had a healthy self-esteem as a young girl, and remembered feeling very comfortable singing in front of others. As a young adolescent, she became more self-conscious and noticed a decrease in self-confidence:

Well, when I was young I wasn't self-conscious. Like, it was fun you know. Go up on stage and "woohoo" exciting you now kinda thing. It was an honor to be able to sing. If anyone asked you to sing something, you'd take it as such a compliment. (...) And then in my adolescence it's as if the compliments didn't do anything anymore. Like I didn't believe them anymore. And I would only listen to the bad stuff. (...) And then it kinda goes in your subconscious and then you start to believe what they are saying. Even if it isn't true. And you start to think, well maybe I'm not that great.

In time, Émilie also chose to ignore what others were saying. Singing allowed her to become comfortable and confident again:

Finally, I made a choice and I just let it go. I was like whatever, it doesn't bother me if I make a mistake on stage anymore. I don't care. I have my friends and I don't need to impress them. They know me. Others can say what they want. It doesn't matter, I don't even know them. Again, it will just hurt me if I let it hurt me.

All the participants struggled with self-esteem sometimes in their lives. Even so, when their confidence was low, it appeared that singing gave participants something to be proud of. Liane described how singing helped her confidence:

Singing helps. I know that I can play music so it's kind of like something else you have to yourself, that no one else has. It kind of gives you something special. It gives you the impression that you have a little sparkle. (...) It's a talent you have so in that sense it helps because it raises your self-esteem. Singing is really a way of raising my confidence. Singing definitely helped the participants feel good about themselves. They recognized singing as an important resource that seemed to bring out the best in them. As Sarah described:

You can be whoever you want to be. And so it's my escape to, I guess to show the really confident. I mean, I'm everything. I can be any shade of gray or any shade of any color, but (singing) is the one where my most vibrant color comes out.

Enjoyment. Singing can involve fun and delight; it can provide a sense of relaxation. Participants were aware of these elements of wellbeing when singing. For example, Émilie noticed that singing brings her joy in everyday events:

It's fun. It's a way of keeping me busy at home, so I don't get bored or something. It peps me up; it makes me happy. If I am cooking supper or something like that, it's always more fun if you sing.

Liane also had feelings of contentment when singing. She compared it to the same feeling she gets after having accomplished something in which she thought she would be unsuccessful:

It was fun. It was a little like a feeling of satisfaction. Umm, because, you could describe it like a feeling you have when you do well in an exam. You passed and you thought you weren't gonna do well and you see it and you're like "oh cool!" It's surprising and very, like, it takes away a bit of stress off your shoulders.

The amusement in having the opportunity to be silly was mentioned by all the participants. Liane enjoyed spending time with her best friend because they would enjoy writing silly lyrics and singing, and would do so for pure delight, "really just to have fun." Émilie, her mother, and brother liked to be silly and have a lot of fun when singing together, at home. They used to sing on a regular basis, spontaneously:

Sometimes, we'd go silly and just start singing a Christmas carol or whatever, and not sing it really good. But I also had my karaoke machine and when I first got it, me, my mom, and my brother, we would just howl! [laugh]

Singing was also good for reducing and managing stress. Participants seemed to think that singing often helped them to relax and be comfortable. Moreover, their minds settled when they sang, leaving less room for thoughts to enter and take over, as Émilie said:

I'm almost not thinking about anything else. I am just thinking about the music. I am completely relaxed. I am not thinking "this person is beside me, are they thinking this or are they thinking that." I am not analyzing, because I analyze everything. (laugh) Yeah, but when the music is playing, it's like all my concentration goes on that. And singing relaxes me a lot; it makes me mellow.

It appeared that the participants also felt a sense of liberation when they sang. Sarah explained this in the following way, "Well, free is a word but it's a little cliché. So, maybe calm. (...) I'm never stressed after having sung. Never. I'm incapable of being stressed after."

There was a certain high that came from singing. Liane said, "it's like an energy that draws you in. And the adrenaline, and the thrill... (laugh)" This energy after a performance was also quite fulfilling for Sarah. She associated it with the same energy you get after a soccer game: "Oh, it's a great feeling. The best high comes after the performance because then you realize what you just did. And you're like, oh it feels so good!" Furthermore, a winding down usually follows the energy that comes with singing. Émilie told of an experience, which she shared with her mother:

When it's me and my mom at home, we're just letting'er go kinda thing. I have so much fun, like, it peeps me up. I'm like on this little high when I sing. And then it relaxes us, like de-stress completely.

Enjoyment could be affected by song choice as well. Not only did choosing joyful, optimistic music make Liane feel better, it also gave her motivation for the rest of her day:

If I always listened to depressing music, I would probably be more depressed. So, it's a good idea to... like sometimes I try to listen to music I really like in the morning that is peppy. For most of the day I will probably be more joyful. (...) It makes you want to take control of your day and do things.

Participants' experiences of wellbeing through singing manifested through fun, silliness, and relaxation. They sang because it was enjoyable and because it felt good. It helped to manage daily stress, as well as provide a general sense of satisfaction and fulfillment. Singing energized and was freeing. Hence, it was good for personal wellbeing, and whether alone or with friends it seemed to be essential in participants' lives for their everyday happiness and comfort.

Coping and healing. Singing contributed to participants' ways of coping and healing. It helped them foster resiliency in different aspects of their lives, helping them bounce back from stress and be resistant to life's challenges. Whether they were singing after school to unwind from the day, to let go of any negative emotions, or to work through a problem, they used their singing voice to cope with everyday happenings. Liane described how she chose certain music to help her work through different feelings:

Sometimes if my day didn't go so well and I was just in a bad mood, I would probably play a song that will keep me in a bad mood. It's not that you want to stay in that mood (...) you know it's better when you're happy. But in a way you need to release all of those emotions and let them go.

Participants could not recall on how many specific occasions singing had helped them cope throughout their adolescent lives because it had become such a useful and often utilized strategy. They appeared to use it regularly and naturally, as Sarah explained:

When I sing, it expresses my adolescent problems because when we become adults, it's a lot more serious compared to now. (...) And I'm sure it's helped me out tons of times. I don't give it enough credit. I probably sang so much that I haven't realized that it even was helping me. It's like anything, whatever you have to do to get over something, you just do it. Sometimes you don't even notice.

Singing seemed to provide the same type of therapeutic benefit as would seeing a counsellor; but instead of talking out their problems, participants used their singing voice to let go of negative emotions related to their problems. Liane said, "it's a little like if you were talking about your problems with someone, and you free yourself of all your emotions. And you feel good after because it's like there is someone there to help." Émilie also mentioned that she does not particularly like to talk about her problems with other people. Singing for her therefore served as a good listener:

I hated talking to someone because I am a little secretive. I don't like talking about really personal things or feelings I have. I prefer to keep it to myself. But this way, I was able to let go of it without telling anyone.

Participants attributed a great deal of importance to singing because it was often the first and most reliable thing they turned to when they need help. When asked how important singing was for her, Émilie responded with the following:

Well, a lot because it helped me to get through some things. Like if I had problems at school or something, you know I'd always go to singing. And with my homework, like I would take half an hour on the piano before, and I'd be good to go kinda thing. Or, if I had problems with my friends or something because they were mad at me or I was mad at them for something really silly, I would write little poems or something or play a song on the piano. Whenever I had a problem as a teenager, it was music or singing.

In difficult times, singing impacted participants' emotional healing. In Sarah's case, she described a distressing experience in which she stopped singing altogether for a few months:

I couldn't sing. I am really good at desensitizing myself from my emotions, like I can just cut it off. Cut myself away from the situation, so I feel numb to it, but really it's still there. It was a period of about three months that I didn't sing. (...) I had a lot of trouble and I got frustrated over it because I wanted to sing. (...) My chakra was closed.

Through this personal, challenging experience, Sarah numbed herself so much, that even her singing voice was blocked. During this time she was away on an exchange for a few months: "I was really mixed up. In (name of city), that was my biggest healing, chaotic moment of my life, so far. It was like my whole life healing process summed into three months because I finally stepped away from my reality." Sarah believed that being away from home helped her see things from a different perspective, "you don't understand what you are going through until you're outside of it. And I was finally outside of it."

Sarah further explained her experience, remembering many details:

I was sitting and singing a song and it was cold outside. It was really cold outside, and there was snow, and I was wearing red pants and umm... I don't know, I think it might have been raining. Yeah, it was raining. It was both, it was slushy. I wasn't scared of people hearing me because I stayed home from school one day and that's when I went for a walk. (...) I was probably crying a lot. I cried a lot when I was in (name of city). I'm a

person who never cried so that's why I'm saying those three months were huge for me because I released old patterns of my thinking, where I was actually able to be emotional and bring myself back to being centered and not disconnected from whatever I was feeling cause that was really easy to do for me. I'm a pro at that. And so yeah, I was probably crying. I was crying, I know I was. And I felt the song. I don't know if you can feel a song like flowing out of you cause sometimes you're just speaking whatever comes out. You're not really feeling anything, but that was a moment where I actually like felt it pouring out of me. In more ways than one. Like crying, and singing, and breathing, and... everything, even the wind.

This powerful experience appeared to have marked Sarah significantly. She spent months not being able to sing; however, her singing voice finally reappeared upon her return, and it seemed to set free everything she had been holding in for so long.

With a lowered and softened voice, and tears welling up in her eyes, Sarah continued to tell her story. It was clear that she felt strongly connected to this experience and it had very special meaning:

In that moment I was like, I'm gonna remember this moment forever. And I can still see my red pants. I knew that that was going to be a moment that I would always bring myself back to for like a pure, there's nothing wrong with my life. I can just bring myself back to that one. Like if you ever bring yourself back to a moment like when you're by the beach or whatever, I bring myself back there. That was my way home. I don't know, everything reflected me. (...) I was just really connected at that moment. I was going through a lot.

Today, Sarah can recall the memory and experience, while still accessing the same positive, inspiring, and heartening feelings. Once Sarah returned from her exchange trip, she had to perform at her school. This was yet another moving experience that helped her release what was inside and troubling her. It seemed to finally put an end to that part of her past:

When I came back home, I had one week before the show. Finally, that was my breakthrough performance. That was the best I had ever sang in my life and it was awesome. I just took everything that happened to me and just, I let it go. It was me. I wanted to cry at the end of my song. This song, I really felt like I was my spirit. I was my soul. (...) When I sang that song, it was authentic. Me, in pureness. So, alot was released

and unblocked when I sang that song. (...) I just took all of these events and I was like, I'm not letting this affect me anymore. I love singing way too much.

When she was able to sing again, Sarah felt whole and complete. Although singing vanished for some time, it did come back and stronger than before. Moreover, it seemed to be the key factor that brought about a healthy change for this young girl.

Émilie also lived a difficult situation whereby singing and songwriting helped heal her pain and grief. The songwriting and singing process allowed her to mourn the death of her brother, leaving her with vivid, positive memories of him:

When my brother died, I composed this song, and it took me two and a half years to compose it. First of all, you're mourning. And you always hear these artists say I wrote this when I went through this ordeal and stuff like that. I began to think maybe I could do something like that. I think this is probably the toughest ordeal I've been through. I began to write lyrics and just kind of write whatever. In the beginning, I was trying to be poetic and that didn't really work so finally I said just write everything, like everything you can think of, feel, whatever, even if it sounds stupid, just write it. So I took blank white paper and by the end, I had completely filled five of them, like all over the place. (...) The next summer, I started composing the music, and when I finally found it, it was perfect. Finally, everything just came together. It was pretty cool. I was really proud of myself for having written it. I think it is really good. It was also pretty emotional, like obviously, I wrote about my brother. I think it was the point where I got over the death of my brother. Like ahhh (sigh) it's done you know, like good, finally. And when I sang the words, it was like I could relive it. It was like reliving everything. I had images in my head, memories that came back to me. It was cool though.

Healing from challenging events takes time and courage. Participants were able to resolve difficult incidents in great part, through singing. Just like a strong melody lingers, participants were able to be resilient and use their singing voice to establish balance and wellbeing.

Summary. In light of these shared, reflective experiences, singing appeared to be a protective factor for participants. It served a personal, therapeutic role in each of their lives, improving their self-esteem and confidence, and making them stronger and more resilient, that is able to cope with stress and be resistant to the negative outcomes of life's challenges. Singing brought joy, comfort, and peace, while also allowing participants to freely express themselves.

The four elements of this theme are essential to happiness and wellbeing. They are central just like the melody is to the song. The participants' genuine and deeply personal melodies fostered positive change in their lives, and remained still today, valuable and motivational.

Reflection

A song has important elements such as lyrics, rhythm, harmony, and melody. These elements combine together to create a wonderful work of art. The three adolescent girls shared deeply personal stories about their singing experiences, which touched on identity, relationships, wellbeing, and the ways in which they sing. Singing was tightly woven into participants' lives. The plentiful benefits of singing include, amongst others, self-confidence, self-expression, enjoyment, being in relationship with others, a sense of belonging to a group, and healing. In this chapter, participants have shared their song, yet it is always changing, constantly evolving. I was afforded the privilege of being able to get a glimpse of certain contexts in which their song was created, as well as how it has influenced, shaped, enriched, and transformed these adolescent girls' lives.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This qualitative study was conducted to understand more about the experience of singing for francophone adolescent girls as well as to better understand how minority adolescent girls negotiate their multiple, intersecting identities such as adolescence, gender, and culture. The purpose of the following chapter is to summarize the research findings of the study and consider them in terms of the existing literature on singing, adolescence, gender, and culture. Practice implications, strengths and limitations of the present study, and areas for future research are also discussed.

Summary of the Findings

Singing provided many benefits to Sarah, Liane, and Émilie. In discussing their singing experiences, the participants shared the different ways that singing existed for them. Their stories also revealed the significance and impact of singing in various areas of their lives (e.g., relationships and wellbeing), which informed and shaped their identity.

Participants described three different ways of singing, which all held an important place in their lives. Singing privately and informally was spontaneous and personal because participants sang openly and freely when they were alone, taking advantage of the opportunity to be in a private space. This is where they were able to experiment and make mistakes without any fear or hesitation. Singing socially and informally in the company of friends or family allowed them to feel comfortable and trusting with others. Just like the private informal way of singing, this way had its own certain easiness, allowing the participants to feel relaxed and secure. The third way of singing, publicly and formally, was about singing and performing song in front of an audience. Mixed emotions, such as nervousness, uncertainty, energy, and excitement, accompanied this way of singing. Participants often stepped out of their comfort zone to perform on stage; however, each new experience provided encouragement and confidence to continue. This way of singing was rewarding because participants usually felt satisfaction and pride after a performance. Although all three ways of singing were different, they all held significance and enriched the participants' lives.

Singing helped build and maintain relationships with family and friends. It enriched their connections to significant people (DeNora, 1999) in their lives such as their mother, a best friend, or a deceased brother. It also provided a way to connect to their audience during a

performance as well as afterward. Following a performance, participants found it easier to approach and communicate with strangers or acquaintances as a result of their performance. These brief moments of post-performance connections were rewarding because participants usually received positive feedback from them. Singing also deepened the three adolescent girls' perceived relationship with a higher being, making this a very special and spiritual aspect of their singing. Moreover, singing nourished the girls' relationship with themselves, helping them be in tune, self-aware, and truthful to oneself. Whether the participants were singing alone, with others or to others, singing enriched and nurtured relationships.

Singing and wellbeing was significant for participants. They described how singing allowed them to express feelings and emotions, which often affected their mood in a positive way. When participants were not comfortable or able to express their feelings verbally, singing gave them another opportunity. In addition, singing had an impact on self-confidence and self-esteem because the more they sang, the more the participants were able to feel good about themselves. It also appeared that singing helped the participants manage and overcome their shyness, which increased their sense of comfort with oneself. Another part of singing and wellbeing included simple enjoyment. Participants loved to sing because it was fun, energizing, and relaxing, fostering enjoyment and wellbeing. Whether alone or with friends, the adolescent girls found that they felt happy and fulfilled when they sang. Other times, singing allowed them to cope with or heal from everyday stress, and was compared to some of the same benefits they expected a therapist or counsellor would provide. In some instances, singing was also essential in overcoming difficult experiences, such as grief, hurt, or maltreatment. Participants found courage and strength through singing, thus allowing them to grow and become healthier young women.

Integration of Findings with the Existing Literature

The present study's findings confirm previous research related to adolescence, gender, and cultural identity, as well as research linking singing and general wellbeing. They also provide evidence that singing is a positive means of negotiating multiple, intersecting identities.

Singing and Being an Adolescent

Most of the previous research on adolescence in western societies describes adolescence as being a period of turbulence with many challenges (Arnett, 1999). Although the participants did describe some parts of adolescence as being challenging with some stressful experiences, they also talked about it as being a positive time in their lives with much excitement and fun. They

were quite satisfied with being an adolescent. The participants' general satisfaction seems to reflect the less common view that rather than only being a time of risk, negative outcomes, and concern about developmental psychopathology (Fredricks et al, 2002), adolescence can also be a time of "harmonious evolution in which positive feelings about self and family are extended into the larger realms of peers and society" (Garrod, Smulyan, Powers, & Kilkenny, 2002, p. 249).

Participants did not share anything that suggested that they were in psychological distress, perhaps as a result of the research focus. That does not mean that they never experienced some form of disordered eating, depression, or anxiety; however, they did not directly talk about this in the interviews. They did however describe difficult experiences which no doubt had an impact on their psychological health; yet, they mostly expressed how they overcame these experiences, often with the help of their singing voice. In addition to helping the participants cope, singing was often a means of exploring and experimenting in the participants' search for meaning and self-discovery. Singing seemed to help them fully experience adolescence in a positive way through relationships with family and friends. It also helped them navigate the in-between period of being neither child or adult, as well as work through frustrations, challenges, or painful emotional experiences.

Adolescence was described as a time when participants felt they had increased freedom and autonomy; they were positive and optimistic about being adolescent, therefore relishing the experience. Although participants had difficulty naming specifically how singing was connected to being an adolescent, they did imply that singing was a way to manage. Singing supported them throughout this period. They chose to sing because it was a positive way of dealing with everyday, adolescent life. Singing brought about a sense of freedom, hope, and pleasure; supporting them on a personal, intimate level, thus helping them deal with emotions and manage stress. Furthermore, singing helped them socially because it strengthened family bonds and supported relationships with peers, friends, and even romantic crushes.

Singing and Being a Girl

Some research shows that there is pressure for adolescent girls to shape themselves in accordance with cultural ideals of femininity and maturity (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). All three participants seemed to be conflicted about gender and seemed to be in the process of trying to make sense of perceived gender stereotypes (e.g., sensitivity, emotionality, and superficiality) that they associated with being a girl. Participants seemed to hold negative ideas

about what being a girl meant and they all discussed how they had difficulty fitting in with “typical girls”. They perceived themselves as being different than other girls. They felt that compared with typical girls, they were more mature, less focused on superficial or material concerns, and less sensitive and emotional. This leads me to think about how young women’s lives are limited by the conventions of femininity. Feeling pride about being different and unique, the participants were pleased to identify themselves as different than most girls at their schools, and not demonstrating the negative characteristics that they associated with being a girl.

The interview guide asked participants to describe how singing was related to being a girl and participants found it difficult to respond. It seemed strange to them to consider singing and their gender identity; they had never thought of this before. Nevertheless, the girls shared that singing allowed for fun and relaxation. They talked about being able to be silly and free when they sang in certain situations such as with close friends or family members. This provided a chance to break free from the belief that they should be mature and responsible girls. Moreover, singing allowed participants to be comfortable with their uniqueness. They perceived themselves as being different compared to other “typical girls”. Therefore, singing offered something special for participants to hold on to, rather than focus on physical appearances or romantic crushes, the negative elements they associated to female gender.

Singing helped balance the participants’ emotions. They said they were not as emotional and sensitive as most girls, that they did not cry as much, perhaps due to the fact they sang. Participants believed it was easier for them to integrate with the boys because the boys did not cry much either. However, singing provided an outlet for participants to feel emotions and be emotional. I wondered about how much societal pressures and ideals of being tough and emotionally indifferent, like boys, influenced participants. Singing appeared to make it safe to express all emotions, not having to cover up, mask, or hold back any feelings. Singing seemed to allow participants to be authentic, to remain in touch with themselves, asserting their unique voices and expressing themselves. If so, singing provides a means for girls to resist being silenced and losing themselves, which according to research is common in adolescent girls (e.g., Spinazzola, Wilson, & Stocking, 2002; Pipher, 1994; Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Although the participants still appeared to be grappling with their gender identity, singing may have helped them somewhat to accept themselves for who they are as girls, and come to terms with the negative stereotypes they associated with being a girl.

Singing and Being a Francophone

Ethnic identity research suggests that a positive personal identity depends on a strong and stable sense of ethnic identity (Moshman, 2005). What is more, research on francophone identity as minority indicates that a sense of belonging is essential in developing a positive sense of self (Simard, 2001). The francophone will develop this sense of belonging by integrating with the francophone people of her surroundings and by contributing to her francophone community. I was quite surprised by the participants' ease and passion when speaking about their francophone identity. It seemed very strong. Despite a few difficult experiences such as feeling left out of her "English" soccer team, participants seemed well integrated and involved in the majority group, as well as strongly connected with the minority group. A sense of belonging to the anglophone group was present and quite positive for participants, as well as a strong sense of pride to their francophone roots, including culture and language. The participants' integration in both French and English cultures suggests a strong sense of biculturalism (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

Biculturalism is important for a person who lives in a dual linguistic context (Landry & Rousselle, 2003) because the person needs to be able to move back and forth, from one group to the next. More often than not, a person in a minority context attributes greater value and importance to the majority group, which then poses a constant internal conflict for the person who will a) want to experience his/her francophone identity authentically, and b) want to prove his/her legitimacy through his/her adhesion to the majority (Levasseur-Ouimet, 1989). This is why it is essential that the francophone minority person find a way to integrate with the francophone community and be an active, contributing participant. The participants of this study seemed to practice this and singing was a means to participate and integrate with their francophone community. A strong connection with their francophone roots, as well as the majority group appeared to provide rich opportunities for expression of the self (Spira, Grossman, & Wolff-Bensdorf, 2002).

Research shows that the creative arts in general can help adolescents identify and connect with their own culture (Hanna, 1992). The participants in this study identified singing as being an important factor contributing to their francophone identity. Singing helped fulfill a sense of belonging to their francophone culture and to its people for a few reasons. They related to the music and lyrics of francophone music, whether it was popular or traditional music. Participants also bonded with family, peers, and friends through French music because they were able to

share this common interest and connection. Singing helped them stay connected to their francophone roots, and participants felt a sense of pride and commitment to these roots. They wanted to promote their language and culture, and they could do so through singing. Even when the girls sometimes felt different or left out by the majority group, or by gender stereotypes, singing appeared to develop and increase their sense of belonging to the francophone culture, making them feel unique and special, and reinforcing a strong sense of self.

Singing and Wellbeing

Research on singing and the benefits it has on wellbeing exists. Singing has positive effects on mood and emotions (Unwin et al., 2002) and facilitates social connection as well as strengthens a sense of self (DeNora, 1999). Findings in this study confirm findings in the existing literature because the three participants described the role singing played in their relationships, increasing bonds with peers, family, and friends. They also described the impact that singing had on their sense of self. Singing was clearly connected to their francophone identity, and a lesser extent to being an adolescent girl. Participants did talk about their connection to singing and how it reflected an inner self, an essential aspect within them. Additionally, participants described fun singing experiences. They enjoyed the freedom achieved with singing and therefore felt completely at ease to be silly or relaxed. Singing was powerful to them because it inspired, provided cheerfulness, and promoted good health, on a social, psychological, spiritual, and physiological level (Hunter, 1999; Stacy, Brittain, & Kerr, 2002). The use of the term “spiritual” for participants seemed to be related to the core of their being and their sense of purpose. One participant used the word spirituality; another talked about being religious, while the other used both terms in her narrative. These two terms seemed to be used when the participants talked about feeling a sense of connection to something bigger, whether they were able to name it or not. The spiritual wellbeing they achieved through singing involved a belief in some sort of force, connection, or a God that gave purpose and meaning to their life.

Other Findings

New and unexpected findings emerged during the collection and analysis of the data and these findings are minimally present in the existing research literature. They are however, worthy of mention as they relate to singer identity, taking risks, singing and relationships, singing to facilitate coping and healing, ways of singing, and singing in French versus English.

Singer Identity

During their interviews, all three participants described what it was like to be a singer and have a singer identity. Being a singer was as important as other components of their identity, for example adolescence, gender, and ethnicity. There were particular moments in participants' lives that seemed to be significant in their awareness of identifying themselves as singers. Sarah had a revealing experience on the bus. She was singing a song to herself, when out of the blue, a girl told her she could sing well. Before this, Sarah had never thought of herself as a potential singer. For Émilie, it was her community that identified her as a singer. She was known as a singer who would sing on many occasions, for various events. Liane began to recognize herself as a singer after her first performance that was part of a songwriting workshop, which allowed participants to perform their songs. After her performance, she received words of encouragement and positive feedback, giving her confidence and bringing it to her awareness that she was a singer.

The research findings of the present study indicate that the three participants valued their singing identity. Singing was natural, intrinsic, and habitual. The girls did not always notice when and why they were singing because it was as natural as breathing to them. In addition, participants appeared to have special or sacred places to sing. They all enjoyed singing at home when no one was around because this allowed them the freedom to sing without hesitation, as honestly and openly as they wished. Liane liked singing in the shower, whereas Émilie loved coming home from school, sitting in front of the piano, and singing and playing to her heart's content. For Sarah, it was singing on stage that gave her energy and left her feeling inspired and self-assured.

When singing in front of audience, participants however, were completely exposed and vulnerable to the gaze and judgment of others. This exposure felt like they were showing a true self, without any masks, which left them feeling vulnerable because of the opportunities for others to scrutinize and disappoint them. Poorly received performances usually led to feelings of uncertainty and worry as participants questioned their talent and doubted their potential. Although these experiences were upsetting, even hurtful, participants always chose to continue singing and to move through and forward. Amidst the negative feedback, the participants usually had the opportunity to learn something about themselves. It allowed for personal growth and required courage.

Taking Risks

Singing seemed to assist participants in taking risks. Every time they performed in front of an audience, they took a risk. They exposed themselves and allowed the public to focus on them, which was not always an easy thing to do. Participants also took risks when they chose to perform time and again, knowing that they may be judged. Singing involved taking risks, yet the risks were usually rewarding because participants felt greater confident with more experiences. In Liane's situation, singing also helped her take risks in social settings because she had the confidence to interact with the public after her performances, something she normally would not do, due to her shy nature. The adolescent girls seemed to gain assertiveness through singing. They were able to be who they wanted to be without letting their peers influence them or their choices. They could be proud of their culture and language even as minority and felt confident enough to let others know this. Moreover, participants' social skills were developed through singing because it offered them numerous opportunities for social interactions with various persons, including strangers. Overall, singing seemed to promote confidence, which in turn led to participants gaining more courage to be assertive and take risks. On many levels, singing contributed to the process of self-development.

Singing and Relationships

It was surprising to discover that singing had such an impact on participants' relationships. The existing literature does not report on how singing helps in creating and maintaining various relationships (e.g., family, friends, audience members, higher powers, and self). Yet, in the present study, there were such deep and meaningful connections made through singing. Émilie to her brother who had passed on, or Liane and her best friend in school, or Sarah and her mother; relationships were a significant aspect of the present findings and singing contributed greatly to them. Furthermore, participants described that singing contributed to a better understanding of others because through the lyrics, they were able to empathize with the characters that were portrayed in the songs. This then was imparted onto participants' own relationships.

Singing Facilitates Coping and Healing

Singing played an important role in participants' ways of coping with everyday challenges, as well as healing through pain and suffering. I did not expect this to be such a significant aspect of singing. Participants recalled vivid memories of instances and times whereby singing had a great impact. Sarah's description of being away from home and remembering precise details of a

singing experience is noteworthy because the memory confirms the value of singing for her and how singing can pull her through difficult times. Sarah draws on this experience time and again to remind herself that she is strong and that singing is a way for her to connect to her inner core self. Singing seemed to reach deep into the participants' self, touching them profoundly and providing long lasting memories that speak to them still today.

Participants used singing as a tool to cope and heal, and considered it like a form of self-therapy in the sense that singing was therapeutic. As opposed to formal therapy, which is more like a treatment, singing had spontaneous, desirable, and beneficial therapeutic effects on participants. Liane described her experiences as being similar to seeing a therapist. Instead of experiencing the therapeutic effect of talking to someone, she sang in her own company, which seemed to be effective for her, just as talking to a therapist would be to someone else. Liane said that singing was easier than talking, and it could replace some of the benefits of talking it through with someone. Singing appeared to be beneficial in that participants could express their feelings, manage their moods, and release their emotions in a safe space, feeling completely comfortable. It was a way to stay mentally and emotionally healthy as adolescent girls.

Literature on singing therapy exists (e.g., Austin, 2001; Summers, 1999); however, singing as a means of self-therapy for therapeutic purposes is not as present in the research. The findings of this study suggest that singing may be a useful means for singers to stay in touch with themselves and work through everyday life challenges, as well as more difficult life changing experiences. Recent work on music listening and coping in adolescents revealed that music listening can be effective for boys and girls when used as problem-oriented coping (Miranda & Claes, 2009). In fact, girls seem to use this strategy as well as emotion-oriented coping through music listening, which could result in fewer depressive symptoms. These results indicated that adolescents, girls especially, report using music listening deliberately to cope with daily stress.

Ways of Singing

Participants described three different ways of singing that all seemed to be equally important; although they served different purposes. The three ways of singing were private informal, social informal, and public formal. Existing literature does not seem to address these specific ways of singing. However, some researchers do discuss certain aspects of private experiences versus public experiences in a francophone, minority context, which may be linked to the findings of this study. According to Landry (1993), when a person lives in dual language context, the

linguistic socialization will be greatly influenced by the person's experiences with his family, his school, and his community, these being his personal network, or the **private** aspects of his linguistic socialization. The **public** aspects represent everything that takes place in institutions and what we see posted and published. Between the public and the private, the former is what matters most in terms of a strong construction of identity (Landry, Allard, Deveau, & Bourgeois, 2005). The participants described private informal and social informal ways of singing, which can be connected to the private experiences Landry talks about. In light of this, it appears that the participants' experiences are significant and strongly associated to the positive development of their sense of self as francophone adolescent girls.

Singing in French versus English

Although it was not always clearly stated in which language participants sang, some information they did share regarding this is worth mentioning. It appears that singing in French is significant for participants in terms of their francophone identity, which is clear in the results section. Singing in French also seems to be important when singing and performing in public. This seemed to be the case especially for girls attending a French school because most opportunities to perform were in French. For Sarah, who went to a French immersion school, she had significant singing experiences in both French and English. Another instance whereby singing in French seems to be important is in relationships with family, when singing is part of the family's interests and daily activities, like was the case for Émilie. When singing with friends and peers, the language chosen to sing in seemed to depend on the friends participants were with. Additionally, it depended on the music they were listening to, for example, Country, English Popular, or French Popular. Interestingly, the language participants sang in when alone was not mentioned. What is clear is that participants listened to both French and English music, both influencing their singing experiences. One can only presume that when the participants sing alone for their wellbeing, they use both languages, depending on the day, mood, music, etc. It would be interesting to know more about the impact of the particular language they sing in and what role that plays in their singing experiences.

Strengths of the Current Study

There are four key strengths of the current study. First, research in the area of francophone adolescent girls' singing experiences, to my knowledge, is non-existent. The existing literature focuses on the benefits of singing and music in general (e.g., Unwin et al. 2002; McClure, 1998;

Hunter, 1999), of singing in groups or as part of music therapy practice. The few studies that looked at singing and adolescents (e.g., Monks, 2003; Bailey, 2003) are focused on the technical aspect of the singing voices, rather than everyday holistic experiences of singing. The existing research tends to focus on specific aspects of identity such as adolescence (e.g., Arnett, 2007; Garrod et al., 2002), adolescent girls (e.g., Gilligan, 1991; Pipher, 1994; Spinazzola et al., 2002) or being a member of a cultural minority (e.g., Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997; Rice, 1996; Levasseur-Ouimet, 1994). The present study considered three aspects of identity in order to describe the singing experiences of adolescent francophone girls, adding rich detail about their everyday singing experiences, as well as providing insight into their experiences of identity. These findings are promising and intriguing yet raise more questions than perhaps answers. However, in having presented an in-depth examination into some of the lived experiences and resulting meaning-making of francophone adolescent girls who sing, my hope is that others will be motivated to do further research involving francophone adolescent girls and their singing experiences, or other types of beneficial experiences that contribute to resilience and health. Further research in this area would enhance the existing body of literature.

Second, the Listening Guide methodological approach offered a way to listen to the adolescent girls. The process was significant in that there was a balance between the narrative voice of the participants and the narrative voice of myself, the researcher. The data analysis process allowed me to hear more of the participants' unique voices, experiences, and narratives, as well as understand more of their perspectives. This relational method brought me into relationship with the participants because I had to follow specific steps during the analysis, listening to each participant's first-person voice before moving in to listen for answers to my own research questions. Furthermore, the steps of the analysis provided a basic frame, rather than a set of prescriptive rules to be followed, which were shaped to fit the needs of the present study. The Listening Guide therefore was respectful and considerate of the participants' authentic and narrative voices because the analytical steps helped keep these alive. I would recommend using this approach to researchers working with qualitative inquiry; especially, when there are few participants and when researchers want to look at and listen to all of the layers of the narrative in an interview.

A third strength of the present study involves my own francophone identity and experiences with singing. I believe that the fact that I was, and am an active member within the francophone community, as well as a singer, enhanced the quality of the interviews and data. The participants were able to share their experiences in French and English, knowing that I was not only a researcher, but also a singer. This commonality provided a shared ground for us to build rapport. I believe that this common ground and common understanding of singing and being a francophone girl/woman, allowed the participants to be more comfortable while sharing their stories with me, which played a part in the richness of the data.

Finally, this study provides insights into each participant, clarifying the previously meaningless or incomprehensible, and suggesting previously unseen connections, such as singing being valuable in coping, healing, and creating relationships. The interview process seemed to have provided benefits to participants, increasing self-understanding and insight into their own lives. The study also provides a feel for each participant, conveying the experiences of having known or met her, which help us to understand the inner or subjective world of each of them, and how they think and feel about their own experiences.

Limitations of the Current Study

As with all research, the present study must be understood in context. First, generalizing the findings to the larger population is not possible. The study's purpose was to provide an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of the three individuals' singing experiences, not to generalize about populations of francophone adolescent girls who sing. Whereas statistical generalizability is the goal of quantitative research, transferability is the more modest goal of qualitative research. Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings. It is a process whereby the readers of the research compare the results of the inquiry to their own environment or situation. If there are enough similarities between the two situations, readers may be able to transfer the results of a study to another context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A second limitation involves the role of demographics, which limits findings' transferability to a small and highly homogenous group of adolescent francophone girl singers. The participants in this study were all Caucasian adolescents from middle-class homes, aged 17 or 18 years, doing or

having done quite well in school. A larger sample may have provided a broader picture of the experiences of adolescent francophone girl singers, and a more diverse sample in age would have provided more range of experience. For example, younger adolescent girls may have shared different perspectives on their singing experiences, as well as different issues and insights about being adolescent, francophone, and a girl.

Lastly, the interviews were conducted in French for the most part, which gave me no choice but to translate the excerpts and descriptive passages used in the results into English. Although I spent time listening to the transcripts several times as well as had many readings of each transcript in order to gain the most accurate possible sense of what participants were saying, and asked participants for clarification whenever I had any doubts or questions, I recognize that some meaning may have been lost through the translation process.

Implications for Counselling Practice

The current study provided a rich description of the experiences of three adolescent francophone girls who sing. The participants described many experiences, feelings, and benefits unique to their singing experiences. Understanding these experiences, from the perspective of the adolescent singer, is important for those interested in this area of research, as well as professionals (e.g., counsellors, therapists, teachers) who work with girls involved with singing. Five specific topics present in the findings are pertinent to counselling therapists and perhaps even educational professionals and francophone community leaders: singing to connect in therapeutic relationships and how it extends to other relationships, singing to improve wellbeing, singing to take risks to connect to one's authentic voice, singing to develop and maintain a positive connection to a francophone identity and culture, and focusing on positive youth development.

Singing seemed to be a way to connect for participants. They were able to reach out to others as well as connect to their selves. As a counselling professional, the connection to the client is an essential element in building a therapeutic relationship. Counsellors are always seeking new ways to connect that speak to the individual client's personality and needs. Singing may be a way to connect to children and adolescents, when talking does not seem to be effective. The present findings suggest that singing plays a role in building and maintaining relationships with many

different people including family, friends, and peers. Professionals could thus integrate singing opportunities in girls' lives to promote positive relationships amongst youth and peers.

The current findings describe singing as a positive contributor to wellbeing. Participants all shared that singing helped them with stressful situations, releasing emotions, managing moods, and coping with day-to-day events. It also seemed to help them get in touch with their feelings and express them in a safe and constructive manner. For some people, sharing feelings and talking about intimate and personal issues, is not easy. Yet singing seems to be a vehicle to do so for some people, whereby they are able to feel safe and self-assured. The implications for counselling professionals can be quite valuable because singing may be appropriate with clients when they are addressing issues relating to identity exploration, confidence, and difficulty with expressing oneself. Moreover, it may create an encouraging space for girls to feel, experience, and uncover knowledge, which is a significant way of representing girls' authentic voices. Singing may thus become a coping strategy for young and adolescent girls and a useful therapeutic intervention for counsellors. For example, a counsellor might ask a girl to bring a song that speaks to her, one that she may have written or one that she listens to and sings. The counsellor could then explore the song with the girl, either singing it with her or allowing the girl to sing parts of it to the counsellor. An exploration of the words, the meaning of the song could follow, as well as describing how the girl feels when she is singing that song, how it speaks to her, and what it means to her. Another option would be to ask the girl to sing on a regular basis and journal about her experiences. These reflections could then be brought into the counselling sessions and further explored.

Brown and Gilligan (1992) believe it is essential for girls to say what they are feeling; however, this often means taking a risk and being assertive. In this study's findings, the three participants talked about singing and taking risks. Liane took a risk when she decided to perform on stage, knowing she was shy and unsure of herself. She continued to take risks every time she chose to sing in front of an audience. Émilie risked writing and composing a song for her brother and performing it. She opened herself up, allowing others to see and hear her unique voice. Sarah risked letting a boy she likes at school know how she really felt about him through song. Participants required courage to take these risks; however, singing seemed to be the protected and

nurturing environment they needed to feel safe enough to develop to their fullest potential (Pipher, 1994). Counsellors and teachers can take this into consideration when working with adolescent girls. In order for girls to connect to their authentic voices, they may need something meaningful to hold on to and to allow them to express and assert their views. For the participants, singing gave them confidence and empowered them to connect to their authentic voice.

Counsellors and even community leaders can assist francophone adolescents in the development and maintenance of their own cultural and ethnic identity (APA, 2002). The sense of belonging to a group and being an integral part of a community is key to building positive self-esteem and planting roots (Pipher, 1994). Francophones who identify with their group can derive pride and focus, which fosters a sense of wellbeing. The participants of this study all had a strong sense of connection to being francophone and belonging to the francophone community. Moreover, singing seemed to strengthen and deepen that connection for them. As community leaders, teachers, or counsellors, it is important to note that singing may not be the key factor for all adolescents; however, providing space for them to find what speaks to them, and supporting and valuing opportunities for self-expression and developing a sense of cultural belonging is associated with developing a resilient identity, that is an identity resistant to the negative outcomes of adversity, life's challenges, and in this case, assimilation or marginality. (Levasseur-Ouimet, 1994).

Finally, I believe that the results of this study support counsellors and professionals to focus on the positive youth development. A positive strengths-based perspective focuses on positive youth development (Larson, 2000), on accentuating strengths and building health rather than fighting sickness (Cowen, 1991), and on describing adolescents' developmental assets and needs rather than deficits (Benson, 1997). Although the participants shared difficult and challenging experiences in their in-depth interviews, the focus was on the positive impact of singing and how singing brought meaning to their lives. I believe this study provided the opportunity to discuss, and thus process, some of the participants' experiences of singing, which appeared to provide them a growth opportunity. The in-depth interviews allowed them to discover and name the benefits of singing, something they had not previously considered. Providing a safe space for

adolescents to share their experiences and focus on the positive, rather than the negative, will indeed build stronger, healthier, more confident, and resilient youth who are able to bounce back after setbacks, disappointments, or losses and who are able to face the future with optimism and courage, despite adverse life events.

Implications for Future Research

The present research was unique in focusing on francophone adolescent girls who sang, in contrast to the majority of singing-related literature that focuses on individuals singing in choirs, on the technical aspects of the singing voice, or on singing as used by music therapists. The present study was also unique in that it did not focus on specific aspects of singing experiences, rather general experiences of singing, as well as the meaning and significance that was attached to singing. Although the present study provided new information in terms of singing-related experiences for francophone adolescent girls, there is still much to be explored through research.

The findings of the present study provide a basis for future research. For example, the participants in the present study were aged 17 and 18 years and were either in Grade 12 or had just completed high school. The findings revealed how singing had been beneficial to the participants in the past, as well as in the present. However, it would be interesting to follow individuals, like the participants in the present study, into their adult lives to explore the long-term benefits of singing and how these experiences relate to being a young adult. Furthermore, looking at singing experiences for adolescent boys would also be of interest. A study looked at boys singing in a church choir and reported that these boys showed a deep appreciation of and engagement with the music, and exhibited many features of high personal wellbeing, despite the fact that singing was often considered “feminine” and that some of the participants were often teased about their singing (Ashley, 2002).

Another interesting area of research would be to collect meaningful experiences of singing that were significant in singer’s lives. For example, Sarah had vivid memories of singing whereby she recalled precise details, such as where she was, what she was doing, thinking, and feeling, even what she was wearing. These memories seemed to be critical incidents for Sarah; experiences that have marked her and that she still goes back to whenever she needs to remember what she has lived and learned. A collection of these types of critical incidents, presented as stories, would be

a way to further explore and understand the significance and impact of singing for some individuals.

Research further exploring the notion of voice and its many dimensions could also be interesting. For example, does singing in French contribute to finding one's political voice? Are young singers aware that by choosing to sing in French they are asserting themselves as a minority and helping to keep the francophone culture alive? Are they singing to take a stand and assert their rights as a francophone living as a minority? Moreover, to what extent are adolescents consciously aware of these types of choices, like singing in French as opposed to singing in English. These questions and others seem to further capture the complexity of the subject and the many additional dimensions voice can have.

I also believe that further research involving singing, as part of the data collection would be valuable. Rather than relying on verbal interviews and recollections, I would be interested as a counsellor, researcher, and singer, in collecting data based on current experience. For example, I would like to explore singing with adolescent girls through hands-on workshops, whereby participants would be involved in using their singing voice to discover the numerous possibilities of it through improvisation and guided activities. Their singing experiences could be tracked during a period of one week for example. This type of research would allow adolescent girls to express their singing voice in a safe place, with someone like myself to debrief with and further discuss their experiences. Action-oriented research like this appeals to me because it involves a direct approach and an opportunity for many girls to sing and use their voice, which they may not do on their own. Moreover, I think this kind of research would compliment the present study and take it one step further, at an experiential and empirical level.

Finally, this research focused on positive experiences with singing. It would be interesting also to explore possible risks or harm associated with singing. For example, investigating adolescents' involvement with the popular culture of Rap, Emo, and heavy metal music and the sexualized, derogatory, dark, and depressing lyrics that often accompany this music, would be important. How might singing experiences related to this type of music interface with adolescent identity, gender identity, or cultural identity? This sort of research could provide a further and fuller understanding of singing.

A final note

“Expanding the range of the voice and allowing it to dance freely through all of its colours provides us with an opportunity to step outside the fixity of our familiar mask and reanimate the entire kaleidoscope of our personality.” – Paul Newham (1998)

This qualitative study has begun to illuminate francophone adolescent girls’ experiences of singing. The most prominent themes in the data focused on singing and experiences of identity, singing and relationships, and singing and wellbeing. The three participants also shared three ways of singing, which all served a different, yet important purpose in their adolescent lives. As a woman, francophone, singer, researcher, teacher, and counsellor who did use singing as an adolescent girl to connect, cope, express, feel, have fun, and stay positive and healthy, I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to get to know Liane, Émilie, and Sarah on a deep and meaningful level. I admire their courage and honesty as they shared with me their stories about singing and the meaning they attribute to singing in their lives. It is my hope that they will always feel safe and free enough to sing to their heart’s content, allowing their true, authentic, and singing voices to be heard and known.

References

- Alberta Education. (1998). *Tu peux compter sur moi: guide à l'intention du parent pour l'accompagnement de l'enfant dans son éducation en français langue première*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Education.
- American Psychological Association. (2002). *Developing adolescents: A reference for professionals*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Arnett, J. (1999). Adolescent storm and stress, reconsidered. *American Psychologist*, 54(5), 317-326.
- Arnett, J.J. (Ed.). (2007). *Adolescence and emerging adulthood: A Cultural approach* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.
- Ashley, M. (2002). Singing, gender and health : Perspectives from boys singing in a church choir. *Health Education*, 102(4), 180-186.
- Austin, D. S. (1998). When the psyche sings: Transference and countertransference in improvised singing with individual adults. In K. E. Bruscia (Ed.), *The dynamics of music psychotherapy* (pp. 315-333). Gilsum, NH: Barcelona.
- Austin, D. (2001). In search of the self: The use of vocal holding techniques with adults traumatized as children. *Music Therapy Perspectives*, 19(1).
- Bailey, B. A. (2003). Amateur group singing as a therapeutic instrument. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 12(1), 18-32.
- Belknap, R. A. (2000). Eva's story: One woman's life viewed through the interpretive lens of Gilligan's theory. *Violence Against Women*, 6(6), 586-605.
- Blankstein, A. M., & Guelzoe, E. (2000). Developing a sense of the possible : Reaching today's youth. *The community Circle of Caring Journal*, 4(4), 2-5.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Brewer, M. B. & Hewstone, M. (Eds.), (2004). *Self and Social Identity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Brown, L. M. & Gilligan, C. (1992). *Meeting at the crossroads: Women's psychology and girls' development*. New York : Ballantine Books.
- Brown, L. M., Tappan, M. B., Gilligan, C., Miller, M. A., & Argyris, D. E. (1989).

- Reading for self and moral voice: A method for interpreting narratives of real-life moral conflict and choice. In M. J. Packer & R. B. Addison (Eds.), *Entering the circle: Hermeneutic investigation in psychology*. (pp. 141-164). Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Bruner, J. (2004). The narrative creation of self. In L. E. Angus & J. McLeod (Eds.), *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy: Practice, Theory, and Research* (pp. 3-14). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Budgeon, S. (2003). *Choosing a self: Young women and the individualization of identity*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Chaitin, J. (2004). My story, my life, my identity. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 3(4), Article 1. Retrieved July 11, 2007 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_4/html/chaitin.html
- Clift, S. and Hancox, G. (2001) The perceived benefits of singing: Findings from preliminary surveys with a university college choral society. *Journal of the Royal Society for the Promotion of Health*, 121(4), 248-256.
- Cowen, E. L. (1991) In pursuit of wellness. *American Psychologist*, 46(4), 404-408.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- DeNora, T. (1999). Music as a technology of the self. *Poetics* 27, 31-56.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). (pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Dibben, N. (2002). Gender identity and music. In R. A. R. Macdonald, D. J. Hargreaves, & D. Miell (Eds.), *Musical identities* (pp. 117-133). New York: Oxford.
- Eisner, E. (1992). The misunderstood role of the arts in human development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 591-595.
- Faulkner, R. & Davidson, J. W. (2006). Men in chorus: Collaboration and competition in homo-social vocal behaviour. *Psychology of Music*, 34(2), 219-237.
- Fédération des Communautés Francophones et Acadienne du Canada (2009). Francophone Community Profile of Saskatchewan. Retrieved November 7, 2009 from http://www.fcfa.ca/profils/documents/saskatchewan_en.pdf

- Fisher, J. & Silber, E. S. (Eds.). (1998). *Analyzing the different voice: Feminist psychological theory and literary texts*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Fiske, A., Kitayama, S., Markus, H., & Nisbett, R. (1998). The cultural matrix of social psychology. In D. Gilbert, S. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Fredricks, J. A., Blumenfeld, P. C., & Paris, A. H. (2004). School engagement: potential of the concept, state of the evidence. *Review of Educational Research, 74*(1) 59-109.
- Gall, J. P., Gall, M. D., & Borg, W. R. (2005). *Applying educational research: A practical guide* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Garrod, A., Smulyan, L., Powers, S. I., & Kilkenny, R. (2002). *Adolescent portraits: Identity, relationships, and challenges* (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gilgun, J.F. (2005). "Grab" and good science: Writing up the results of qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(2), 256-262.
- Gilligan, C. (1991). Reframing resistance. In C. Gilligan, A. G. Rogers, & D. L. Tolman (Eds.), *Women, girls & psychotherapy: Reframing resistance*. (pp. 5-32). New York: Hawthorn Press.
- Gilligan, C., Spencer, R., Weinberg, M. K., & Bertsch, T. (2003). On the listening guide: A voice-centered relational method. In P. Camic, J. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*. (pp. 157-172). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Government of Saskatchewan (2009). Saskatchewan Francophones. Retrieved November 7, 2009 from <http://www.ops.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=1acd120d-707d-4b66-bfb8-c47a383b2f5a>
- Greene, G. & Freed, S. (2005). Research as improvisation: Dancing among perspectives. *The Qualitative Report, 10*(2), 276-288.
- Hanna, J. L. (1992). Connections: Arts, academics and productive citizens. *Phi Delta Kappan, 601-607*.
- Hunter, B. C. (1999). Singing as a therapeutic agent, in The Etude. *Journal of Music Therapy, 36*(2), 125-143.
- Huss, E. (2005). Researching creations: Applying arts-based research to Bedouin women's

- drawings. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 4(4), Article 4. Retrieved April 2007 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/4_4/PDF/HUSS.PDF
- Kearney, C. (2003). *The Monkey's mask: Identity, memory, narrative and voice*. Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham Books.
- Landry, R. (1993). Déterminisme et détermination: vers une pédagogie de l'excellence en milieu minoritaire. *Les actes du 1^{er} congrès national de l'ACREF*. (p. 33-78). Winnipeg : Collège universitaire de St-Boniface; Alliance canadienne des responsables et des enseignants et enseignantes en français langue maternelle (ACREF).
- Landry, R., Allard, R., Deveau, K. et Bourgeois, N. (2005). Autodétermination du comportement langagier en milieu minoritaire : un modèle conceptuel. *Francophonies d'Amérique*, 20, 63-78.
- Landry, R. et Rousselle, S. (2003). *Éducation et droits collectifs : Au-delà de l'article 23 de la Charte*. Moncton : Les éditions de la Francophonie.
- Larson, R. (2000). Towards a psychology of positive youth development. *American Psychologist*, 55, 170-183.
- Levasseur-Ouimet, F. (1989) Enseigner en milieu minoritaire : réflexions sur la pédagogie. *Éducation et francophonie*, 17(3), 16-22.
- Levasseur-Ouimet, F. (1994). *Les besoins éducatifs particuliers des élèves francophones vivant en milieu minoritaire*. Edmonton, AB: Faculté Saint-Jean, Université d'Alberta.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (1985). Establishing Trustworthiness. In Y.S. Lincoln & E.G. Guba (Eds.). *Naturalistic Inquiry* (pp. 289-331). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 275-289.
- Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). From understanding to action: New imperatives, new criteria, new methods for interpretive researchers. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 26(1), 12-29.
- Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). (pp. 163-187). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- MacDonald, R., Hargreaves, D., & Miell, D. (Eds.). (2002). *Musical Identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Mauthner, N. S. & Doucet, A. (1998). Reflections on a voice-centred relational method. In J. Ribben & R. Edwards (Eds.), *Feminist dilemmas in qualitative research: Public knowledge and private lives*. (pp. 119-146). London: Sage Publications.
- McAdams, D. P. (1988). *Power, intimacy, and the life story: Personological inquiries into identity*. New York: Guilford.
- McAdams, D. P. (1990). Unity and purpose in human lives: The emergence of identity as a life story. In A. I. Rabin, R. A. Zucker, R. E. Emmons, & S. Frank (Eds.), *Studying persons and lives* (pp. 148-200). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The Stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: William Morrow.
- McAdams, D. P. & Janis, L. (2004). Narrative identity and narrative therapy. In L. E. Angus & J. McLeod (Eds.), *The Handbook of Narrative and Psychotherapy: Practice, Theory, and Research* (pp. 159-173). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- McClure, W. M. (1998). A cross-cultural interdisciplinary study of the healing power of singing, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, (UMI No. 9913039).
- McLean, K. C. (2005). Late identity development: Narrative meaning making and memory telling. *Developmental Psychology*, 41(4), 683-691.
- McNiff, S. (2004). *Art heals: How creativity cures the soul*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Menuhin, Y. (n.d.) Retrieved September 20, 2009 from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/y/yehudi_menuhin.html
- Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and research*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Miranda, D. & Claes, M. (2009). Music listening, coping, peer affiliation and depression in adolescence. *Psychology of Music*, 37(2), 215-233.
- Monks, S. (2003). Adolescent singers and perceptions of vocal identity. *British Journal of Music Education*, 20(3), 243-256.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250-260.
- Morse, J. M., & Richards, L. (2002). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Moshman, D. (2005). *Adolescent psychological development* (2nd ed.). Mahwah, NJ:

- Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Murray, M. (2003). Narrative psychology and narrative analysis. In P. Camic, J. Rhodes, & L. Yardley (Eds.), *Qualitative research in psychology: Expanding perspectives in methodology and design*. (pp. 95-112). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Nelson, D. & Weathers, R. (1998). Necessary angels: Music and healing in psychotherapy. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 38*(1), 101-108.
- Newham, P. (1998). *Therapeutic voicework, principles and practice for the use of singing as a therapy*. London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Nicol, J. J. (2006). Me Making Music, Music Making Me: Unexpected Travels in Music and Music Therapy. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy*. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from <http://www.voices.no/mainissues/mi40006000210.htm>
- Nicol, J. J. (2008). Creating vocative texts. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(3), 316-333. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-3/nicol.pdf>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Phinney, J. S. & Devich-Navarro, M. (1997). Variations in bicultural identification among African American and Mexican American adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 7*, 3-32.
- Pipher, M. (1994). *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the selves of adolescent girls*. New York : Ballantine Books.
- Polkinghorne, D. (2000). Ricoeur, narrative and personal identity. In C. Lightfoot, C. Lalonde, & M. Chandler (Eds.), *Changing conceptions of psychological life* (pp. 27-48). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Rice, F. P. (1996). *The Adolescent: Development, relationships, and culture*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Rogers, A. G. (1993). Voice, play, and a practice of ordinary courage in girls' and women's lives. *Harvard Educational Review, 63*, 265-295.
- Schwandt, T. A. (1997). *Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Simard, A. (2001). L'école orientante : pour faciliter le choix de carrière. Pelletier, D. (dir.) In

- Pour une approche orientante de l'école québécoise.* Sainte-Foy : Éditions Septembre.
- Simmons, R. (2002). *Odd girl out: The Hidden culture of aggression in girls.* Orlando, FL: Harcourt.
- Spinazzola, J., Wilson, H. W., & Stocking, V. B. (2002). Dimensions of silencing and resistance in adolescent girls: Development of a narrative method for research and prevention. In L. H. Collins, M. R. Dunlap, & J. C. Chrisler (Eds.), *Charting a new course for feminist psychology.* (pp. 111-138). Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Spira, M. K., Grossman, S. F., & Wolff-Bensdorf, J. (2002). Voice and identity in a bicultural/bilingual environment. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal, 19*(2), 115-138.
- Stacy, R., Brittain, K., & Kerr, S. (2002). Singing for health : An exploration of the issues. *Health Education, 102*(4), 156-162.
- Statistics Canada. (2006). Census of Population. Retrieved September 9, 2009, from <http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo11c-eng.htm>
- Steinberg, L. (2002). *Adolescence.* (6th ed.). Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Summers, S. G. (1999). A tapestry of voices: Community building with a geriatric choir reflected in a music therapy model of practice. *Proquest Dissertations* (Document ID No. 729213201).
- Taylor, J. M., Gilligan, C., & Sullivan, A. M. (1995). *Between voice and silence: Women and girls, race and relationship.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, S. L. (2004). *Therapeutic voice lessons as stress management.* Unpublished thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.
- Thorne, S. (2000). Data analysis in qualitative research. *Evidence-based Nursing, 3,* 68-70.
- Todorova, I. L. G. & Kotzeva, T. (2003). Social discourses, women's resistive voices: Facing involuntary childlessness in Bulgaria. *Women's Studies International Forum, 26*(2), 139-151.
- Uhlig, S. (2006). *Authentic voices, authentic singing: A multicultural approach to vocal music therapy.* Gilsum, NH: Barcelona Publishers.
- Unwin, M. M., Kenny, D. T., & Davis, P. J. (2002). The Effects of Group Singing on Mood. *Psychology of Music, 30,* 175-185.
- van Manen, M. (1997). From meaning to method. *Qualitative Health Research, 7*(3),

345-369.

- Warren, B. (Ed.). (1993). *Using the creative arts in therapy: A practical introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Wiens, H. Janzen, H. Mott, A., & Claypool, T. (2003). Voice training as a healing power : A pilot study. *Guidance & Counselling, 19*(1), 10-17.
- World Federation of Music Therapy (1996). 'Definition of music therapy'. Retrieved May 15, 2007, from <http://www.musictherapyworld.de/>
- Young, L. (2009). The potential health benefits of community based singing groups for adults with cancer. *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy, 15*(1), 11-27.
- Zimmerman, J. K. (1991). Crossing the desert alone: An etiological model of female adolescent suicidality. In C. Gilligan, A. G. Rogers, & D. L. Tolman (Eds.), *Women, girls & psychotherapy: Reframing resistance*. (pp. 223-240). New York: Hawthorn Press.

Appendix A: Recruitment Brochure

**Que faire si je suis
intéressée ou si je
veux en savoir
davantage?**



Si tu t'intéresses à participer,
communique avec

Gisèle Lalonde :

gal379@mail.usask.ca

ou

665-8079

**EST-CE QUE TU ES
ADOLESCENTE?
FRANCOPHONE?
ET
AIMES CHANTER?**



*Je t'invite à participer à
une étude qui a comme but
de connaître les
expériences d'adolescentes
francophones qui chantent.*

Cette étude a été approuvée par le
comité d'éthique de l'Université de la
Saskatchewan.



- ✓ Est-ce que tu es une adolescente francophone?
- ✓ Est-ce que chanter est important pour toi?
- ✓ Est-ce que tu chantes régulièrement?

Si oui, je t'invite à participer à un projet de recherche qui explore les expériences d'adolescentes francophones qui chantent.

Je cherche des participantes qui voudraient me rencontrer deux fois pour discuter leurs expériences en chant. Ce processus aura comme objectifs la découverte et le partage de tes expériences.

Tu auras à faire 2 entrevues d'une durée d'environ 45-75 minutes chacune. Ces entrevues seront enregistrées et par la suite, transcrites. De plus, tu auras à écrire quelques réflexions informelles par rapport à tes expériences de chant. La dernière étape consistera en une brève rencontre afin d'approuver les données et d'en autoriser la diffusion.

Je suis une étudiante à la Maîtrise en Counselling et Psychologie scolaire à l'Université de la Saskatchewan qui fait sa recherche sous la supervision de Dr. J. Nicol.

Toute information que tu fourniras sera confidentielle.

Ta participation sera volontaire et tu auras le droit de te retirer à n'importe quel moment.



Appendix B : Interview Guide

Introduction to the research:

- Introduce myself and say why I am doing this research.
- The purpose of this interview is so that I can hear your experiences of singing and what those are like for you.
- There are no wrong answers to the questions that I ask, and you can talk about anything you want, saying only what you feel comfortable enough to share.
- If you have any questions for me during the interviews, please do not hesitate to ask.

Question guide:

- Tell me about yourself: who you are, where you are from...
- Tell me about your self in terms of being an adolescent.
- Tell me about your self in terms of being a francophone.
- Tell me about your self in terms of being a girl.
- Tell me how singing is a part of your life (where, when, how long, kinds of experiences, importance of...)
- How is singing related to you in terms of being an adolescent?
- How is singing related to you in terms of being a francophone?
- How is singing related to you in terms of being a girl?
- Take a moment to remember a singing experience you had. Describe that experience to me with as many details you can think of, so that I can also live it.
- How do you feel when you sing? What goes on in your body? What do you experience in terms of emotions, 5 senses, etc.?
- Does singing make you feel connected? (to yourself, others, things, spaces...) Does it make you feel like you belong?

Appendix C : Journal Writing Handout

Dear participant:

I would like you to take some time to reflect on your singing experiences, writing as much as you can about them. You may use one or more of the following ideas to guide you through this process.

- Describe one or more of your singing experiences in detail.
- Write about your singing experiences in a chronological order, describing how it all began, why you were interested in it, etc.
- Reflect on the importance of singing to you and the benefits and value it brings in your life.
- Describe what singing means to you using metaphor.
- Describe how singing is related to your francophone culture.
- Describe what it means to be an adolescent and how singing is related to that.

Your journal entries will not be judged. Please do not worry about grammar, spelling, syntax, etc. What is important is that you provide me with as much rich detail and information possible. Please write a minimum of two journal entries on two separate occasions. The more you write, the more this will help my research.

Thank you very much!!

Sincerely,
Gisèle Lalonde