

## PERCEIVED HOLISTIC HEALTH BENEFITS OF THREE LEVELS OF MUSIC PARTICIPATION

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### Background

Results from our previous research using interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) indicated that participation in group singing generated emotional, social, cognitive and physical therapeutic effects. Participants also suggested that these effects were not realized to the same extent while listening to music.

### Aims

Because our participants were from unique choirs comprised of homeless and disadvantaged individuals, it was necessary to further validate our findings with larger numbers of singers in choirs in more common environments.

### Method

A pilot survey was developed to determine amateur choristers' perceptions regarding 3 levels of music participation: singing in a choir, listening to music alone and listening to music with others. Participants rated items using a 5-point Likert-type scale. Of the 63 randomized items, 21 items similarly probed each of the 3 participation levels. The participants were 124 singers (96 females) from 3 distinct choirs (church, community, work place). The ages of the participants ranged from 24 to 82 years ( $m = 52.16$ ). Mean years of voice and instrumental training were .92 and 2.94 respectively.

### Results

Although the ratings were generally high, the majority of the items received the highest average ratings in the 'singing in a choir' category. 'Listening to music alone' received the highest average ratings for 6 items. For all but 2 items the 'listening with others' category received the lowest average ratings. When ratings from all items from each participation category were combined to form an overall Holistic Health Rating, active participation in singing received the highest average rating and listening to music with others received the lowest average across item rating.

### Conclusions

The survey results indicate that participation in group singing may be more beneficial than less active types of music involvement. The outcomes are consistent with, and will be discussed in relation to, two recent studies utilizing physiological measures, particularly secretory immunoglobulin A (IgA) and cortisol, which found that participation in choral singing significantly reduced stress. Additionally, one of these studies found that listening to music did not have a similar significant effect.