

## **The Invisible Student: Understanding Social Identity Construction within Performing Ensembles**

This article discussed the concept of “invisible” students within music ensembles and how to prevent students from feeling excluded and self-conscious. This article surprised me in that it made me think of ensembles in a different way. I was involved in my several of the choirs at my high school during my time there. If I was asked at any point why I was a choir member, or what the purpose of choir is, I would have automatically said it was to make music. I had never considered choir as a place to make friends or as anything social. However, this article made me realize this is an important part of life in an ensemble. Rehearsing together every week, learning music together, and ultimately performing and competing together can foster a very close relationship between a group of people. Ensemble should be a place where students with something in common can come together and explore that interest. It is through choir that I made some of my closet friends throughout high school and where my fondest memories come from, up until this point I believe I may have taken that for granted because it seemed to all just come naturally. I believe students today struggle a lot with their self-worth and having labels become part of who you are. Being deemed awkward or strange can dramatically lower a students self-esteem, and once a label has been placed it can be very hard to get rid of. I believe that music classrooms and ensemble rehearsals should be a safe space for all students to express themselves as this is at the core of music making in itself. If members of the ensemble feel as if they cannot relate to each other, the music itself can be affected and will not be nearly as enjoyable to make as it could be. I think the author made a good point about getting the students to work together in order to help everyone feel included. I believe great example of this exists at Western in the vocal

methods class. From the first day Professor Jennifer Moir stresses the importance of fostering a positive environment for self growth and evaluation. Rather than speaking from a position of authority and telling all the students to get along, she takes a different approach and assures us of our responsibility to make the classroom a safe space for everyone to become their best selves. As a class we understood this, and as a result our class room became somewhere where students could perform and receive feedback that was both constructive and respectful. After experiencing this I vowed to try to do the same as a teacher in the future. I think the authors techniques will help teachers to ensure every student feels the same level of comfort and joy in the classroom, and has reminded me of the importance of interpersonal relationships and how they benefit both the music made by the ensemble and the ensemble experience itself.