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The effects of singing in a choir on biological and psychological measures of anxiety

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Simple anecdotal evidence will reveal that many people find music to be a relaxing and mood-lifting activity. Recently, there has been a large amount of scientific literature investigating this effect and concluding that singing does have positive effects on reducing stress. They have been able to show that singing in a choir results in a reduction in scores on the Positive And Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) and State-Trait Anxiety Index (STAI) questionnaires. Additionally, interviews with choir goers have revealed that singers report an increase in mood and increase in sociability after singing in a group. Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that levels of cortisol, a hormone associated with stress, show a significant reduction after a choir rehearsal. However, most of these studies are limited by only measuring at the start and end of the singing period. In this investigation, we aim to measure throughout the period of singing and periods both before and after in order to attempt to produce a curve of effect for both psychological and biological indicators of stress. We hypothesise that singing will result in an overall reduction in both biological and psychological measures of stress and will increase feelings of sociability. During the singing period, we would expect psychological markers of stress to decrease and for this to be correlated with a decrease in biological markers of stress. In the recovery period, we would suggest that psychological markers and biological markers will start to move back towards baseline levels prior to singing, but should still remain higher than baseline. We would expect feelings of sociability and psychological markers of stress to be inversely correlated, with feelings of increased sociability with fellow singers and a decrease in stress. We are also interested in seeing whether baseline anxiety levels can be used to predict the effectiveness of anxiety reduction in singing.

Biography

David Budd completed his undergraduate degree in Neuroscience at the University of Oxford, aged 21. He then moved to Goldsmiths College, University of London to pursue a Masters in Music Psychology.

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