**NYSSMA Winter Conference Research Gallery**

**A Problem of Quality in Music Teacher Education**

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The majority of students attending public school in the next decade are children of color, while the majority of teachers are white (Chapman, 2011, Ryu, 2010). This disparity is even more noticeable in music education. Numerous barriers—including expense of instruments and private study, and familiarity with standard Western notation—marginalize large populations of children, namely students of color and students from low-earning households (Bradley, 2007; Koza, 2008; Miller, 2014; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2008). This limits entry to university music education programs, and thus limits the cultural (and musical) diversity amongst classroom music teachers.

My doctoral dissertation examined the understandings and misunderstandings of the term *diversity* by seven music education professors at public universities. A theme of quality emerged amongst all of the participants. The professors’ notions of quality were often in contrast to their stated beliefs about diversity—that is, there seemed to be a binary relationship between quality and diversity.

My research poster will use these data to suggest that *quality* is a problematic term in music education. I will include the ways that the term quality is used in professional literature. I will juxtapose the literature review against interview data from my dissertation to illustrate how the term quality (an adjective) continues to limit diversity in university music education programs. I believe that the term *qualities* (a noun) can be more useful to describe musicians and institutional music programs. I conclude that a small shift in semantics may create more openings for students who have been historically marginalized from university music education programs.

**The Relationship Between Music Aptitude and Academic Achievement**

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The issue that this master’s thesis addresses is the relationship between music aptitude and academic achievement and its implications for recruiting, retaining, and placing effective music teachers. The purpose of this master’s thesis is to examine the relationship between academic achievement and stabilized music aptitude in high school seniors intending to begin a collegiate music program of study at Long Island University (LIU) Post. Time period of research is the 2015-2016 academic year.

Data collection is from LIU Post Department of Music Audition Day rosters from 2008-2012. In addition to the relationship between music aptitude and academic achievement, the relationship between stabilized music aptitude, high school GPA, SAT score, ACT score, and New York State Teacher Certification Exam scores and first year teaching evaluations will also be examined. The researcher gathered data from the LIU Post Department of Music, College of Education and Information Sciences, and three LIU Post Music Education program completers who are in their first year of teaching.

The findings show that there is a statistically significant correlation between composite music aptitude and high school GPA and composite music aptitude and ACT score. This master’s thesis will be useful for music educators and music teacher preparation programs because it points to the importance of carefully examining high school GPA, ACT score, and stabilized music aptitude as indicators of success in first year teachers. Recommendations for future research include replication at urban and/or rural universities.

**Retention of Students Who Participate in Sports and Music**

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This research was conducted for a college action research course by an undergraduate

pre-service teacher. The problem of low retention rate of music students, who also participate in

sports, was the topic of this research project. How do the teachers with successful retention rates

communicate and accommodate with the sports faculty? What are the attitudes towards the

importance of sports participation versus musical participation? How do teachers with successful

retention rates help assist the students in managing participation in both sports and music?

Triangulation data collection procedures used in this study were (1) interviewing two teachers,

(2) online forum contributions from 23 teachers and colleagues, and (3) personal observations.

By gaining information from teaching professionals and students who worked through the issue

of sports and music participation, an action plan was devised using several techniques that will

implemented in the future.

The initial results of the research project demonstrate the importance of communication

for teachers to assist their students in developing a well-rounded experience. Teachers also take

on the role of a motivator and problem solver for the students, in order to insure their students

can participate in the activities they enjoy. By having open lines of communications between the faculty, coaches, students and parents, clear expectations can be determined and shared with

everyone. This can be achieved early on with the students, emphasized in open houses or letters

sent home to parents, and made apparent in the everyday support that the teacher can give to

students.

Further investigation of this action research study will occur in order to gain further

insights into the topic. Through implementation of the techniques described in this study, the

action plan devised may or may not work for every student’s specific situation. However, it will

provide a starting place in devising additional methods to help students succeed. An expansion

of this research into different areas connected with retention may be investigated.

**Music Teachers’ Implementation of Content-Specific Certification Courses: A Pilot Survey**

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The first steps toward becoming a music teacher typically involve a formal degree program. After earning a degree and acquiring a teaching position, a music teacher may desire more information. Various institutions and organizations annually host an array of content-specific courses for music teachers seeking additional training (Conway, 2004). Some courses include a certification following completion of specified guidelines. Examples of such courses include Orff Schulwerk, Kodaly, Suzuki, and Gordon’s Music Learning Theory. In this study I explored teachers’ perceptions of their own development after completing content-specific courses.

The purpose of this pilot survey was to develop a dialogue surrounding music teachers’ perceptions and implementation of content-specific information. The primary question guiding this research was, “What are teacher perceptions of the effect from certification courses in their classrooms?” Secondarily, I drew comparisons between teachers’ perceptions of several categories associated with the completion of certification courses. Participants in this study included music teachers from across the United States with subscriptions to music-teacher-specific web pages on Facebook.com. These web pages included: *Dalcroze Society of America, AOSA, Kodaly Educators, MLT Classroom Teachers, Music Teachers, Texas Band Directors, and Music Educators Association of New York City.*

This survey was open for a period of one week and 153 music teachers responded. Participation was advertised by posting a brief memo on each included web page stating that I sought data for a pilot project for graduate school, including a clickable link at the end of the post. Only members of these web pages were able to take the survey. Preliminary findings suggest that all participants believed the course in which they participated was effective in improving their teaching, and 78% of participants reported that they incorporate this content into lessons daily. Future studies should investigate how certification courses make an impact in classrooms, and how more teachers can be encouraged to participate in certification courses.

**An Ongoing Process of Discovery: Teacher Research in Elementary General Music**

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All good teachers, whether they consciously carry out research or not, are

researchers in the broadest sense of the word. This is because good teachers are

also learners, and they recognize that they need to keep learning throughout their

careers if they are to improve. They probe their subject matter, constantly

searching for material that will excite and motivate their students; they explore

pedagogy to create a learning environment that is both rigorous and supportive;

they talk with their colleagues about difficult situations. Above all, they value the

intellectual work that is at the core of teaching. (Nieto, 2003, p. 76–77)

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the research experiences of an

elementary general music teacher enrolled in the first cohort of an online master’s degree

program in music education. Specific research objectives included examining this teacher’s perceptions of conducting teacher research through a series of action research projects that led to the development of a case study that explored the lived experience of a special needs child in one of her 3rd grade music classes. Additional objectives included examining the understanding about qualitative research this teacher developed and how it informed her teaching practice (Beeth & Adadan, 2006), her evolving teacher and researcher identity (Elliott, 2012; Robbins, Burbank & Dunkle, 2007), and how teacher research serves as a powerful form of professional development (Conway, Edgar, Hansen, & Palmer, 2013; Gruenhagen, 2008). From the start, this teacher embodied the curious nature shared by teacher researchers. Her classroom became a “laboratory of learning” where new insights continually emerged in regard to student learning, teacher

learning, and teaching practice (Robins, Burbank, & Dunkle, 2007). As Bullough and Gitlin (1995) stated, she indeed became of “student of teaching.”

As a master’s student, this teacher participated in weekly online discussions with her

cohort of teaching colleagues and ongoing collaborative conversations with her professor and assigned mentor. These conversations, along with email communications; an end-of project

interview with this teacher; researcher journals; the teacher’s research journal, interviews, teaching videos, and written case study report, served as data sources. Emergent themes included: questions, perceptions, and stories of lived music practice; bridging the theory to practice gap; teaching music to special needs students; “doing” research; teacher philosophy; and evolving teacher and researcher identity. Implications for future research will be discussed.

**Music Education in Parochial Schools: History and Challenges of**

**Parochial Music Education**

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As the research output in music education continues to evolve, it seems that a majority carried out in primary and secondary schools is centered on public school programs. While this is not necessarily a negative assertion, musicians in particular typically allow multiple versions of similar viewpoints: in this case, ensuring that private and parochial school music education programs are adequately represented in music education research. Through this study, I attempt to distinguish characteristics and challenges of private parochial school music education programs and their public school counterparts. Music education at its foundational level should focus primarily on its students; *where* students learn should not dictate the types of musical opportunities accessible to them.

As an alternative to public education, Catholic schools have left a lasting impact on American music education since the 17th century. Even the first parochial school, which opened in Philadelphia in 1767, included singing hymns as a subject. Gray (1995) documents the brief history of the National Catholic Music Educators Association (NCMEA). This organization, which existed for only thirty-five years, from 1942-1976, dissolved as a result of expansions into the broader professional music organizations such as the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), which we are a part of today.

Many private parochial schools face certain challenges that would not necessarily become factors in public school settings. For example, Hash (2015) documented the staggering number of music educator vacancies in faith-based schools over one academic year. Such quick teacher turnover is a hardship seemingly limited to parochial school programs, not to mention the socioeconomic impact and implications of families paying a required tuition. Consider the role of the music educator in the musical career of a student and imagine how a lack of consistency in an ensemble director would impact a developing instrumental music program from year to year. Students in parochial school music programs typically do not have to imagine, as this is their reality.

This study is intended to examine the successes and shortcomings of a parochial school music program within a mid-sized suburban district, drawing a majority of its population from both urban and suburban districts and a large international student population. While the structure of the parochial school provides challenges, students are still able to make music at a high level using creative solutions and implementations.

**Musical Voices from the Margins: Recognizing and Enriching Students’ Indigenous Musical Literacies in the Urban General Music Classroom**

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Popular music listening has taken center stage in the broader educational discourse (Morrell & Duncan Andrade, 2005). Scholars in a variety of disciplines recognize that popular music listening forms a primary out-of-school leisure activity of today’s children and youth (Martino, 2006; Woodson, 2004; Kellner, 2000). Despite this recognition, music education research to date has focused primarily on popular music listening and youth culture. Using the lens of critical literacy, this study investigated how young children make sense of the popular music that they hear, what tools they bring to their listening engagements, and to what degree their discussions surrounding that music exhibit elements of criticality and agency. The author draws on a two-year action research study in a New York City public elementary school and scholarship in the fields of music education, literacy theory, and cultural studies. The research site was envisioned as a democratic space in which sharing, inquiry, and negotiation informed an emergent sense of pedagogy. On a weekly basis, over the course of two school years, participants (age 9 – 11) shared their favorite popular songs and facilitated dialogues around the meanings and themes of the songs. The children explored the intersections of popular music and identity, representation, and social inequity, among other themes. Participants composed original rap songs as an extension to the process of critical listening and inquiry.

Findings reveal that active popular music listening and digital composing reveal indigenous musical literacies of the urban elementary music student that may go unrecognized in the current landscape of music education. Further, findings reveal that critical popular music listening and composing constitute a forum for children’s navigations of their unique socio-cultural world and provides them with an opportunity to talk with and back to the narratives of popular culture (Jenkins, 2006; Kinney, 2012). The author argues that by building on students’ indigenous musical literacies and inviting critical engagements with popular music into the classroom, general music educators can facilitate critical and transformative experiences for their students, aid them on their path to critical citizenship, and develop a type of lifelong critical music literacy that is uniquely contemporary – the ability to read and write our world through music.

**Inservice and Preservice Teacher Observations of Technology Use in Music Classrooms**

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Few things have changed as much over the past decade as the expectation for, and presence of, technology in classrooms. Teachers, parents, and communities are assumed to embrace the use of technology in schools, but may not always agree as to the necessity and effectiveness of implementing strategies and use of devices based on administrative and agency mandates.

Two groups provided responses about their observations in actual classrooms; undergraduate music education majors (n=36), and inservice general music teachers (n=34). The undergraduates indicated (open response) specific examples of perceived uses of technology in public school classrooms in which they had just completed observations, while the inservice teachers responded to a series of questions (survey) regarding the effectiveness of computer-based strategies. The majority of student described applications were projection and amplification devices, with keyboard labs cited as present in a large percentage of classrooms, although none were described as being in use. The only specific example of software applications cited were nonspecific instances of SmartMusic being available (although again, not in use) in the classroom. Inservice teachers responded to a questionnaire, and rated statements describing 1) pedagogical topics (processes, musical concepts, listening, singing, musical response, etc.), 2) sociological topics (power of shared group experiences, communication of values through music, enjoyable engagement, exploring cultural norms, etc), and 3) psychological and professional perceptions (school expectation mandates for use of technology, stress levels as a result of computer use, effects on isolation and professional respect, etc.) in regard to current school use of technology. Open response comments were also collected regarding personal and predictive experiences in their professional roles. Initial analyses indicate high response and agreement regarding expectations in school environments (m = 4.56, sd =.71), with lowest regard for use in developing emotional response to music (m = 1.89, sd =.95). Performing experiences were also rated low (m = 2.15) with a range of 1-5 on all topics. Tablets, laptops, lab work stations, and frictionless social media may represent new ways of stimulating student interest in music, but actual classroom implementation may be less frequent than commonly believed. An alternative view held by some music teachers suggests continuing consideration of the slower reflective developmental processes students deserve and may come to appreciate later.

**Impact of Scheduling on Elementary Music Programs: Teacher Perceptions of Schedule Satisfaction, Student Achievement, and Job Satisfaction/Emotional Health**

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The purpose of this research was to investigate the impact of scheduling on elementary music programs, specifically exploring teacher perceptions of satisfaction with their current schedules (frequency/duration of class sessions), student achievement, and job satisfaction/emotional health. A review of related literature revealed that while there is some extant research regarding scheduling for music classes and the emotional health of regular and music teachers, there was limited research about elementary music scheduling, none of which also investigated the subsequent emotional health of music teachers and/or student achievement as a result. A survey containing a combination of Likert scale items and open-ended questions was sent to elementary music teachers in the Oneida, Herkimer, and Otsego Counties in New York State, with a few additional teachers contacted from Delaware, Madison, and St. Lawrence Counties.

Through researcher-generated analysis of the responses from the participants (N = 27), it was determined that there was a relationship between student learning and satisfaction with schedule, (*r = 0.67).* From the results, the researcher was able to make the assumption that teachers with fewer sessions and/or fewer minutes per week/cycle are less satisfied with their schedules than those with more sessions and/or more minutes per week/cycle. The results imply that teachers perceive the quality of student learning to be impacted positively when there is more instructional time and negatively when there is less instructional time. However, the quantitative results of this study are not strong enough to support that teachers with dissatisfying schedules are also in poor emotional health; there was no significant statistical relationship between satisfaction with schedule and job satisfaction/overall health *(r = .03).* Despite the statistical results, qualitative responses from teachers provided information to the contrary. Limitations of the study and implications/recommendations for further research are also included.

**Breaking the Sound of Silence: A Teacher Conversation Group**

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Music teachers are often isolated due to the small number of music educators in any given school building. They are infrequently afforded valuable time for professional development and collaboration. Acknowledging the need for early career teachers to engage in supportive, meaningful professional development, we provided five novice music teachers, each with fewer than three years of teaching experience, with an opportunity to participate in a teacher conversation group (a unique collaborative and supportive forum for dialogue) to discuss topics of interest and importance to them. Teachers participated in six, hour-long meetings during which we were researcher-facilitators: present to encourage conversation, not participate. Topics for conversation were identified and prioritized through online surveys; participants completed a final survey wherein they provided feedback on their experiences.

Conversations were video recorded and transcribed verbatim. We coded transcripts for emergent themes and analyzed the online surveys for trends. Credibility was established through member checks and the verification of themes through video recordings.

The primary theme of Navigating Relationships with circuitous sub-themes of Tension and Grappling arose from the analysis. Throughout the conversations, teachers discussed navigating relationships with administrators and colleagues. They talked about tensions that arose from these relationships: lack of resources and time, ineffective mentors, structuring curriculum, and justification of music as a viable subject. The teachers discussed grappling with these tensions and working through them in their individual school settings with savviness and diplomacy. Results from the final survey indicated that the music teachers valued interacting with each other in a safe environment, while receiving constructive feedback from one another. The teachers valued the camaraderie and expressed interest in meeting again. The experiences shared in the teacher conversation group highlight the need for meaningful, community-based interactions among music educators, providing space for teachers to become agents of their own professional development.

**Effects of Chinese Pop Music Selection on Students' Music Familiarity and Preference for Its Traditional Version**

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Pop music is the most preferred and familiar music genre for many young people

(Hargreaves & North, 1997; May, 1985; Mills, 2000; Stewart, 1984). In contrast, world

musics are less preferred by young people (Leblanc, 1979). Additionally, personality can

affect preference for music (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). The purpose of this study was to

investigate effects of Chinese pop music on students’ familiarity and preference for its

traditional version. Research questions that guided this study are as follows: (a) is there a

difference in students’ familiarity with and preference for traditional versions of Chinese folk

songs based on their exposure to pop version of Chinese folk songs? (b) is there a relationship

between students’ familiarity with and preference for Chinese folk songs (traditional and/or

pop versions) based on personality? and (c) what are students’ open-ended reasons for

preference decisions and are they influenced by exposure to pop music versions of traditional

Chinese folk music?

The participants were students (ages 18-30) recruited from two intact undergraduate

classes at a university in the northeastern United States. Participants completed pretest,

treatments, and posttest within four months. In the first week, the participants completed a

pretest (personality test and music listening preference test). Students were then divided

randomly into either a Chinese pop music treatment group or a traditional Chinese music

treatment group. Then, participants attended six weekly treatments, during which they listened to various music examples. Depending on the treatment group, the students heard either the traditional version of the example or a pop music version of the example. During each treatment period, the researcher provided background information such as characteristics of musical elements and main melody line while referring participants to clips of the recorded music example. The researcher also used engaged and attentive listening strategies such as clapping, moving, humming along to the music, and discussion to deepen the participants’ experience with the music (Campbell, 2005). Following the treatment period, the researcher administered a posttest for listening familiarity and preference. As the study is in progress, results are forthcoming.

**Identity Development among Adolescent Males Enrolled in a**

**Middle School General Music Program**

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The purpose of this study was to better understand the musical engagement of adolescent males enrolled in a general music class in order to learn what factors of the classroom environment adolescent males perceive as impactful in the development of their musical identities (MacDonald, Marshall, & Miell, 2002). Secondly, because researchers have posited that informal music contexts are pivotal in the development of adolescent identity and that connections can be drawn between formal and informal settings (Green, 2008; Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003), I wanted to learn what role, if any, in-class connections to students’ informal musical contexts might play in the engagement of their musical identities.

The following research questions were explored: In what ways, if any, are adolescent males’ musical identities engaged in the general music classroom? What role, if any, do in-class connections to informal contexts play in this engagement? Musical identities were understood through a social psychological perspective encompassing identities in musicand music in identities: the socio-cultural musical roles individuals fill and the ways in which music serves other, non-musical aspects of an individual’s identity.

An all-male school in the Midwest United States served as the research site. Participants were adolescent males, ages 11 through 14, enrolled in a compulsory general music program. I collected data via questionnaire, focus group interview, individual interviews, video reflections, researcher memos, and artifacts.

Four factors emerged as key in the engagement of participants’ musical identities in the music classroom: 1) freedom in decision-making, 2) belonging to the classroom community, 3) distinction among peers, and 4) exposure to the other. Participants reported they could more fully engage their musical identities when each of these factors were present in the classroom, with the exception of distinction, which at times helped and at times hindered the expression of particular self-concepts. In-class connections to informal contexts were revealed in the roles of both freedom and exposure to the other in students’ engagement of musical identities. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings as they relate to teaching, program advocacy, and recommendations for future research.