

Desert Skies Symposium on Research in Music Education 2017 Abstracts

PAPER SESSION 3

Music Program Alumni's Perceptions of Professional Skills, Abilities, and Job Satisfaction: A Secondary Analysis of the 2011, 2012, and 2013 Strategic National Arts Alumni Project

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Two of the most common career paths for music program graduates are to become private studio teachers or teachers within the public schools. Despite the apparent dissimilarity between typical K-12 and studio teaching contexts, there has been increasing discussion about pedagogical skills and proficiencies relevant to both settings. Researchers have explored the skills perceived as useful in K-12 music teaching (Davis, 2006; Kelly, 2010; Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs, 2010; Saunders & Baker, 1991), whereas others have explored K-12 music teachers' perceived preparedness to teach (Conway, 2002; DeLorenzo, 1992; Fredrickson & Neill, 2004; Housego, 1990; Krueger, 2001; MacLeod & Walter, 2011; Taylor, 1970; Thompson, 1970). For studio teachers, there have been no studies that specifically address perceptions of the skills useful for studio teaching and only a few studies on preparedness to teach (Fredrickson, Geringer, & Pope, 2013). In addition, there are no studies that have systematically comparing pre-service K-12 and studio teachers to discern whether there are similarities between their professional needs.

While it is likely that each group has some unique needs, it is at least as likely that some principles of teacher preparation apply to both pre-service K-12 and studio teachers. For example, researchers have recommended that studio teachers might benefit from educational experiences that are already standard in traditional teacher education programs such as increased pedagogy coursework or internship experiences akin to student teaching (Duke & Simmons, 2006; Fredrickson, Geringer, & Pope, 2013; Fredrickson 2007; Rickels, Councill, Fredrickson, Hairston, Porter, & Schmidt, 2010; Villarreal, 2010).

The purpose of this study was to compare music studio teachers' (n = 622) and K-12 music teachers' (n = 976) perceptions of the degree to which their postsecondary education helped them develop selected professional skills and abilities, perceptions of how important those same selected skills and abilities are for teaching, and job satisfaction. Data for this study were from the 2011, 2012, and 2013 administrations of the multi-institutional online alumni survey conducted by the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP). Likert-type questions were subject to Chi Square and descriptive analyses. An open response item, "Is there anything that [INSTITUTION] could have done better to prepare you for further education or for your career? Please describe" was also coded and analyzed.

The majority of participants indicated that the following skills were very important to their current work: relationship building, leadership skills, project management, persuasive speaking, clear writing, creative thinking, taking feedback,

broad knowledge and education, and critical thinking. However, of these skills, fewer than 50% of all respondents felt their institutions had helped them very much to develop project management, persuasive speaking, clear writing, and critical thinking skills. The most substantial differences between the groups occurred on financial, business management, and entrepreneurial skills, indicating that studio teachers perceive these skills as very important to their work. Regarding job satisfaction, studio teachers reported being less satisfied with their job security but more satisfied with work-life balance than K-12 teachers.

Regarding discrepancies between developed skills and necessary skills, virtually all studio and K-12 teachers said teaching skills were very important to their work; substantially fewer said their institutions helped them very much to develop those skills. A large percentage of both studio and K-12 teachers felt their degrees did not at all prepare them with financial and business management skills, though the majority of studio teachers indicated these skills to be very important to their work. A substantial percentage of the teachers felt that their institutions prepared them very little or not at all in terms of technological skills, while the majority of K-12 teachers said they were very important to their work. For studio teachers, there was a gap between the importance of entrepreneurial skills for their work and the development of those skills in university training.

Regarding the open response question, the following categories were identified: business or administrative skills, networking, practical training, pedagogy training, advising, technology skills, additional coursework, and teaching experiences. Some participants made specific recommendations for additional coursework they felt would have been of benefit to them. In particular, requests for teaching experience within the degree program were prevalent among both K-12 and studio teachers' open-ended comments. K-12 teachers expressed a need for additional pre-student teaching experience or full-year student teaching placements, whereas studio teachers mentioned a need for internships or structured teaching experiences within pedagogy classes.

The results of the present study indicate significant disparities between the skills these teachers perceive themselves to have developed in their education, and the actual skills they need to teach. The findings also suggest a number of possible directions for practice, including courses in business, finance, networking, administration, entrepreneurship, and more supervised teaching experiences for both K-12 and studio teachers, which may help to prepare students with some of the skills essential for a music teaching career.

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Undergraduate Band Students' Perceptions of Previous High School Student Leadership Experiences

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Student leadership programs are prevalent in secondary school music programs (Koenig, 2011) though little research has examined the outcomes of such programs. Both Westlake (2015) and Bialek and Lloyd (1998) studied the outcomes of student leadership experiences outside of music, finding that participants developed leadership, communication, and presentation skills. Two related studies on high school students auditioning into music education degree programs found that many candidates had some type of previous teaching or leadership experience (Rickels et al., 2010, 2013). Research connecting these topics is needed to better explain the benefits of leadership activities for high school directors and to provide guidance for music teacher trainers in selecting students and creating curricula.

The study examined undergraduate instrumental music majors' perceptions of their own high school band leadership experiences. Specific research questions were: (1) To what extent did instrumental music education and non-music education majors participate in various student leadership roles? (2) To what extent do college music majors feel that their high school student leadership experiences were positive? (3) To what extent did high school leadership experiences influence students' decisions to continue studying music at the collegiate level? and (4) What was the most "valuable" lesson they learned from that experience that they have carried forward?

Method

Participants ($N = 74$) were undergraduate instrumentalists enrolled in a public university's large concert band. The members of this ensemble were diverse in background having come from different high schools across the United States, as well as diverse in programs of study (Music Education, $n = 36$; Music Performance, $n = 21$; Bachelor of Arts in Music, $n = 12$; others/double majors, $n = 5$). After one demographic item asking participants to indicate their specific music major(s), the researcher-developed survey included four items to address the study's research questions. The first asked participants to select from a list of band student leadership positions all roles they had served in during high school. The list was based on Koenig's student leadership survey (2011) and elaborated based on the researcher's previous experience. The second and third questions asked respondents to rate how "positive" and how "influential" they considered their previous student leadership experiences on a 7-point Likert-type scale anchored with "not positive/influential" and "very positive/influential". The final question was open-ended and asked participants to recount what was their biggest "takeaway" or "lesson" from their student leadership experience. These responses were read by the researcher and a classification system was devised to sort the responses based on content.

The researcher administered the survey to the group en masse at the end of one of their regular rehearsals. Completion of the survey took less than five minutes and was voluntary. Statistical analyses for significance were conducted by dividing the participants into two groups: music education students and non-music education students.

Responses of participants who were double majors, thus in multiple categories, were discarded.

Results

Results indicated that music education majors were at least twice as likely to have served in very visible teaching positions, such as drum major or concert-band student conductor (41.7% and 36.1% of responses respectively), than non-music education students (18.2% and 9.1% respectively). However, the role of section leader, which realistically included some teaching, was equally prevalent in both groups. Secondly, music education students considered their past student leadership experiences to have been more positive overall ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 1.01$) and more influential in choosing collegiate music study ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.58$) than their non-music education peers ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 1.54$ and $M = 4.58$, $SD = 2.21$). Independent t-tests found a significant difference between the two groups on both questions ($t(65) = -2.2$, $p < 0.05$, $d = 0.62$ and $t(65) = -2.24$, $p < 0.05$, $d = 0.77$). Finally, the written comments describing participants' biggest "takeaways" were coded into five categories: communications and social skills, leadership skills, teaching and musical skills, self-realizations, and other or unrelated. The majority of the comments from both groups (68.3%) discussed the acquisition of both leadership skills and communication/social skills.

Discussion

Taken altogether, the data and written comments suggested that high school band leadership experiences had lasting effects on participating students, both influencing future study in music as well as teaching valuable skills. Consequently, music educators must take care to develop student leadership experiences that positively benefit student's development as both leaders and musicians. Additionally, the short-answer responses collected suggested that band leadership experiences teach students many of the skills and attributes that research has demonstrated are characteristics of effective teachers (Gordon & Hamann, 2001; Rohwer & Henry, 2004; Teachout, 1997). Future research could examine this connection further to aid music teacher trainers best identify potential music education students and to improve current music education curricula.

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Power-Risk-Reward: Dominant Themes in Top 40 Music

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The purpose of this study was to identify themes present in the Top 40 songs from Billboard's 2006-2015 "End Year Hot 100" list (N=400) using Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) software. Themes were sorted from most prevalent to least prevalent by year to identify the rate at which concepts are sold to our students. A content analysis of lyrics using LIWC software revealed high rates of swearing (46%), ingestion of drugs or alcohol (43%), sexual themes (32.25%), or a combination of all three (17.5%) in the lyrics studied. Further analysis showed the six strongest themes present in this sample were (1) power seeking, (2) reward seeking, (3) references to the body, (4) concerns of leisure, (5) motivation to achieve, and (6) risk taking, portrayed with a positive valence in 63% of the songs.

Demographic data showed the performers of these songs to be overwhelmingly male (56.75%), compared to female (27.75%) and mixed-gender groups (15.5%). As a growing number of music educators and scholars are calling for the inclusion of popular music in the classroom, in what ways might these data influence how and what we teach? Popular music may contain mature themes ill-suited for student learning. These findings suggest the need for music educators to be mindful of "Do No Harm" principles when considering themes both overt and covert in the popular music they bring to the classroom.

Influences Upon Career Pathways of Hispanic Music Majors

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For young people embarking on their undergraduate education, choice of a major may be the most important decision they make. A student may choose a particular major for a number of reasons, such as perceived ability (Riza & Heller, 2015) as well as personality characteristics and family support (Astin, 1993). For Hispanic students, influences such as language and culture may also play a large role in students' post-secondary choices (Tornatsky, Cutler, & Lee, 2002). A student's choice of a major in liberal arts fields such as music and education, for example, may have different influences than a choice of a science or business major.

In this study, we examine the career pathways of predominantly bilingual Hispanic music majors. According to previous research, music majors report being influenced by intrinsic enjoyment of music (Parks & Jones, 2011; 2012), as well as role models and family influences (Rickels et al., 2010). Perceived musical ability might also contribute to intrinsic motivation for music majors (Riza & Heller, 2015). Hispanic students are increasing their presence in American institutions of higher education, but many fail to graduate (Fry, 2002). Therefore, a need develops to investigate the unique experiences of these students in order to better serve them. Some distinguishing characteristics of Hispanic students include a tendency toward religiosity, particularly Catholicism, (Segal & Sosa, 1983) as well as a strong connection to family and community (Lorenzo, et al, 2012). Music has traditionally been a strong part of Hispanic culture, but research into specific experiences of Hispanic music majors is only at the beginning stages. In the present study, we aimed to investigate Latinx students who choose music as a major at an American university, to begin to determine the role of cultural influences (both American and Mexican) on these students' career outlooks.

The purpose of this study is to examine elements of influence upon Hispanic, mostly bilingual music majors, with regard to their career choices and outlooks.

Specifically, we seek to answer the following questions:

1. How does student's language and cultural background relate to their perceived career prospects?
2. How does religiosity relate to career self-efficacy?
3. What other factors influence Hispanic students' choice of music as a career?

Method

Participants

The present study included 64 (28 female, 36 male) music majors, currently attending a large Hispanic-serving institution, located in South Texas. Most were upperclassmen (27 juniors, and 21 seniors), though freshmen (4) and sophomores (12) were included. All (100%) self-identified as Hispanic. Over 84% of these students reported that they were bilingual in English and Spanish.

Design and Measures

To discover the influences upon the career pathways of the Music students, an online survey was created and distributed using the survey software Qualtrics. Music and Psychology students were recruited to complete the survey and were offered incentives

such as extra credit and recital lab credit (for music majors). Survey responses were analyzed to determine the nature of relationship(s) among students' levels of acculturation and career goals.

Several measures were used in the survey, relating to students' cultural behavior, career self-efficacy, extrinsic and intrinsic work values, motivation, and social bonding. Although data analysis is currently ongoing, one measure used in which preliminary data has been analyzed is the Mexican Orientation Scale (MOS), a 17 item subscale of the Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans II by Cuellar et al. (1995). The MOS was used to assess the participants' level of acculturation, defined as the process by which individuals of different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact and experience subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Cuellar, et al, 1995). This 5-point scale taps the multidimensional aspects of the acculturation process, including Latino enculturation (the degree to which a person adheres to their own original culture [Aguayo, et al, 2011]), familiarity with American culture, Spanish language preference, and both English and Spanish proficiency. The scale has a test-retest reliability of .96 and a validity coefficient of .89.

The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale- Short Form (CDMSE-SF; Betz & Luzzo, 1996) and the Career Self-Efficacy Sources Scale (CSESS; Nasta, 2007) were used to assess students' confidence that they could successfully complete career tasks. The internal consistency reliability of the CDMSE-SF ranged from .73 (Self-Appraisal) to .83 (Goal Selection) for the 5-item subscales and yielded an alpha of .94 for the 25-item total score. The CSESS correlated significantly and positively with the CDMSE-SF, ranging from .93 (Career Self-efficacy) to .58 (Vicarious learning).

Results

Preliminary analyses compared females and males on sociodemographic variables (e.g., self-reported bilingualism, income), classification, and all measures of career prospects. There were no significant gender effects.

The majority of our student sample self-reported as bilingual (77%). Given this high percentage, it was of interest to compare bilinguals to monolinguals on measures of career prospects. There was no significant difference among bilinguals and monolinguals on most measures of career prospects; however, on the Career Self-Efficacy measure (e.g., items included, "I see other students like me get good jobs after college.") bilingual students reported a significantly higher frequency of perceived career success, as compared to monolinguals, $t(62) = 2.71, p < .05$. Importantly, given the low sample size, these analyses were likely underpowered thus masking further findings favoring bilinguals on perceptions of job marketability.

Regarding cultural group classification, a majority of students were classified as more acculturated (integrated into the American culture), as compared to enculturated (still maintaining traditional Mexican culture). Specifically, most fell into three categories: intermediate (34.4%), high bicultural (26.6%), and integrated (26.6%). Thus, only very few were classified as traditional (1.6%) and low bicultural (10.9%). Findings indicated that acculturation was positively and significantly related to Career Self-efficacy, $r(64) = .27$, and Jobs, $r(64) = .30, p < .05$.

Student's frequency of religious practices was positively and significantly associated with their Self-efficacy $r(64) = .28$ and Career Motivations $r(64) = .34, ps < .05$.

Further results will be discussed regarding the relationship between the selection of major and students' self-identity, how being raised in a Hispanic culture may affect this decision, and implications for Hispanic students pursuing careers in music, psychology, or other Arts and Humanities fields.

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Social Constructionism in the Middle School Chorus: A Collaborative Approach

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“Social constructionism insists we take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world, including ourselves” (Burr, 2003, p. 2).

Middle school programs occupy a unique place in choral music education. This study builds upon and makes a unique contribution to the body of literature in choral music education by introducing critical participatory action research into the social ecology (Shotter, 1993) of the middle school choral classroom during the “regular” school day with a non-select choral ensemble. In order to answer the research questions guiding the study, I created a constructionist learning environment, applying domains of relevance set forth by Gergen (2001), and examined how this model of practice impacted the pedagogical practices of 19 sixth grade chorus students and their chorus teacher over the period of one semester.

The purpose of the study—conducted *with* students rather than *on* them—was to discover and co-create collaborative and socially relevant practices in the sixth grade chorus so that I might better meet the needs and interests of my middle school choral students. I wanted to know how constructionism, a theory about knowledge and learning, informed pedagogical and social practices in the sixth choral ensemble. To accomplish this, I reconceptualized my pedagogical practices and made organizational changes. I then used critical participatory action research strategies to “critically” examine the discourse, i.e., social and institutional structures, surrounding constructionist approaches to middle school choral education.

Through the lens of constructionist epistemology and the theoretical perspective of critical inquiry my critical participatory action research study examined ways that social constructionism informs pedagogical practices in music education in general and brings a new paradigm to the middle school choral ensemble in particular. I chose this framework because constructionist epistemology, critical inquiry, and critical participatory action research share common themes and purposes (Crotty, 1998). Constructionists believe that truth and meaning are created by persons’ interactions with the world and that meaning is socially constructed, not discovered. Critical inquiry keeps the spotlight on socially constructed power relationships to expose hegemony and injustice. Critical participatory action research complements this framework because its purpose is to generate knowledge that is valid and vital for the well being of learners, and for promoting social change (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; Mills, 2010). These ideas framed my efforts and in turn, those of the participants as we came together for the purpose of creating a learning environment that was collaborative and socially relevant to teaching and learning in the middle school chorus.

Scholars have developed a broad range of definitions and applications for constructionist learning theories. My own pedagogical leanings—that learning is most effective when as part of an activity the learner constructs a meaningful product (Sabelli, 2008)—are derivative of constructionist learning theories espoused by Seymour Papert (1980, 1991). Papert’s theories are distinctive in that they are more situated and

pragmatic than Piaget’s constructivism or Vygotsky’s socio-constructivism (Ackerman, 2001). This is important because constructionism is as diverse as the people who use it, making the constructionist pedagogical landscape vexed and messy (Perkins, 1999). Although instructional approaches vary, most constructionist learning environments are active, creative, and characterized by a social approach (Phillips, 1995). These theoretical interpretations and methodological implications were critical considerations when designing this study.

Critical participatory action research allows educators to engage in the immediate and continuing betterment of practice rather than merely being informed about practice (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). All participants collected evidence in the form of video recordings, interviews, journals and portfolios. All evidence was considered in light of the changes that occurred—individually and collectively—in pedagogical and organizational practices and in regard to the original research questions. In order to discern collaborative and socially relevant pedagogical practices specific to sixth grade choral music education, I reflected on what the participants thought about our changes in pedagogical practices, and how participants reacted when pedagogical changes were put into place. In addition, I accounted for ways that individual actions, understandings, and relationships with others are part of—and help to construct—the cultural-discursive arrangements that enable and constrain our collective practices (p. 76).

When narrating our story, I attempted to represent the divergent perspectives of all participants in a manner that may be helpful and credible, rather than indisputable. I chose this approach because it demonstrates the working out of constructionist pedagogies that emerged, and it reveals the “in the field” reflection that took place during the study. This report illuminates ways that constructionist principles might be used to create a collaborative model of middle school choral music education and the pedagogical and social practices that emerge when beginning sixth grade students and their chorus teacher share responsibility for teaching and learning.

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