

Desert Skies Symposium on Research in Music Education

2017 Abstracts

PAPER SESSION 9

Embodied Histories of Music

Isaac Bickmore, Arizona State University

What do we mean when we say “The History of Rock n’ Roll?” Is there only one story? In this paper we will examine how the history of an idea or concept may have “various fields of constitution and validity” (Michel Foucault, 1972, p. 4), and one of those fields is us. In other words, people embody histories of all kinds.

The first time I met Billy Cioffi was on the first day of a graduate-level introduction to ethnomusicology class. The way I remember it, we were sitting in a circle taking turns introducing ourselves in counterclockwise order. I began to introduce myself in the usual way, “My name is Isaac Bickmore, I am getting my PhD in music education, I taught kindergarten through 8th grade general music, and I also ran a 7th and 8th grade rock n’ roll history choir.” Almost before I could finish the sentence, Billy interrupted me, “Rock n’ roll history? Music teachers talk about rock n’ roll history. I am the history of rock n’ roll.”

It was such a bold claim with so much wrapped up in it I could hardly decide where to start unpacking it. The matter of a person being the embodiment of the history of an idea or concepts, the question of the definition of rock n’ roll, the matter of how a person could justify such a claim, the matter of deciding what we mean when we say history. If Billy is the history of rock n’ roll, is he the history of rock n’ roll, or is he one of many histories? If Billy embodies a history of rock n’ roll, does that mean that others can/do as well? Do I embody a history of rock n’ roll? Do you? Do we all?

What does Billy’s claim mean for the college-level rock n’ roll history course so many people have attended and continue to sign up for? My guess is they won’t hear about Billy. I didn’t hear about Billy when I took the class at the University of Utah. Billy wasn’t in the book (Stuessy and Lipscomb, 2013). If Billy isn’t in the books and the professors who teach the classes don’t know about him, what does that say about Billy’s claim? Maybe we are looking at the problem the wrong way.

Foucault summarizes important ideas from the work of his mentor Georges Canguilhem. The history of a concept is not wholly and entirely that of its progressive refinement, its continuously increasing rationality, its abstraction gradient, but that of its various fields of constitution and validity, that of its successive rules of use, that of the many theoretical contexts in which it developed and matured (Foucault, 1972, p. 4). Two fascinating ideas about history found within this statement are worth noting. The history of a concept is not just its progressive refinement or continuously increasing rationality. A history can be comprised of various fields of constitution and validity, successive rules of use, and many theoretical contexts. Using these two ideas to examine Billy’s claim and other forms of rock n’ roll history may give us a better understanding of how Billy is indeed an embodied history of rock n’ roll and how we may be as well.

In this paper we will examine Billy's claim and the questions it raises, specifically how we might embody our own personal histories of popular music. We will examine how the idea of an embodied history of popular music might play out in a general music classroom. If we envision and interact with the people in our classrooms as individual members of an interconnected ecosystem of personally embodied histories of music, how might our conceptions and practice of general music change or grow? How might we develop and facilitate interactive projects and activities that honor personally embodied histories of music?

"Everybody's got a beat": Student perceptions regarding project-based learning in a music technology classroom

Dennis Giotta, Southeast Local Schools (Apple Creek, OH)

The purpose of this collective case study was to examine the learning experiences of high school students enrolled in a music technology course. Music technology is an open-ended and evolving field. Compared with traditional music ensembles, this relatively new music offering varies greatly considering the educational objectives and curricular goals. Music technology classes in the United States cover a broad range of musical concepts (e.g., music production, sound synthesis, electronic music composition). In the process of designing and introducing a new music course, educators might benefit from the knowledge of previously established models. Thus, music educators should identify the advantages and dilemmas encountered in those existing classes and contemplate the curricular goals that they hope to impart.

This research provides insight to interactions that student participants had with one another in the music technology program while utilizing a variety of hardware and software tools. The research questions guiding this study were the following: 1. How do the students draw on prior experiences with technology in the music technology classroom? 2. How do students exhibit agency in the development of their musical skills through a project-based learning environment? 3. What are students' perceptions regarding the longevity of musical skills learned in the music technology classroom?

There are two broad goals related to the research questions that were used in this study. First, this research offers several accounts of students' opinions of their experiences in the music technology program. Their voices might help to widen the lens with which educators and researchers conceptualize the underpinnings of school music technology courses. Second, it is important to gain an awareness of students' ownership of the materials learned in class and how students' musical independence might extend beyond school. Students were encouraged to describe the construction of relationships between prior knowledge with those skills being learned.

This research study is concerned with secondary school students' self-guided learning experiences as they relate prior technology experiences to current project-based assignments in the setting of their Technology-Based Music Class and the extent to which they believe those skills might last beyond school. Students involved in music technology courses typically experience opportunities to work autonomously in project-

based learning scenarios. As agents of their own learning, these students tend to internalize many aspects of musical knowledge as it relates to their lives. Students who experience music in these classes have opportunities to make connections to how they use that information beyond school because their learning process is more personalized.

This study provides an examination of student perspectives in a high school music technology program, which is located in a large metropolitan area in Ohio. The program offers students opportunities to compose, record, and perform music using the same tools that many professionals use, such as Ableton Live. To explore the variety of musical experiences of students involved in a nontraditional music program this study displays the music technology program as a collective case. The participants were comprised of students enrolled in one of two levels (Level 1 and Level 2, respectively) of music technology courses offered at the high school. Students were invited to share their perceptions related to their learning experiences throughout their involvement in the music technology course. Focused on the unique perspectives of eight students, data were generated through interviews, observations, student journals, audiovisual materials, and field notes. Within-case and cross-case analysis of the data established the themes of (a) building on technological experiences, (b) prior music knowledge, (c) approval of project-based learning, (d) musical dreams for the future.

The findings from the study indicated that students differed on their feelings regarding the importance of drawing on prior musical and technological knowledge to complete composition assignments. They were, however, favorable toward working autonomously in a project-based learning environment. Students' experiences in the music technology class gave them the confidence and skills required to work toward their musical pursuits in the future, whether those pursuits were recreational or related to career aspirations. In order to provide a greater understanding of these characteristics, several implications can be made for extending the boundaries of music pedagogy, reconceptualizing curricula, and designing opportunities for nontraditional music students. Based on the findings of this study, music educators might consider implications for teaching and learning music, revising curricula, and creating new music offerings.

Scholastic Steel Bands in the United States: A Comprehensive Profile

Adam Grisé, University of Maryland

While extensive music educational research has been devoted to traditional ensembles, very little attention has been focused on emerging ensembles such as steel band. Over the past 40 years, steel bands have become increasingly common in school, collegiate, and community settings in the United States. This study used director survey data and national datasets to construct a comprehensive profile of scholastic steel bands in the United States, outlining director and student population information as well as program and ensemble characteristics.

Population studies within music education over the past several years have revealed troubling trends as music education at all levels fails to accurately represent our

diverse society (Elpus & Abril, 2011; Stewart, 1991; Gardner, 2010; Kelly, 2016; Hewitt & Thompson, 2006; Elpus, 2015). Although there have been a handful of steel band population surveys (O'Connor, 1981; Remy, 1990; Svaline, 1995; Haskett, 2012, 2014) and ethnographic program examinations (Tiffe, 2006; McCalman, 2003; Haskett, 2009; Resch, 2010) in the past 35 years, there is yet to emerge a published study which delves to the level of student demographics. Additionally, the steel band, as a still-evolving school ensemble format requires accurate and detailed information on instrumentation trends, repertoire sources, and program structure in order to inform educational decisions, curricular development, and overall musical progress within the field.

The purpose of this study was to construct a comprehensive profile of scholastic steel bands in this country, drawing together director-reported data on student demographics; program structure, practices, and instrumentation; and director demographics. With an expanded understanding of the composition and situation of American school steel bands, this study may inform discussions around this non-traditional ensemble and diversity—both in population and approach—in music education.

Steel band directors were identified from a publicly available database and recruited by email to complete an online questionnaire covering student, director, and program information. Respondents from 220 K-12, collegiate, and community steel band programs from across 41 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands were included in the study. With programs ranging in size from five to three hundred students, including curricular programs, after school ensembles, and community organized activities, this study sheds light on the breadth and range of steel band programs currently active. From this data set, I was able to construct a profile of the current trends in scholastic steel bands in the United States.

While these data confirm previous findings of demographic uniformity among steel band directors (Haskett, 2014), the study points to generally diverse student populations at the K-12 level beyond broader music education enrollment trends. Using director-reported student racial demographic information in conjunction with school data available from the National Center for Education Statistics, this study showed that two thirds of K-12 steel band programs were racially representative of their school populations. In light of recent research showing a general lack of racial diversity within K-12 music education (Elpus & Abril, 2011), these findings may point to emerging ensembles, such as steel band, as attractive ensemble options for a diverse range of students.

Among the findings at the program level were some interesting trends in repertoire sources. Over 80% of directors reported composing or arranging music for their ensembles, with close to half of those reporting this as their primary means of acquiring new repertoire. Over 40% of directors reported using student compositions and arrangements in their programs. The autogenous approach to repertoire underscores a unique curricular approach common to steel bands. This personalization factor may lead to an overall more responsive music classroom than in ensembles where custom selected and arranged repertoire is not as common.

Much of the data obtained in this study was founded on prior research in the field and can therefore provide perspective on how American steel bands have evolved over the past 40 years. Some of these findings, however, represent new data points upon which

future comparisons can and should be made. This information may not only serve those working within the field of steel band in the United States, but inform other educators, administrators, policy makers, and stakeholders on the populations involved in this still very new but growing art form. Through investigating the current situation and population of scholastic steel bands in particular, this study has shown that, at least at the K-12 level, a diverse musical offering can translate into diverse student participation. Further research at the program or ensemble level may reveal why and how steel band has managed to overcome some of music education's diversity deficits.

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High School Students Perceptions of Non-Traditional Music Classes

**Steven Kelly, Florida State University
Kenna Veronee, Florida State University**

American society has constantly debated the role and purpose of education. Discussions have frequently related to educational quality involving curricular offerings (Spring, 2006). Research has indicated that a school's overall quality is frequently influenced by a curricular emphasis in the arts (Austin, 1997; Kelly & Heath, 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003; Woodford, 2005). A diverse arts curriculum has been shown to correlate with an increase in enrollment in the arts courses (Kelly & Heath, 2014). However, Abril and Gault (2006, 2008) stated that an expansion of arts curricula has not occurred. An examination of curricular diversity among arts courses, and value that students might have toward non-traditional music classes, may contribute to a better awareness of music's potential contribution to student success.

The purpose of this paper was to investigate high school music students' perceptions of non-traditional music classes. The specific questions were (1) What non-traditional music courses were offered at participants' schools; (2) What was the participants' perceived value of specific non-traditional music courses; and (3) In which non-traditional music courses would participants enroll if it was offered at their schools.

Method

Participants were high school choral, band, and orchestra students attending a large university-based summer music camp in the southeastern United States. Students represented diverse musical abilities due to their representation of multiple geographic locations and potential diverse cultural and musical backgrounds.

A survey was constructed focusing on 29 different non-traditional music courses. The survey consisted of three questions. Question One asked participants to circle each course, from the 29 listed courses, that was offered at their school. Question Two utilized an eight point Likert-type scale where participants were asked to rate each of the 29 courses from 1 = No Value to 8 = Great Value regarding their perceptions of how musically valuable each course might be. Question Three asked participants to indicate YES or NO if they would enroll in each of the 29 courses, if those courses were offered at their school.

Results

A total of 344 individuals completed the survey (Chorus = 87, Band = 171, Orchestra = 86). To achieve equal sample sizes for each group, 86 participants from each area, Chorus, Band, and Orchestra, were randomly selected resulting in an end sample total of 258. The courses reported being offered most frequently were Advanced Placement Music Theory (61.63%), Music Theater (58.14%), and Piano/Keyboard

(45.35%). Participants gave the highest values to Music Theory ($M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.97$), Advanced Placement Music Theory ($M = 6.36$, $SD = 2.02$), and Music Composition/Arranging ($M = 6.15$, $SD = 2.05$). ANOVA analysis found significant differences between participant groups regarding the musical value they placed on: Bluegrass Ensemble ($F(2, 255) = 7.25$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.05$), Gospel Ensemble ($F(2, 255) = 24.48$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.16$), Irish Fiddling Ensemble ($F(2, 255) = 8.59$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.06$), Music Theater ($F(2, 255) = 8.40$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.06$), Music Theory ($F(2, 255) = 4.81$, $p = 0.009$, $\eta p^2 = 0.04$), and Praise and Worship Ensemble ($F(2, 255) = 16.00$, $p < 0.001$, $\eta p^2 = 0.11$.)

Courses participants indicated they would enroll in most were Music Composition/Arranging (84.11%), Advanced Placement Music Theory (83.33%), and Music Theory (80.62%). Significant differences were found between participant groups and indication of interest in enrolling in: Bluegrass Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 12.30$, $p = 0.002$, $V = 0.22$), Gospel Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 34.79$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.37$), Handbell Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 9.13$, $p = 0.01$, $V = 0.19$), Irish Fiddling Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 23.65$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.30$), Music History ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 6.77$, $p = 0.03$, $V = 0.16$), Music Theater ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 18.43$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.27$), Praise and Worship Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 19.10$, $p < 0.001$, $V = 0.27$), Steel Pan Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 6.63$, $p = 0.04$, $V = 0.16$), and World Music Ensemble ($\chi^2(2, 258) = 9.03$, $p = 0.01$, $V = 0.19$).

Discussion

Findings showed participants would take non-traditional music courses if they were offered at their schools and perceived these courses as having musical value. However, curricular offerings selected most and perceived having highest value appeared to be more common, perhaps most familiar (e.g. music theory). Non-traditional music courses that could have been selected or were perceived to have the lowest musical values were courses perhaps considered less familiar (e.g., Gamelan Ensemble or Mariachi Band). The results may influence music teachers striving to increase curricular diversity and meet diverse student musical interests to offer a variety of music courses beyond the traditional chorus, band, and orchestra.

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Aesthetic Education in Adult Leisure Activity: The Purpose of the Community Band

Anita Kumar, University of Washington

The purpose of this paper is to examine the intersection of philosophy and pedagogy in the context of the large ensemble rehearsal through a critical review of literature within the community band context. Like directors of school ensembles, directors of community bands make choices about repertoire, rehearsal practices, and performance rituals. Bennett Reimer advises that, “Whenever we play a creative musical role as a musician, choices are at the center of what we are doing” (2003, p. 122). Given that an ensemble’s group identity represents a collective of both the individual and shared experiences and motivations of its members, a synergistic philosophy (as described by Reimer in the third edition of his book *A Philosophy of Music Education*, 2003) is necessary for all to move forward with common purpose. Furthermore, it is the director’s responsibility to lead and teach with the varied individuals in mind, and especially within an adult ensemble, to not simply let go of aesthetic purpose based on the assumption that an amateur group is not interested in higher musical ideals. It is our job to ensure a rewarding aesthetic experience, even if performance quality is not the best. A constant dialogic interplay between the aesthetic purpose and the performance ability of an amateur group is therefore no different than the regular calculus made regularly by school directors. Yet awareness of the difference between what is and what could be jumps to the fore in devising a personal pedagogical philosophy that is incorporative of, and synergistic with, the identities and goals in music participation of adult learners who choose to participate in music as a leisure activity.

Adult amateur ensemble participants, in which members elect to join voluntarily and not as a means of earning income, bring to their group a variety of personas and personal philosophies. Members’ continued participation, or so-called “voting with their feet,” implies an understanding of and acquiescence with the stated goals or mission of an ensemble. While differences of opinions or beliefs may pervade, it is generally assumed that if these differences are too severe, members would stop attending. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the director to make choices, both artistic and logistical, which provides a quality aesthetic experience for all of these different participants.

This paper begins with an examination of the levels of participation model offered by Gates (1991) and critiqued by Jorgensen (1993). While imperfect, this model represents the various identities members of community bands bring with them as they participate in a format which is typically formalized in a similar manner to school ensembles (Allsup & Benedict, 2008). The way directors accommodate or challenge a members’ comfort level with what the ensemble requires may occasionally require members to stretch their participation into a higher level.

If directors use a synergistic philosophy (Reimer, 2003), they can honor the experiences of their members and seek input in ways that work with members’ identities and allow for enhanced personal experience within the collective. Research indicates that students will adapt some self-regulatory and self-motivational behaviors even within more structured contexts (such as traditional school ensembles) when they are allowed to choose their own repertoire (Green, 2002). Therefore in adult ensembles, where

responsibility for personal behaviors is paramount to success and continued engagement (Coffman, 2009), we should encourage the self-regulatory behavior of our intrinsically motivated musicians by allowing member input in choice of repertoire. Ensemble leaders must therefore surrender some of the authority for making choices on behalf of the group, to allow for ownership and buy-in from their members.

In addition to repertoire choice, rehearsal practices could also be more facilitative in order to provide more agency to adult musicians. In some previous studies of adult ensembles (for example, Coffman & Barbosa, 2013; Kruse, 2009), rehearsal paradigms take into account the lack of skill of adult amateurs, and the sensitive and yet self-motivating behavior of adult learners. However, descriptions of deeply engaging musical experiences are lacking. They must happen, however, or else these ensembles would not exist; adults would not choose a mode of recreation that was not in some way fulfilling. Music researchers may wish to better document the internal dialogue between individuals and group identity, for the benefit of making meaning out of their musical endeavor.

Paramount to the rehearsal process is trust maintained within an ensemble. Furthermore, there is a level of trust that extends to the audience; “trust is placed in their audiences, that they will attend and respond appropriately and relevantly, and give all due regard to their efforts” (Reimer, 2003, p. 123). A fear of alienating audiences may lead ensembles to choose repertoire for goals of entertainment. While it may be unfair to assume such music lacks enough depth to engage the ensemble in meaningful musical participation throughout a rehearsal sequence, this fear is likely more reflective of a lack of trust in our audiences. In turn, this may result in additional pressures not to program aesthetic repertoire or plan rehearsal experiences designed to grow the individual musicians, instead of a goal of providing entertainment. However, if the rehearsal is the place where members come week after week for an engaging leisure and aesthetic experience, then this is where our focus in planning activities must lie.

As educational ensembles focus more on growing the individual musicianship of their students, how this translates to community bands is yet to be seen. If the synergistic approach is balanced and captures the experience of many young people, then as those musicians become adults and elect to participate, where next will their musical journey take them?

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Content Meets Context: Professional Development and Socialization in Music Education, Reimagined

Justin West, University of North Texas

To distinguish effective and ineffective school organizations, educational researchers often scrutinize the degree to which teachers hold capacity as agents of instructional and institutional change (e.g., Achinstein, 2002; Bridwell-Mitchell & Cooc, 2016; Coburn, 2001; Leana, 2011; Minckler, 2014). Of specific concern is how teachers working in proximate community and interdependent relationship might effect school reforms that may otherwise be unattainable by teachers operating individualistically. Examining policy enactments and school reforms through an organizational and social lens has provided granular insight into how positive (and negative) educational change manifests itself school-to-school and teacher-to-teacher.

Music education researchers have also addressed notions of professional community. However, relevant studies typically foreground teacher interaction only as it pertains to specially convened, music-specific settings such as a music conference or an inter-school teacher workshop group wholly comprised of music teachers (e.g., Sindberg, 2014; Stanley, 2011, 2012; Stanley, Snell, & Edgar, 2014; West, 2011). While a content-concerned perspective remains important, it may effectively ignore the social and organizational contexts in which the bulk of music teachers' work takes place (i.e., the school), even as recent research has reported music teachers perceive school-level factors (e.g., inter-teacher relationships, school-specific policy and administration, degree of classroom autonomy, demographic and cultural contexts) as materially important to the definition of their work (Abril & Bannerman, 2015). Notwithstanding sporadic inquiries, at present, music education scholars have not sufficiently examined how music teachers' work is constructed and mediated explicitly by within-school social and organizational conditions, potentially undermining the field's capacity to understand how music teacher professional development might be crafted specifically to meet context-specific demands.

Nevertheless, at present, neither systematic research nor official professional development policies and practices adequately account for how music teachers' work is constructed and mediated explicitly by within-school social and organizational conditions. Scant work frontally considers how music teacher development might be

crafted specifically to meet context-specific demands. And, furthermore, notwithstanding the frequent, if tacit, acknowledgment of professional isolation as a perennial school-based issue facing music teachers (e.g., Allsup, 2005; Scheib, 2006), limited data are available that empirically characterizes the campus-level social constitution of music teachers' work. Indeed, a reimagined conceptualization of music teacher development and socialization might be needed.

In that vein, using scholarship from a cross-section of disciplines including general education, sociology, organizations, and music education, the purpose of this analysis was to preliminarily consider how music education researchers, policymakers, and practitioners might freshly confront two critical notions: broadly, (a) how music teachers' work is socially and organizationally constructed, and, more concretely, (b) how new social and organizational professional development orientations might empower music teachers as effective instructional and curricular problem-solvers within their specific social and organizational milieus, deepening in the process the field's understanding of effective professional development practice. The paper focuses initially on how teacher social capital is generated and leveraged within school organizations as a means toward educational improvement. Thereafter, it examines the social and organizational constitution of music teacher's work and the philosophies and practices that presently characterize most music teacher professional development experiences. Ultimately, it details a new "context-conscious" orientation and puts forward policy and research recommendations, arguing that such an agenda will ensure that music teacher learning is relevant and reformative to contemporary music teacher practice.

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