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From the Editor

The *Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education* (*MJRME*), published by the Missouri Music Educators Association (MMEA) since 1982, is the oldest state research journal in continuous publication. Although the publication was delayed over the past several years, primarily attributable to the pandemic, with this double issue the journal is caught up though 2024 and is fully expected to be back on a yearly publication schedule as of 2025.

An index of all the issues of the *MJRME* is available on the journal's website as a downloadable Excel file, and PDF versions of all issues are available there, as well. As a service to the profession, MMEA is providing all these documents for free, with no login required and no publication lag (https://mmea.net/missouri-journal-of-research-in-music-education/). We will continue to publicize the publication of new editions via email and social media.

Given the accessibility of the website, and the ever-increasing costs of printing and mailing, this issue is the last that will be printed and mailed to subscribers. The Editorial Committee has decided to provide the journal in an online-only format rather than increase the price to cover the actual rising production costs, which MMEA has generously been subsidizing for a number of years. Although we believe that print publications benefit recipients, because people are more likely to thumb through and read abstracts and articles when the journal is sitting on their desk, than to click and open PDFs or read articles only based on target searches, the cost-benefit analysis is not sufficient for smaller journals such as this one to justify.

We hope researchers will continue to support the *MJRME* by submitting manuscripts for consideration for publication, and by citing articles that appear in the journal to help increase visibility. The free access should make this an attractive option for authors as well as readers.

Wendy L. Sims, Editor

NOTE: If your institution has been a paid subscriber, we thank you for you for your support. Please feel free to include the URL and/or link to the journal website in your databases and indexes.

FEATURE ARTICLES

Missouri Journal of Research in Music Education, No. 60-61, 2023-2024, 1-22.

Mental Health and Stress among Undergraduate Music Majors

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The purpose of this study was to assess the mental health and stress of undergraduate music majors and to evaluate the efficacy of the Mental Health Inventory (MHI-18) and the Music Major Stress Index (MMSI) with this population. Data analysis compared levels of mental health and stress across different classifications, genders, and degree programs. Findings indicated that the MHI-18 and the MMSI exhibited acceptable reliability and validity with participants in this study. Furthermore, we found that sophomores exhibited heightened mental health challenges than students in other classifications and that non-binary individuals and women reported significantly poorer mental health and higher stress levels than men. In addition, respondents experienced significantly higher levels of anxiety than other psychological states and greater exposure to internal versus external stressors. Quartile analysis of MHI-18 and MMSI scores supported these data and identified varying levels of mental health and stress among students. These findings hold implications for addressing psychological well-being with undergraduate music majors.

Keywords*:* mental health, stress, music major, undergraduate

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Procter et al. (2022) defined mental health as "an overall state of well-being and functioning" that is "closely related to the ability to cope with and bounce back from adversity, to solve problems in everyday life, manage when things are difficult and cope with everyday stressors" (p. 5). Mental health involves a complex interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, and environmental influences that makes causality difficult to determine (Srivastava & Anand, 2020). Factors related to good mental health include supportive friends, family, and social networks, work-life balance, physical health, and reduced stress and trauma (Procter et al., 2022). Likewise, poor mental health might result from

stressors such as low self-concept, financial pressures, traumatic life experiences, physical ailments, strained personal relationships, and problematic social, political or workplace environments (Choudhary et al., 2023; Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994). Mental ill-being might manifest as anxiety, depression, negative affect, or a loss of behavioral control (Veit & Ware, 1983) and interfere with a person's cognitive, social, or emotional functioning (Procter et al., 2022).

A person's ability to manage stress can affect their overall mental health and may depend on several factors including daily demands in relation to resources, individual emotional stability, and the use of effective coping strategies. Excessive demands without resources to cope can lead to symptoms of burnout and depression. Furthermore, people with low emotional stability may aggravate the effects of stress on their psychological well-being by reacting sensitively to stressors and/or implementing maladaptive responses. Mental health is both an outcome of coping mechanisms and a predictor of one's ability to handle stress. Poor mental health can increase the effects of stressors, whereas good mental health can serve as a buffer against the pressures of daily life (Moeller et al., 2022).

Psychological well-being is a key component for student success in college and has become a particular focus in recent years (Eisenberg et al., 2007). Research indicates that many students experience mental health challenges in one form or another and that this phenomenon is increasing on campuses throughout the country (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators [NASPA] & Uwill, 2023). A recent survey of undergraduate and graduate students (N = 76,406) from across the United States indicated that 41% felt symptoms of depression, 36% experienced anxiety, and 14% had seriously considered suicide (Eisenberg et al., 2023).

Findings from previous research vary regarding the extent to which individual characteristics affect mental well-being. For example, several studies have found that females and non-binary students reported higher levels of psychological ill-being (Seehuus et al., 2021) and stress (American College Health Association, 2023; Beiter et al., 2014; Brougham et al., 2009; Dusselier et al., 2005; Pedersen, 2012; Pierceall & Keim, 2007) compared to men. However, other research has reported no significant differences between male and female university students on measures of mental health (Choudhary et al., 2023; Demirbatir, 2012; Dyson & Renk, 2006). Regarding classification, Beiter et al. (2014) found that upperclassmen reported higher stress levels than underclassmen, while Demirbatir (2012) reported significantly greater depression, anxiety, and stress in fourth-year music students compared to their

peers. Conversely, Misra et al. (2000) observed that freshmen and sophomores faced more academic stress than upperclassmen. Some (Nadareishvili et al., 2022; Son et al., 2020) but not all (Moeller et al., 2022) authors have concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated mental health challenges among college students.

Stress factors affecting the mental health of undergraduates include adapting to a more autonomous lifestyle, adjusting to new academic standards and social pressures, and carrying the financial burdens associated with attending college (Kitzrow, 2003). D'Angelo and Wierzbicki (2003) found that daily stressors were predictive of college students' degree of depression and anxiety. Regression analyses indicated that perceptions of time pressure, romantic relationship problems, annoyances, and social mistreatment were each positively associated with depression, whereas perceptions of time pressure, academic alienation, annoyances, social mistreatment, and friendship problems were each predictive of anxiety.

Mental well-being can vary by field of study. Lipson et al. (2016) determined that undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in music, visual art, and architecture were significantly more likely to screen positive for depression and anxiety and report suicidal ideation compared to their peers in other disciplines. Music majors, in particular, might face higher rates of depression, anxiety (Spahn et al., 2004), and stress (Sternbach, 2008) compared to their peers in other fields. Bernhard (2007) found higher levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization—both factors that can lead to burnout—among music (n = 48) versus non-music (n = 272) majors at a public liberal arts university in the Northeast United States. In a replication of this study with music majors (N = 229) at a different institution, string and voice students reported greater burnout than those studying brass or woodwinds. In addition, non-music education majors expressed more burnout compared to music education majors, and freshmen, sophomores, and seniors reported burnout at a higher degree than juniors and graduate students (Bernhard, 2010). In a different study involving music education majors, over 70% of participants exhibited symptoms of moderate or severe depression and/or anxiety (Payne, 2023).

Factors unique to music study that might affect mental well-being include performance anxiety, perfectionism, and career concerns (Bernhard, 2010). Music students may also cope with frequent public scrutiny, competition, pressure to excel, persistent negative feedback, and excessive workloads (Maas et al., 2023; Perkins et al., 2017; Sternbach, 2008; Teasley & Buchanan, 2016; Wristen, 2013). Payne (2023) found that music education majors, on average, carried a courseload of 18.5 hours (including 0 credit courses) per semester

and weekly spent 9.08 hours in rehearsal. In addition, most participants worked an average of 13–15 hours a week to cover living expenses and the cost of college.

Purpose and Need for the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the mental health and stress levels of undergraduate music majors and to test the efficacy of two measurement instruments related to psychological well-being with this population. The following questions guided this research:

- What levels of mental health and stress do undergraduate music majors experience?
- How do mental health and stress vary among undergraduate music majors based on gender (man, nonbinary, woman), classification (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors), and/or degree program (Bachelor of Music [BM], Bachelor of Music Education [BME], Bachelor of Arts/Sciences [BA/BS] in music)?
- What is the efficacy of the Mental Health Inventory (Veit & Ware, 1983) and the authors' Music Major Stress Index with undergraduate music majors?

Understanding the mental health and stress levels of college students is important to helping them thrive in higher education (Eisenburg et al., 2007). Several authors have examined mental ill-being among music majors (e.g., Bernard, 2007, 2010; Demirbatir, 2012; Payne, 2023; Wristen, 2013). However, we found no studies with this population that assessed all the psychological states measured by the MHI-18 and only one (Payne, 2023) that utilized an instrument designed specifically for students in this field. Results from this study will provide additional data on the state of mental health and stress among undergraduate music majors and identify stressors that might affect their psychological well-being. These findings may alert college personnel to students most likely to struggle and suggest aspects of mental health that require intervention. Although this research involved a limited sample from one school of music, the processes and instruments used here could be helpful for evaluating the mental health of undergraduates at other institutions.

Method

Sample and Data Collection

All undergraduate music majors (N = 282) at a large state university in the Midwest United States received an invitation in late February 2024 to complete a Qualtrics survey consisting of separate measures for mental health and stress. The survey took approximately five minutes to complete. We obtained approval for this study from the institutional review board of the university before collecting data.

The initial sample (N = 282), prior to survey responses, included freshman (n = 59, 21%), sophomores (n = 71, 25%), juniors (n = 46, 16%), and seniors (n = 103, 36%) in BM (n = 56, 20%), BME (n = 143, 51%), and BA/BS (n = 52, 18%) programs. Several students were pursuing dual degrees either in music (n = 27, 10%) or another field (n = 4, 1%). The BM degree encompasses programs in performance, composition, and therapy. The BME degree includes tracks for band, strings, voice, and keyboard that all lead to PK–12 music licensure in the state. Students in BA/BS programs focus on either the liberal arts or music business. Data regarding students' gender in the initial sample were unavailable.

We kept the survey open for 12 days and sent nonrespondents 3 reminders during this period. A total of 156 students submitted completed surveys, resulting in a response rate of 55%. The final sample included freshmen (n = 37, 24%), sophomores (n = 45, 29%), juniors (n = 33, 21%), and seniors (n = 41, 26%) in the BM (n = 42, 27%), BME (n = 89, 57%), and BA/BS (n = 11, 7%) programs. An additional 14 (9%) students were pursuing both BM and BME degrees. Participants in the final sample identified as men (n = 62, 40%), non-binary (n = 15, 10%), or women (n = 75, 48%), or preferred not to say (n = 4, 3%).

Survey Instruments

Mental Health Inventory

Veit and Ware (1983) developed the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) to measure general psychological distress and well-being. The original version contains 36 items on a six-point Likert-type scale anchored by *all of the time* (1) and *none of the time* (6). Each item asks participants to indicate the frequency of various psychological experiences over the past four weeks. For example, "During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time . . . have you been a very nervous person?" and ". . . have you been in control of your behavior, thoughts, emotions, feelings?"

Factor analysis affirmed the use of the MHI as an overall measure of mental health and revealed a two-factor model around items related to psychological distress and psychological well-being. Additional analysis divided these constructs into five subscales that included anxiety, depression, loss of behavior/emotional control (psychological distress), positive emotional affect, and emotional ties (psychological well-being). The inventory includes both positively and negatively worded prompts and, therefore, requires reverse scoring on some items to determine scale and subscale scores (Veit & Ware, 1983).

For this study, we utilized a shortened 18-item version of the MHI (MHI-18). This instrument retains four of the five subscales (anxiety, depression, behavior/emotional control, positive affect) and contains one additional item from the emotional ties subscale (". . . have you felt loved and wanted?"). Several studies have determined that the MHI-18 is reasonably brief, reliable, and preserves the subscale structure among a general population (Antazo, 2020) and college students (Ahmed et al., 2022; Choudhary et al., 2023; Meybodi et al., 2011; Yuvaraj et al., 2016). Given these attributes, we determined that the length and content of the MHI-18 provided sufficient detail and required reasonable completion time compared to alternatives such as the 10-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler et al., 2002) and the 42-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) used in previous studies (e.g., Demirbatir, 2012; Moeller et al., 2022).

Calculating scale and subscale scores on the MHI-18 involved the following procedure: (a) reverse score positively worded items, (b) average responses for each item in the scale/subscale, and (c) subtract 1 from the average scale/subscale score, multiply by 100, and divide by the number of items in the scale/subscale. The score for the overall scale and each subscale ranges from 0 to 100. Higher scores indicate better mental health compared to lower scores (Ritvo et al., 1997).

Music Major Stress Index

Previous research has determined a strong relationship between mental health and stress (Moeller, 2022). Consequently, we developed the Music Major Stress Index (MMSI) to complement the MHI-18 and identify potential contributors to mental ill-being. Unlike other assessments of stress for college students (e.g., Feldt, 2008; Kent et al., 2022), the MMSI contains variables unique to those pursuing a degree in music (e.g., Bernard, 2010; Kitzrow, 2003; Maas et al., 2023). Using the MHI-18 and the MMSI together can help faculty and administrators gain a comprehensive understanding of music students' mental health challenges and pinpoint specific factors for intervention to improve their well-being.

We selected items for the MMSI based on results of a preliminary survey. Undergraduate music majors ($N = 282$) at the institution involved in this study received an invitation to respond to a single prompt: "List things that cause you stress as a college student in general and a music major in particular." Responses ($N = 49$) varied in length from 5 to 292 words.

Items for the MMSI emerged from the narrative data through a directed approach to qualitative content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This process involved using prior research (Bernhard, 2007, 2010; Payne, 2023; Wristen, 2013) to identify key concepts or variables as initial coding categories. We collectively read and discussed each statement until we agreed on appropriate code(s). Statements we could not categorize through the initial coding scheme received a new code. We used these codes as a basis for items on the MMSI.

The final version of the MMSI consisted of 12 potential stressors, all of which were supported by the preliminary survey and previous literature (American College Health Association, 2023; Bernhard, 2007, 2010; Dusselier, 2005; Payne, 2023; Wristen, 2013). Participants responded to each item based on the prompt, "How frequently do the following items stress you out?," on a five-point Likert-type scale anchored by *all of the time* (1) and *none of the time* (5). We determined an overall scale score by adding ratings from the individual items. Possible scale scores ranged from 12 to 60 with higher scores indicating lower levels of overall stress.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study utilized SPSS™ Statistics for Academic Institutions. Calculations for the MHI-18 and the MMSI involved descriptive statistics (*M*, *SD*, *Mo*, *f*) for each item, and Cronbach's alpha to check internal consistency of the scales and subscales. Pearson's *r* coefficients indicated correlations for scale and subscale scores on and between both measures.

We determined mental health status and stress levels based on quartile (Q) scores as per the procedure by Choudhary et al. (2023). Students falling below the first quartile (Q1) were categorized as having worse mental health/stress levels compared to their peers in the total sample. Scores between Q1 and Q3 indicated typical mental health/stress, while those above Q3 represented better mental health/stress levels in relation to other participants.

Analysis included comparisons of total scores on the MHI-18 and the MMSI by classification (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), degree program (BM, BME, BA/BS, BM+BME), and gender (man, non-binary, woman) through univariate ANOVA. We also utilized one-way ANOVA to examine differences

in subscale scores within the total sample. Levene's test for equality of variance, as well as skewness and kurtosis readings, determined if data met the assumptions for normality. Post hoc analyses to find significant differences between subgroups involved Tukey HSD tests, when data met the assumption for equal variances, or Games-Howell tests, when data did not (Russell, 2018). Note that SPSS™ compensates for unequal sample sizes by implementing the Tukey-Kramer modification during post hoc analysis (IBM, 2020).

A principal component analysis on MMSI data allowed us to determine if underlying dimensions existed among the 12 items contained in the instrument. This process utilized Kaiser normalization and obliman rotation with kappa set at the default value of 4. Although the pattern matrix (unique contribution of each component to a variable's variance) served as the primary determinant used to identify components, the structure matrix (correlation of each variable and component) and communalities (proportion of each variable's total variance accounted for by all components) also contributed to the interpretation. We considered the effectiveness of individual items based on the extent to which they achieved a high loading (≥.40) (Matsunaga, 2010). Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated if there were adequate correlations for data reduction, and the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure determined sampling adequacy (Russell, 2018).

Results

Mental Health

The MHI-18 achieved good internal consistency on the overall scale ($\alpha = .92$) and subscales (Anxiety, $\alpha = .84$; Depression, $\alpha = .76$; Behavior/Emotional Control, $\alpha = .81$; Positive Affect, $\alpha = .75$). Skewness and kurtosis readings indicated a near normal curve for scores on the overall scale, subscales, and comparison subgroups within classification, degree, and gender. Only one subgroup—the BA/BS degree (kurtosis = -1.10)—fell slightly outside the skewness and kurtosis range for acceptable normality (-1–+1). Levene's test indicated that total MHI-18 scores for all comparison groups met the equality of variances assumption ($p > .05$). However, subscale scores for the total sample did not ($p < .001$). See Table 1 for raw data on individual items.

Total scores on the MHI-18 varied from 5.6 to 88.9 ($M = 54.5$, $SD = 16.3$) out of a possible score of 100. The interquartile range equaled 25.56 (Q1 > 41.11; Q2 > 53.89; Q3 > 66.67). Participants falling below Q1 and screened with worse mental health than peers ($n = 41$) included 6 (16%) freshmen, 22 (49%) sophomores, 7 (21%) juniors, 6 (15%) seniors; 14 (36%) BM, 21 (24%)

Table 1. Mental Health Inventory Descriptive Statistics

	Subscale	Item	*M*	*SD*	*Mo*	1–2 *n* (%)	3–4 *n* (%)	5–6 *n* (%)
	During the past 4 weeks, how much of the time . . .							
Psychological Distress	Anxiety	have you been a very nervous person?	2.8	1.5	1	75 (48)	56 (36)	25 (16)
		have you felt tense or high-strung?	2.8	1.3	2	68 (44)	72 (46)	16 (10)
		were you able to relax without difficulty? [a]	4.0	1.3	5	27 (17)	64 (41)	65 (42)
		have you felt restless, fidgety, or impatient?	3.0	1.3	3	61 (39)	74 (47)	21 (13)
		have you been anxious or worried?	2.6	1.3	2	81 (52)	58 (37)	17 (11)
	Depression	did you feel depressed?	4.0	1.3	5	24 (15)	70 (45)	62 (40)
		have you felt disheartened and blue?	3.9	1.2	4	23 (15)	77 (49)	56 (36)
		have you been moody, or brooded about things?	3.9	1.3	4	20 (13)	84 (54)	52 (33)
		have you been in low or very high spirits?	3.3	1.1	4	38 (24)	94 (60)	24 (15)
	Behavior Control	have you been in control of your behavior, thoughts, emotions, feelings? [a]	2.7	1.2	2	88 (56)	56 (36)	12 (8)
		have you felt emotionally stable? [a]	3.2	1.3	2	56 (36)	72 (46)	28 (18)
		did you feel you had nothing to look forward to?	4.9	1.1	6	6 (4)	47 (30)	103 (66)
		have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?	4.9	1.2	6	9 (6)	35 (22)	112 (72)
Psychological Well-being	Positive Affect	has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you? [a]	2.5	1.0	2	90 (58)	60 (38)	6 (4)
		have you felt calm and peaceful? [a]	4.0	1.2	5	24 (15)	71 (46)	61 (39)
		have you felt cheerful, light-hearted? [a]	3.3	1.0	3	36 (23)	107 (69)	13 (8)
		were you a happy person? [a]	2.9	1.1	2	73 (47)	67 (43)	16 (10)
	Emotional Ties	have you felt loved and wanted? [a]	2.7	1.2	2	77 (49)	67 (43)	12 (8)

Note: $N = 156$. Scale Anchored by *all of the time* (1) and *none of the time* (6).
[a]Calculated from raw data prior to reverse scoring of positively stated items.

BME, 3 (21%) BM+BME, and 3 BA/BS (27%); and 10 (16%) men, 8 (53%) non-binary, 21 (28%) women, and 2 (50%) individuals who preferred not to identify their gender. Respondents scoring above Q3 (n = 36) and designated as having better mental health included 8 (22%) freshmen, 5 (11%) sophomores, 8 (24%) juniors, 15 (37%) seniors; 7 (17%) BM, 23 (26%) BME, 3 (21%) BM+BME, and 3 (27%) BA/BS; and 18 (29%) men, 1 (7%) non-binary, and 17 (23%) women. Note that percentages above represent proportions of individual subgroups and not the total sample.

Subscale scores on the MHI-18 ranged from a possible 0–100 with higher scores indicating better levels on each construct. A one-way ANOVA determined a significant difference between subscale scores, $F(3, 620) = 76.03$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$. Post hoc Games-Howell tests found that participants experienced significantly ($p < .001$) worse anxiety ($M = 37.2$, $SD = 22.0$) compared to depression ($M = 55.6$, $SD = 18.8$), behavior/emotional control ($M = 69.4$, $SD = 19.6$), and positive affect ($M = 56.8$, $SD = 15.9$). Respondents also indicated significantly ($p < .001$) worse depression and positive affect compared with behavior/emotional control.

A univariate ANOVA indicated a significant difference in total MHI-18 scores by classification, $F(3, 152) = 4.11$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .08$. A post hoc Tukey test revealed that sophomores ($M = 47.6$, $SD = 16.0$) experienced significantly lower levels of mental health compared to seniors ($M = 58.3$, SD = 16.6) ($p = .011$). All other comparisons between classifications were nonsignificant.

Analysis also determined significant differences in MHI-18 scores by gender, $F(2, 149) = 8.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$. Women ($M = 52.9$, $SD = 14.8$) ($p = .032$) and non-binary students ($M = 42.8$, $SD = 15.5$) ($p = .001$) reported significantly worse mental health compared to men ($M = 59.7$, $SD = 16.4$). Differences between women and their non-binary peers was marginally nonsignificant ($p = .060$).

There were no significant differences found on the MHI-18 among the various degree programs, $F(3, 152) = 1.19$, $p = .317$, $\eta^2 = .02$. Further analysis revealed moderate to moderately high correlations between the subscales ($r = .55–.77$) and high correlations between subscales and overall scores ($r = .79– .89$) (See Table 4).

Stress

The MMSI yielded an internal reliability of $\alpha = .88$ with no significant increase by any item deletion. A principal component analysis using an eigenvalue of one criterion accounted for 56% of the variance and required 10

iterations to converge. Bartlett's test ($\chi 2 = 857.60$, $p < .001$) determined that correlations within the data were appropriate for analysis and the KMO measure (.84) indicated sampling adequacy. Subject-to-variable ratio equaled 13.0:1.

This analysis generated a two-component model, which we interpreted as Internal Stressors and External Stressors. Component 1 (Internal) yielded an eigenvalue of 5.35 and explained 45% of the variance. Component 2 (External) attained an eigenvalue of 1.34 and accounted for an additional 11% of the variance. All but two of the rotated component loadings exceeded .50, and only two items cross-loaded above .30 (see Table 2). Three communalities (.29–.71, *M* = .56., *SD* = .14) failed to exceed .50. Both subscales attained an acceptable level of internal consistency (Internal Stressors, α = .87; External Stressors, α = .76) with no increase by item deletion. Subscale scores on the MMSI were moderately correlated with each other ($r = .65$) and highly correlated to the total scale ($r = .90–.91$). Nonetheless, intercomponent correlations ($r = .46$) met the ≤.85 cutoff that generally serves as the criterion for discriminant validity in applied research (Brown, 2015).

Table 2. Music Major Stress Index Principal Component Analysis

	Component	
	Internal	External
Balancing responsibilities	**.85**	
Time Management	**.84**	
Academic Courseload	**.77**	
Managing physical/mental health	**.72**	
Achieving academic success	**.60**	.38
Achieving musical success	**.48**	.45
Relationships with faculty		**.91**
Relationships with peers		**.71**
Faculty expectations		**.60**
Perception of musical ability		**.53**
Future plans		**.51**
Financial concerns		**.41**

Note. Cross loadings < .30 were suppressed. Items highlighted in gray were not included in Component 1.

Total scores on the MMSI varied from 12.0 to 59.0 (M = 30.0, SD = 9.4) out of a possible score of 60.0. The interquartile range equaled 12.50 (Q1 > 23.0, Q2 > 29.0, Q3 > 35.5). Participants falling below Q1 (n = 42) and screened with higher stress compared to the total sample included 9 (24%) freshmen, 14 (31%) sophomores, 7 (21%) juniors, 12 (29%) seniors; 11 (26%) BM, 23 (26%) BME, 3 (21%) BM+BME, and 5 BA/BS (46%); and 11 (18%) men, 6 (40%) non-binary, 23 (31%) women, and 2 (50%) individuals who preferred not to identify their gender. Respondents scoring above Q3 (n = 39) and categorized with lower stress levels consisted of 11 (30%) freshmen, 8 (18%) sophomores, 9 (27%) juniors, 11 (27%) seniors; 15 (36%) BM, 19 (21%) BME, 3 (21%) BM+BME, and 2 (18%) BA/BS; and 24 (39%) men, 1 (7%) non-binary, 13 (17%) women, and 1 (25%) individual who preferer not to identify their gender. Percentages above represent proportions of individual subgroups and not the total sample.

Skewness and kurtosis values for MMSI indicated a near normal distribution on the overall scale across the entire sample and within classification subgroups. However, four subgroups within degree or gender fell outside the -1 – +1 range for skewness (BME, 1.06; Women, 2.59) and kurtosis (BM/BME, 1.89; BA/BS, -1.09). Internal and external subscale scores also demonstrated acceptable skewness and kurtosis readings for the total sample. Levene's test for equality of variance was nonsignificant for the internal and external stressors subscales, and the overall scale for the classification and degree comparison groups. The same test, however, determined unequal variances for the overall scale by gender, $W(2,149) = 3.96$, $p = .021.65$.

Ratings for each item on the MMSI ranged from 1–5 with higher scores indicating lower levels of stress. We calculated subscale scores by adding ratings for items in component 1 (Internal Stressors) and items in component 2 (External Stressors). Each subscale contained 6 items and had a possible total score of 6–30. A one-way ANOVA determined that participants experienced internal stressors (M = 13.3, SD = 5.4) to a significantly greater degree than external stressors (M = 16.7, SD = 5.0), F(1, 311) = 33.65, p > .001, 2 = .10. See Table 3 for raw data on individual items.

Table 3. Music Major Stress Index Descriptive Data

Item	*M* [a]	*SD*	*Mo*	1–2 *n* (%)	3 *n* (%)	4–5 *n* (%)
How frequently do the following items stress you out?						
Achieving musical success	1.9	1.3	1	116 (74)	23 (15)	17 (11)
Perception of musical ability	2.0	1.2	1	111 (71)	24 (15)	21 (13)
Achieving academic success	2.1	1.1	1	110 (71)	26 (17)	20 (13)
Balancing responsibilities	2.3	1.1	1	95 (61)	43 (28)	18 (12)
Managing physical/mental health	2.3	1.3	1	91 (58)	37 (24)	28 (18)
Time management	2.4	1.1	2	92 (59)	44 (28)	20 (13)
Academic course load	2.4	1.1	2	91 (58)	42 (27)	23 (15)
Future plans	2.4	1.2	1	87 (56)	39 (25)	30 (19)
Financial concerns	2.6	1.4	1	79 (51)	30 (19)	47 (30)
Faculty expectations	2.7	1.9	2	73 (47)	38 (24)	45 (29)
Relationships with peers	3.9	1.2	4	38 (25)	45 (29)	72 (46)
Relationships with faculty	3.8	1.2	5	22 (14)	41 (26)	93 (60)

Note. $N = 156$. Scale anchored by *all of the time* (1) and *none of the time* (5).
[a] Lower mean scores indicate higher levels of stress.

A univariate ANOVA indicated no significant differences in MMSI scores by classification, $F(3, 152) = .813$, $p = .48$, $\eta^2 = .02$, or degree program, $F(3, 152) = .571$, $p = .635$, $\eta^2 = .01$. However, differences between the gender subgroups did attain statistical significance, $F(2, 149) = 7.53$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$. A post hoc Games-Howell test revealed that non-binary students ($M = 25.4$, $SD = 7.4$) ($p = .005$) and women ($M = 28.4$, $SD = 8.0$) ($p = .007$) reported significantly higher stress levels compared to men ($M = 33.3$, $SD = 10.3$). Differences between non-binary respondents and women was nonsignificant.

Pearsons *r* indicated a moderate correlation between the MMSI Internal and External Stressors subscales ($r = .65$) and a high correlation between subscales and the overall scale ($r = .90$–$.91$). We also examined relationships between the MHI-18 and the MMSI. Subscale and overall scores on these measures attained

low to moderate correlations (r = .28–.61) (See Table 4). Likewise, only 63 (40%) participants scored in the same quartile on the MHI-18 and the MMSI.

Table 4. Pearson Correlations b/w Mental Health Inventory-18 and the Music Major Stress Index

	Dep [b]	Be/Em Con [c]	Pos Aft [d]	Psych Dis [e]	Psych W-bng [f]	MHI Tot [g]	Int Strs [h]	Ext Strs [i]	MMSI Tot [j]
Anx [a]	.65	.64	.55	.89	.59	.86	.59	.51	.61
Dep [b]	-	.77	.55	.89	.59	.86	.41	.43	.46
Be/Em Con [c]		-	.68	.89	.71	.89	.40	.36	.42
Pos Aft [d]			-	.67	.97	.79	.31	.28	.32
Psych Dis [e]				-	.70	.98	.51	.50	.57
Psych W-bng [f]					-	.83	.32	.33	.36
MHI Tot [g]						-	.51	.48	.53
Int Strs [h]							-	.65	.91
Ext Strs [i]								-	.90

Note. All correlations significate at $p < .001$.

[a] Anxiety, [b] Depression, [c] Behavioral/Emotional Control, [d] Positive Affect, [e] Psychological Distress, [f] Psychological Well-Being, [g] Mental Health Inventory Total, [h] Internal Stressors, [i] External Stressors, [j] Music Major Stress Index Total.

Discussion

In this study, we examined mental health and stress among undergraduate music majors. Data analysis indicated that sophomores faced more pronounced mental health challenges than students in other classifications. In addition, non-binary individuals and women reported significantly worse mental health and stress in comparison to men. Analysis also revealed that respondents experienced significantly higher levels of anxiety than other psychological states and greater exposure to internal versus external stressors. Quartile placements for total scores on the MHI-18 and MMSI aligned with these data and identified students with worse, typical, and better mental health and stress compared to their peers.

Readers should generalize results with caution due to limited sample size and representation from only one institution. Unequal numbers within comparison groups likely contributed to violations of the assumption of normality and prevented the use of two- and three-way ANOVA due to loss of statistical power. As a result, we might have missed significant interactions between independent variables (Russell, 2018). Finally, self-reported data without verification of previous health history may have resulted in over- or underreporting mental health and stress assessed in this study (e.g., Wristen, 2013).

Moderate correlations for overall scores on the MHI-18 and the MMSI somewhat support the relationship between mental health and stress found previously for the overall population (Mrazek & Haggerty, 1994), college students in general (D'Angelo & Wierzbicki, 2003; Pedersen, 2012), and music majors specifically (Demirbatir, 2012; Payne, 2023). However, correlations between anxiety, depression, and stress in this study were not as strong as coefficients reported for music students by other authors (Demirbatir, 2012; Payne, 2023) with different measures of these constructs. In addition, quartile placements for individual participants on the MHI-18 and the MMSI differed substantially. These results support the assertion that multiple factors in addition to stress contribute to psychological well-being (Kitzrow, 2003). For example, students with higher levels of stress but typical or better mental health may utilize more effective coping mechanisms and/or have a more supportive social network compared to their peers with similar stress and poorer mental health (Moeller, 2022). Further development of the MMSI might increase the variance in stress explained by this instrument and result in stronger correlations with the MHI-18.

Participants here reflected prior research (Payne, 2023; Wristen, 2013) that found elevated levels of anxiety and depression among music majors. In addition, they attained mean scores 7–16 points lower on the MHI-18 compared to undergraduates studying various subjects in Iran (Meybodi, 2011) and India (Ahmed et al., 2022; Choudhary et al., 2023; Yuvaraj et al., 2016). These data aligned with previous studies (Bernhard, 2007; Lipson et al., 2016; Spahn et al., 2004) that suggested music majors experience greater mental health challenges compared to peers in other fields. A replication of this study that includes a larger sample of both music majors and non-music majors from a variety of backgrounds and regions would provide more insight into these differences.

Significantly lower MHI-18 scores for sophomores in this study might have been due to characteristics of the sample. It is also possible that conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to their current mental health. These participants were mostly high school sophomores at the start of the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. They likely experienced interrupted educational

experiences and greatly altered music instruction during their junior year, as well as aftereffects of COVID restrictions in their senior year. U pon entering college, they might not have been as academically, musically, and psychologically prepared as typical freshmen (Knox, 2023; Rinn, 2024) and continue to suffer decreased mental health as a result (NASPA & Uwill, 2023).

Non-binary respondents and women in this sample reflected their peers in other studies who reported lower levels of mental health (Seehuus et al., 2021) and higher levels of stress (American College Health Association, 2023; Brougham et al., 2009; Dusselier et al., 2005; Pierceall & Keim, 2007) compared to college men. A marginally nonsignificant result between women (n = 72) and non-binary (n = 15) students on the MHI-18 was likely due to sample size, since there was a 10-point difference between mean scores for these two groups.

Implications

Preparation for collegiate music study can start in middle school and high school. PK–12 music educators should help students develop strategies for managing stress, foster an awareness of mental health, and encourage treatment when necessary (Wristen, 2013). They should also be open and transparent about the challenges of pursuing music professionally and guide students to make realistic assessments of their potential for success in various fields.

Faculty and administrators in university schools of music must recognize the unique challenges that come with these majors (Sternbach, 2008; Teasley & Buchanan, 2016; Wristen, 2013) and take responsibility for promoting psychological well-being among the student population (Kitzrow, 2003). Specific actions might involve providing instructional units in freshmen courses or periodic convocations to help new students transition from high school to collegiate music study. Topics could include strategies for coping with internal stressors such as time management, balancing responsibilities and courseloads, and managing physical/mental health (Bernhard, 2007). Faculty should regularly discuss the challenges of achieving academic and musical success and work to build a supportive community that de-emphasizes competition in favor of individual growth and achievement. Addressing external stressors might involve limiting the cost of student fees and course materials, and discussing topics such as performance anxiety, career development, and personal finances in courses, seminars, or the applied studio.

In addition to helping students deal with stress, college music personnel should streamline undergraduate curricula as much as possible by evaluating what skills and knowledge are essential in the field, reducing unnecessary overlap in

course content, and eliminating classes that might be unnecessary. Faculty might also consider reevaluating ensemble requirements in relation to rehearsal time and course credit (Bernhard, 2007, 2010). Advisors should encourage students who want to take elective courses or ensembles beyond program requirements to make choices or extend their time in college to balance extra demands in healthy ways.

The MHI-18 and the MMSI demonstrated acceptable reliability and validity for measuring the psychological well-being and stress of undergraduate music majors. Schools/departments of music could use the MHI-18 and MMSI to measure psychological well-being and stress experienced by their student body. This information may be useful in determining and sequencing academic and performance requirements for various degree programs. Perhaps college personnel could make these instruments available to students for self-evaluation and reflection on their own or during discussions of mental health in classes or convocations. Faculty and administrators must not attempt to diagnose students themselves. Instead, they should have mechanisms in place to refer individuals with potential mental health conditions to appropriate agencies on campus (Kitzrow, 2003).

Future Research

Authors should continue to investigate mental health and stress in relation to classification, degree program, gender, and other variables connected with psychological well-being (e.g., Bernhard, 2010). In this study, for example, we did not ask participants to identify their major performance area (e.g., vocal, instrumental) and concentration (e.g., composition, therapy) to protect the anonymity of a relatively small sample from one school of music. Other factors to examine include employment hours, socioeconomic status, screen time, alcohol use, and personality characteristics (e.g., American College Health Association, 2023; Eisenberg et al., 2023; Payne, 2023). Future studies should replicate this research with larger sample sizes from multiple institutions (e.g., Payne, 2023) to support or refute the present findings, monitor ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on music majors' mental health, and assess the efficacy of various measurement instruments with this population (e.g., Bernhard, 2007; Demirbatir, 2012; Miksza et al., 2019). This line of research will inform the profession on potential mental health challenges of music majors and contribute to program and curriculum development at the undergraduate level.

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Effective Teacher Characteristics Among Higher Education Music Education Faculty

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This investigation examined skills/behaviors that undergraduate students believed influenced their perceptions of what constitutes an effective college/university music teacher educator (MTE). Additional questions addressed the extent that (a) differences in gender (b) students' academic level, (c) the size of school students attended, and (d) the area of specialization influenced students' perceptions of teaching effectiveness. A researcher-constructed survey was distributed to undergraduate music education students from ten colleges and universities across the country representing varying sizes and affiliations. The survey presented thirty-five variables of skills and behaviors suggested in the literature as influencing the perception of a teacher's effectiveness. Using a seven-point Likert-type scale, participants (N = 108) rated the extent they perceived each variable influenced their perceptions of a MTE's effectiveness. The results indicated that skills and behaviors labeled as pedagogical or personal in nature were consistently rated as more influential than those related to subject matter. Variables that perhaps reflected an instructor's presentation style and personal skills and behaviors were rated most influential. Variables reflecting more specific music subject matter skills and behaviors were not rated as influential. Statistical analysis found no significant differences among the participants' gender, current academic year, institution, or area of specialization, suggesting agreement that MTE professors should focus on developing pedagogical skills and behaviors specifically related to presentation delivery of information to be considered effective. The findings suggest that while undergraduate music education students perceive content knowledge the most important factor influencing their professors' effectiveness, they also valued personal skills and behaviors.

Keywords: Teaching effectiveness, teacher behaviors, teacher skills, student perceptions

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Effective teaching is a challenge for educators at all levels because presenting information and skills in meaningful ways can be multi-faceted, ambiguous, and

constantly changing for even the most experienced educator. For instance, researchers have shown that a teacher's reputation, a priori vague standards, and often poorly defined parameters influence perceptions of teacher effectiveness (Berliner, 1986). Compounding this challenge is identifying and demonstrating behaviors that constitute effective teaching (Kelly, 2008; Madsen et al., 1989). Additionally, what is known about teaching and learning continues to evolve and can be affected by a student's age, test taking ability, socioeconomic level, and academic area (Clement, 2018; Haston & Russell, 2012; Napoles & MacLeod, 2013). Consequently, no single factor creates effective teaching and frequently there is a lack of consensus on criteria that defines behaviors and skills that constitute an effective teacher (Madsen et al., 1989).

Effective teaching has been defined as the degree of effect which observed teacher behaviors have on student behavior (Yarbrough & Price, 1981). The American Council on Education (2024) stated that effective teaching is most concerned with the connection of instruction to student outcomes. Hu (2020) suggested that effective educators should be most concerned with which skills and behaviors their students believe are the most influential on their learning. Dukes and Victoria (1989) suggested effective teaching is comprised of at least four attributes: knowledge of what is being taught, enthusiasm for teaching, rapport between the teacher and student, and organization of the learning environment. Other reports suggest effective teaching involves strong diverse pedagogical approaches, a variety of assessments, and diverse learning environments (American Council on Education, 2024; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Wiggins, 2015). Based on this broad information, it is easy to understand that defining effective teaching is subject to tremendous variability that requires an expansive combination of subject knowledge, personal, and pedagogical skills (Teachout, 1997).

A variety of factors seem to influence the perception of effective teaching. These factors include both teacher attributes and students' personal characteristics. Research findings have shown that the general skills and behaviors that can influence students' perceptions of effective teaching include an instructor's teaching style, instructional techniques, personal attributes, and classroom environment (Madsen et al., 1989; Yarbrough, 1975). Coleman, et al. (1966) suggested the perception of effective teaching can be influenced by students' personal characteristics such as socioeconomic status, parental involvement, race, and other cultural variables. However, despite knowledge of these influences, researchers report defining effective teaching can be difficult, yet everyone seems capable of recognizing good teaching when it is observed (Madsen et al., 1989).

The task of developing effective music teacher traits usually begins with the undergraduate teacher-education program. These programs typically focus on developing skills and behaviors necessary for effective K-12 educators. During this time, collegiate music teacher educators (MTE) can serve as role models for preservice teachers (Page & Jenks, 2012). Music education programs have a responsibility to ensure preservice students develop sufficient subject matter expertise, appropriate instructional and motivation techniques, and adequate classroom management skills to be effective in their teaching (Haston & Russell, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Kelly, 2008; MacLeod & Napoles, 2012, 2014).

While there have been many studies addressing K-12 teachers, there have been few studies regarding developing skills and behaviors necessary for effective teachers in higher education. Researchers have shown that effective collegiate teaching contributes to reduced differences in the achievement gap, improves student engagement, increases retention, and improves graduation rates (Swarat & Sullivan 2015; Yeado et al. 2014). However, one report (Gyurko, et al., 2016) suggested many teacher education programs rely solely on an individual's previous classroom experiences to develop teachers to become teacher educators. Still other studies have suggested more specific skills and behaviors for effectively teaching in higher education. Clement (2018) suggested successful collegiate teachers have a strong knowledge of their discipline, are accepting of an inclusive classroom, are organized and effective at planning, teach from a variety of strategies, use a variety of assessments, and have passion for teaching. Bain (2004) wrote that the best collegiate teachers embrace critical thinking activities, question authentically, provide specific feedback that promotes re-thinking assumptions and perceived models of reality, and establish high standards and positive attitudes toward students. Based on findings from a survey of 3,000 undergraduate college students at 128 four- and two-year institutions, Flaherty (2023) reported that students viewed a professor's teaching style as the most important aspect of an effective college-level teacher. This same report further suggested that effective collegiate professors have clear expectations for students, are more flexible with attendance grading and class participation, and made more efforts to know students individually. Additionally, Murray (1983) posited that collegiate teachers not only influence student learning, but they create motivation to learn beyond the classroom and model behaviors that foster continued learning.

Effective teaching is also a concern for collegiate music educators, especially those who teach future music teachers in K-12 preservice programs. Wiggins (2015) stated that teaching music effectively appears to require skills and

behaviors related to having an in-depth understanding of music, multiple learning styles, and diverse delivery approaches. To meet these expectations, it is generally accepted that collegiate MTEs should not only be experts in their field of study, but also have a strong background in K-12 teaching experiences where pedagogical skills and behaviors can be developed and effective classroom environments can be created (Kelly & Juchniewicz, 2022; Page & Jenks, 2012). This approach is supported by Darling-Hammond (2023) who stated that teachers who have had more preparation for teaching are more confident and successful with students than those who have had little or none. Consequently, it is not uncommon to see advertisements requiring MTE faculty to have three or more years of K-12 teaching experience (College Music Society Music Vacancy List, 2024).

Previous researchers have focused on factors that affect developing preservice and in-service K-12 teaching skills. Most research at the collegiate level has focused on conducting skills (Hart, 2019; Regier, 2021; Silvey, 2013) and preservice teacher development (Edelman, 2021; Kelly, 2008; MacLeod & Napoles, 2012, 2014; Napoles & MacLeod, 2013; Rohwer & Henry, 2004). However, minimal research has addressed what is required for effective collegiate MTEs. Hu (2020) suggested that collegiate students should have the most influence on what is regarded as effective teaching among higher education professors because teacher education faculty are often influential in helping preservice students develop behaviors associated with effective teacher skills (Haston & Russell, 2012; Raiber & Teachout, 2014). Given that students' opinions may be influential, it would seem necessary to have a better understanding of skills and behaviors considered most effective by collegiate MTEs in influencing and developing future music educators.

This investigation was designed to examine the specific skills/ behaviors that undergraduate students reported to influence perceptions of their MTE's teaching effectiveness. Additional questions addressed the extent that differences in students' (a) gender, (b) academic level (e.g., freshman), (c) the size of school attended, and (d) the area of specialization influenced students' perceptions of what constitutes an effective college/university music teacher educator.

Method

Survey Development

The study was primarily descriptive in design. The dependent measure was a three-part researcher constructed Qualtrics survey containing items based on

previous research related to characteristics of effective music teachers (American Council on Education, 2024; Kelly, 2008 Madsen et al., 1989; Raiber & Teachout, 2014; Silvey, 2013; Wiggins, 2015). Part One asked participants to provide demographic information regarding the gender they most identified with, current academic year in school, the type of institution they attend, and their primary area of specialization. Part Two presented thirty-five variables representing a variety of skills and behaviors previously suggested as influencing the perception of a teacher's effectiveness. Using a seven-point Likert-type scale, participants rated the extent they perceived each variable influenced their perceptions of a MTE's effectiveness from 1 (*not effective*) to 7 (*very effective*). Part Three asked participants to provide any additional characteristics they felt contributed to an effective collegiate MTE.

To establish content validity of the survey, we asked two experts (both college music education professors not used in the primary study) to independently determine if the survey contained an adequate representation of the targeted content and was appropriate for the chosen population. The most notable change was in minor adjustments to two Likert-type items for clarity. We measured intercoder reliability by using the number of agreements versus disagreements and found the level of agreement to be 97.35% which exceeded the acceptability threshold of 80% suggested by Madsen and Madsen (2016).

Next, the survey was field-tested using additional collegiate MTE faculty (N = 5) also not used in the later full administration of the survey. The results of the pilot indicated that the survey's directions were clear and the survey could be successfully completed in less than ten minutes.

Participants and Administration

Following institutional review board approval, we began the participant selection process by searching websites from a variety of institutions across the country. Through a purposeful selection process, we focused on institutions that had faculty whom we were familiar with through our research activities. We were mindful of the need for both private and public institutions with similar academic and musical scope in a variety of locations; we also selected accredited institutional members of the National Association for Schools of Music to better ensure that each institution shared similar curricula experiences. Ten institutions were selected that met the initial selection criteria. Seven schools were public schools and three were private institutions. The schools represented a broad geographic area which included Tennessee, New York, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas.

Using each selected university's website, we then identified the MTE faculty. Next, using their published email addresses and office telephone numbers, the identified faculty were contacted to request that they allow their students to participate. We informed each faculty member of the study's purpose, research questions, and approximate time required (ten minutes) for their students to complete the survey. All contacted faculty agreed to participate.

Upon agreeing to participate, we sent each faculty member a link to the Qualtrics survey and asked them to distribute the link to all the undergraduate music education students within their programs. Faculty were given the freedom to distribute the survey link in any manner they deemed best. There were no verbal instructions other than informing the students of the nature and topic of the study, that they should not complete the survey if they had already completed it in another class, that the survey was anonymous, and that they were not required to participate. After two weeks faculty were asked again to distribute the survey link to their undergraduate music education students if they had not yet done so. After another two weeks, the survey link was closed and the data analysis began.

Results

Participants (N = 108) were undergraduate music education majors who represented varying gender diversity, academic years in school, and areas of music specializations from a mix of small/large and public/private institutions (see Table 1). Of the participants, nine students were from institutions considered by the researchers as small public schools (1,000 or fewer total students), 19 students came from schools considered as medium size public schools (1,000-5,000 total students), 55 students came from schools considered as large public schools (more than 5,000 total students), one student came from a school considered a small private schools (1,000 or fewer total students), five students came from institutions considered as medium-size private schools (1,000 – 5,000 total students), 15 students came from large private schools (more than 5,000 total students), and four students came from schools that did not fit the demographic criteria. Most participants indicated their area of specialization was band/orchestra (n = 64); other students' areas of specialization were choral (n = 37), elementary (n = 6) and other (n = 1). Due to the demographics of the student populations across the participating institutions, it was reasonable to assume the participants represented diverse cultural and musical backgrounds as well as a variety of music major subject areas.

Table 1. Demographic Variables (N = 108)

Variable	Number
Gender	
Male	48
Female	58
Prefer to Self-Describe	2
Prefer Not to Disclose	0
Current Academic Year	
Freshman	12
Sophomore	34
Junior	22
Senior	40
Institution Description	
Small Public (1000 or fewer total students)	9
Medium size Public Institution (1000 – 5000 students)	19
Large Public (more than 5000 students)	55
Small Private (1000 or fewer students)	1
Medium-size Private (1000-5000 students)	5
Large Private (more than 5000 students)	15
Other	4
Area of Specialization	
Band/Orchestra	64
Choral	37
Elementary	6
Other	1

The mean scores, standard deviations, and category classifications for all variables are listed in Table 2. The category classifications were based on similar procedures conducted by Teachout (1997). As an ex post facto measure (Teachout, 1997) we placed each item into broad categories of subject knowledge and skills (SK), pedagogical knowledge and skills (PD), and personal knowledge and skills (PS). Using an online internet randomizer (Randomizer Wheel, 2024), we randomly selected approximately 20% of the classifications and asked two music education graduate students not affiliated with the study to serve as a reliability check and independently agree or disagree with the classification

assignments. Intercoder reliability, measured as the number of agreements divided by total observations, was 97.12%, which exceeded the acceptability threshold of 80% suggested by Madsen and Madsen (2016).

Descriptive results showed "Is knowledgeable of subject matter & materials" (M = 6.56, SD = .075) as the variable rated as most influential on a MTE's teaching effectiveness. Other highly rated variables included "Is mature and has self-control" (M = 6.51, SD = .67), "Is able to present a lesson/class with clarity" (M = 6.45, SD = .75), " Is able to hold students' attention" (M = 6.45, SD = .76), "Displays confidence" (M = 6.42, SD = .77), and "Is able to motivate students" (M = 6.42, SD = .86). "Possesses proficient piano skills" (M = 4.25, SD = 1.51) was the variable rated as the least influential on the perception of a MTE's teaching effectiveness. Other variables rated lowest include "Uses a variety of technologies in teaching" (M = 4.73, SD = 1.51) and "Is knowledgeable and proficient in all musical areas (e.g., band, choral, string, etc…)" (M = 5.02, SD =1.32). T-test analyses ($p < .05$) found no significant differences between mean scores related to differences in gender, the participants academic levels, the size of the schools which participants attended, and area of specialization and the thirty-five Likert-type scale variables.

Table 2. Means & Standard Deviations for All Variables by Rank Order

Variables	M	SD	Category
Is knowledgeable of subject matter & materials	6.57	.76	SK
Is mature and has self-control	6.51	.67	PS
Is able to present a lesson/class with clarity	6.45	.75	PD
Is able to hold students' attention	6.45	.76	PD
Displays confidence	6.42	.77	PS
Is able to motivate students	6.42	.86	PD
Values student input	6.37	.82	PD
Demonstrates strong leadership skills	6.37	.83	PS
Creates an inclusive classroom	6.34	1.07	PD
Is flexible and adaptable	6.33	.80	PS
Is patient with students	6.32	.86	PS
Is organized and prepared	6.28	.91	PS
Involves students in the learning process	6.27	.91	PD
Easily develops a positive rapport with students	6.25	1.02	PD
Displays an understanding of current issues related to education	6.12	1.02	PD
Manages stress well	6.10	.98	PS
Maintains an effective class instructional pace	6.08	.95	PD
Is enthusiastic, energetic	6.03	.99	PS

Possesses a broad understanding of teaching/learning strategies	6.00	1.04	PD
Demonstrates a high level of musicianship	5.85	1.40	SK
Has excellent speaking skills (diction, tonal inflection, vocabulary)	5.81	1.10	PS
Has a pleasant personality; sense of humor	5.73	1.21	PS
Possesses musical knowledge (music theory, history, etc.)	5.68	1.16	SK
Employs a variety of materials/activities within a lesson/class	5.66	1.19	PD
Is creative, imaginative, and spontaneous	5.65	1.17	PS
Maintains a high level of professionalism	5.55	1.33	PS
Frequently makes eye contact with students	5.47	1.28	PD
Uses a variety of assessments to facilitate student learning	5.43	1.31	PD
Demonstrates strong conducting skills	5.39	1.43	SK
Infuses research findings to support teaching approaches	5.38	1.37	PD
Moves toward and among the group	5.32	1.30	PD
Demonstrates excellent music performance skills	5.30	1.56	SK
Is knowledgeable and proficient in all musical areas (e.g., band, choral, string, etc…)	5.02	1.32	SK
Uses a variety of technologies in teaching	4.76	1.50	PD
Possesses proficient piano skills	4.25	1.51	SK

* Note: Under "Category," SK = Subject Knowledge, PD = Pedagogical Skills, PS = Personal Skills

In the survey's Part Three, the participants provided twenty-seven additional comments concerning skills/behaviors that they thought influenced undergraduate students' perceptions of their MTE's teaching effectiveness (see Table 3). We examined the additional responses through a previously established qualitative coding procedure for analyzing participants' responses by (a) assigning codes, (b) combining codes into themes, and (c) displaying the data (Creswell, 2007). We independently coded each response. Using the established list of codes, two graduate students in music education unfamiliar with the study served as a reliability check and independently coded six randomly chosen responses, approximately 20% of total open responses. Randomization was achieved using an Internet randomizer (Randomizer Wheel, 2024). Intercoder reliability, measured as the number of agreements divided by total observations, was 95.28%, which exceeded the acceptability threshold of 80% suggested by Madsen and Madsen (2016).

Table 3. Additional Comments Provided by Respondents

Trustworthy
Must have administrative and management skills
General kindness, the ability to make friendships with students
My professor is very kind, patient, and funny. She has real world experience teaching middle school band and she uses that to tell us about her experiences so that we know what we can expect.
Loving learning (exemplifies an open mind)
They care a lot about our futures and do everything necessary to get us to the level that we need to be at to become a music educator.
Charismatic and understanding but still firm. Can have a balance between fun and business.
Effective music educators at all levels are ones that adjust their curriculum to reflect the current societal norms and/or demands. In turn, effective music educators are ones that can recognize when their teaching style/curriculum is outdated and needs to change in order to benefit the students and their learning experiences.
Real inclusivity, not just inclusivity of liberal and marginal students. A value of every opinion as long as it is not inherently hateful.
An effective university music teacher educator is someone that fosters excellence within each individual preservice teacher rather than a general greatness across all students. Many students have personalities which they will one day present to their students. An effective professor will mentor and equip these preservice teachers with the tools they need to be successful teachers while still holding true to their individual personalities. An effective music teacher educator will also be empathetic to a whirlwind course load that students take on, but not sacrifice the integrity of a course. Instead an instructor must anticipate busy times in a semester and have flexibility to adjust the course calendar if necessary.
I believe that a university music teacher educator displays a variety of qualities that add to the impact they have on their students' professionalism and character development.
Personal investment on student success
Teach students different ways to reach their goals
Ability to understand what is going on within the classroom (withitness), ability to control the classroom.
Knowledge of real world teacher issues, respect for a variety of forms of music education and attempts to appeal to that.
Sets high expectations while being empathetic, being encouraging not demeaning

Being relatable to your students, makes the relationship with your students music better and will make your students want to learn more because it's from you

Approachability and adaptability to students' needs

Genuinely values everything that students contribute to the classroom
I think a teacher's ability and encouragement to engage with students outside the classroom and invest in learning.

Someone who can flip the switch from a pleasant environment with jokes and having fun to cracking down on issues that must be fixed while commanding serious authority and respect.

Making sure there is an inviting yet firm classroom because that is something that should be reflected in the students when they go out and begin teaching.

Teach things other than music, shows students how to apply music skills to other areas of life

Strong will, effective use of silence, understand how assignments function

Able to find solutions to challenges that they might not expect to face, yet tackle them anyway and in a calm respectful manner

Personable, patient

Effective music educators at all levels are ones that adjust their curriculum to reflect current societal norms and/or demands. In turn, effective music educators are ones that can recognize when their teaching style/curriculum is outdated and ready to change in order to benefit the students and their learning experiences.

The qualitative coding analysis revealed that overall, the most common category influencing a student's perception of an effective MTE was personal attributes as reflected in statements such as "*General Kindness, the ability to make friendships with the students*," "*Loving learning (exemplifies an open mind)*," and "*Charismatic and understanding but still firm, can have a balance between fun and business*." Other comments suggested skills that may comprise a broader category of general educational characteristics such as "*Teach students different ways to reach their goals*," and "*Ability to understand what is going on within the classroom (withitness), ability to control the classroom*."

Discussion

This investigation concerned the specific skills/behaviors that undergraduate students reported to influence perceptions of their MTE's teaching effectiveness.

Overall, more skills and behaviors labeled as pedagogical and personal were rated as more influential than subject matter skills and behaviors. However, variables that reflected an instructor's personal skills and behaviors or instruction skills were rated most influential. Regarding the specific research questions in this study, statistical analysis found no significant differences among the demographic variables of student gender, academic year, institution, or area of specialization. Thus, there seemed to be a strong sense of agreement among the participants in this study that MTEs should focus on developing pedagogical skills and behaviors specifically related to presentation of information in order to be considered effective. This finding supported previous reports that effective teacher educators teach from a variety of strategies, engage students, and create classroom atmospheres that motivate students to strive for in-depth understanding of information (Bain, 2004; Haston & Russell, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Wiggins, 2015). The finding further suggested that while undergraduate music education students perceived content knowledge as the single most important factor influencing their professors' effectiveness, they also valued personal skills and behaviors as previously reported (Haston & Russell, 2012; Raiber &Teachout, 2014).

This conclusion is somewhat different from previous research (Madsen et al., 1989; Yarbrough, 1975) that indicated a music teacher's personal characteristics were considered most influential on their effectiveness. However, additional participants' comments also supported the idea that personal characteristics are important for college instructors. While there appears to be similarities between K-12 music educators and college MTEs, presentation of information appears more important to college music education students regarding what influences their perceptions of effective MTEs. A possible explanation for this difference could be the level of instruction. Previous studies focused on K-12 students' perceptions of their teachers while the current study may be an indicator of different expectations for MTEs.

It is interesting that the survey variables which reflected more specific music subject matter skills and behaviors were not rated as influential in this study. Whereas most of the survey variables were rated relatively high, skills reflecting musical skills such as knowledge of music history and theory, conducting, and performance were not considered among the most influential for MTEs. This result is supported by previous research for K-12 music educators, however because collegiate MTEs are often considered role models for future K-12 music educators (Kelly & Juchniewicz, 2022; Page & Jenks, 2012), the finding might be somewhat surprising from a performance perspective. This finding might suggest that participants in this study may not perceive their MTE's music skills as a factor

influencing their developing teacher skills. This could be because many MTEs often do not teach classes or ensembles directly using music skills such as music theory, conducting, and applied lessons. It's possible that college level students see their MTEs more as classroom or rehearsal models than musical models.

Results from this study may impact graduate music teacher education programs by providing a framework through which to focus teaching assistantships, guidance, mentorships, and assessments. Previous researchers (Clement, 2018; Flaherty, 2023; Gyurko, et al., 2016) have shown that successful teaching in higher education requires a unique mindset, teaching approaches, and skills that can be different from K-12 preparation. Bain (2004) particularly stated that simply being a good K-12 teacher does not necessarily make an individual a good teacher of teachers. Programs may consider the curricular experiences for graduate music education majors who are seeking to become MTEs. Graduate music teacher educator programs may wish to provide experiences that focus more on the development of teacher delivery skills and less on musical skills as part of teaching assistantships. Programs may also consider individual personal traits when advising students. These considerations may affect graduate teaching assistantships and other opportunities that graduate students often have when pursuing PhD music education degrees.

The study's findings should be viewed with caution. Certainly, the low number of respondents makes it difficult to generalize across broader populations. A possible explanation could be the length of the survey and the timing of survey distribution; the survey was sent out at the end of a semester when students are at their busiest time possibly resulting in survey fatigue. Future studies could address additional influences on preservice music teachers' skills including ensemble participation (including the prospects of bifurcation of performance from education), applied lessons, and other curricular requirements. One interesting future possibility might be to investigate online teaching's impact on student's perceptions of effective higher education music teaching. Future studies could also compare perceptions of skills and behaviors between MTEs, ensemble directors, applied professors and other faculty to better provide a quality music education for every student. An additional study may focus on a longitudinal approach to determine if perceptions change over the course of an undergraduate degree.

Summary

This study was an investigation of collegiate students' perceptions of effective skills and behaviors of college/university MTEs. A review of literature

found that despite previous research focused on factors affecting the development of effective preservice and in-service K-12 teaching skills, there is minimal empirical research regarding what skills and behaviors are considered most effective for collegiate MTEs. Information from the present study showed that skills and behaviors labeled as pedagogical and personal were consistently rated as more influential than subject matter skills and behaviors. Specific skills and behaviors that reflected an instructor's presentation style and personal skills and behaviors were most often rated as most influential. Skills and behaviors that reflected more specific music subject matter knowledge were not rated as influential in this study. No significant differences were found among the research question variables of student's gender, academic year, institution, or area of specialization.

The findings suggest that undergraduate students may not perceive their MTE's music skills as a factor influencing undergraduate student teacher skill development and that they may see their MTEs more as classroom or rehearsal models than musical models. Furthermore, the findings have implications for developing graduate students' teaching skills by providing experiences that focus more on the development of instructional delivery skills and less on musical skills as part of teaching assistantships. Future studies may focus on additional influences on undergraduates' perceptions of MTEs, including their current or previous ensemble participation, applied lessons, on-line instruction, and other curricular requirements.

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Understanding Music Major Group Piano in the 21st Century: Digital Nativism and Student Adaptation[1]

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Group piano instruction has been a popular means of music education in America for many years. Despite the robust history of group piano pedagogy and curriculum development over the course of the past century, empirical research to test and investigate the practices of group piano teachers is limited (Betts & Cassidy, 2000; Cremashi, 2012; Pike, 2014). Group piano teaching materials have also not kept pace with rapid advances in technology (Choi, 2020). Recent teacher guides, literature reviews, and an emphasis on research initiatives are beginning to address these deficiencies (Journal of Piano Research, 2024; Mishra & Fast, 2018; Morrison, 2023), however, a thorough understanding of the students in group piano is still needed. This review of literature will contribute to our understanding of today's digital native music majors and their needs while adapting to college and working within the undergraduate group piano curriculum. Findings from this literature review reveal that group piano provides opportunities for students to develop essential music skills (such as sight-reading, transposition, harmonization, improvisation, and accompanying) in an environment that is both practical and engaging, and full of technological resources. Group piano courses may also be conducive for learning "real life" skills such as creativity, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. The unique needs and adaptation patterns of today's digital native learners require further study, which may lead to necessary and continual updates in pedagogical practices and curricular guidelines for the modern group piano instructor.

Degree programs dedicated to piano pedagogy are a relatively new phenomenon in the field of music education, but the intricacies of teaching piano in private and group settings have been studied, at least informally, for much of the past century (Burnette, 1982; Canfield,1936; Frisch, 1954; Pike, 2014). Group or class piano courses are a key component of the curriculum for students pursuing an undergraduate degree in music therapy, education, and performance,

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yet national standards for collegiate-level courses often lack specificity, and the curriculum content for group piano varies between programs. By comparison, other areas of education literature include numerous studies regarding the complex relationship between research findings, standards, student needs, and teaching practice (Coate, Barnett, & Williams, 2003; Hiebert, 1999; Robles, 2016). Despite the prevalence of piano classes in university programs throughout the United States, little empirical research exists pertaining to the value of these courses as part of the curriculum (Betts & Cassidy, 2000; Cremaschi, 2012; Pike, 2014).

Recent changes in the research landscape have begun to address these deficiencies. For example, the first issue of the *Journal of Piano Research* is expected in fall 2024. This publication aims to fill the need for additional research in the field, and is currently open access, making articles available for free to anyone who registers for an account (Journal of Piano Research, 2024). However, even as the number of empirical research studies pertaining to group piano increases and findings become more accessible, additional scope and understanding of the students enrolled in group piano is also needed. Piano pedagogy should adapt to the needs of modern students and new technologies require educators to regularly enhance and alter their teaching strategies to meld with students' technological growth mindset (Crappell, 2019). Group piano coursework and associated practices should consider the specific needs of the learners enrolled, which are increasingly influenced by societal technology shifts (Choi, 2020). At the same time, eye-catching apps and other tools are not beneficial in all circumstances (Ajero, 2019). A focus on both the digital habits and adaptation processes of today's group piano students should influence collegiate educators as they continue to revise, design, and examine teaching best practices.

Today's university group piano students were born in the first decade of the 21st century, and accessible digital technology has likely impacted both their academic and social routines. Recent literature describes today's college students as *digital natives* because they utilize different learning processes than their generational predecessors as a result of widespread technology use throughout their lifetime (Cleveland, Jackson, & Dawson, 2016; Cremata & Powell, 2017; Prensky, 2001; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Group piano is one of the first classes that these digital native music majors encounter in college and a core element of undergraduate music curricula. How students adopt productive educational habits in core coursework during the transition to college has been described in existing adaptation literature (Crede & Niehorster, 2012). Specifically, collegiate adaptation has been a prevalent research topic since the 1940s (O'Donnell et al.,

2018), yet little is known about how music majors adapt to college, specially to the demands of core music classes, and how adaptation techniques among digital native learners may inform group piano pedagogy.

The primary purpose of this literature review is to examine the students in today's group piano courses within the context of their modern learning needs. Future improvements to pedagogical outcomes can be identified by understanding the connections between foundations of group piano coursework, rapid changes to technology, and how students adapt to college. I developed this review by first evaluating piano pedagogy and group piano research. Piano pedagogy textbooks, method books, research articles, and teacher handbooks (Agay, 2004; Baker-Jordan, 2003; Bastien, 1988; Coats, 2006; Crappell, 2019; Fisher, 2010; Jacobson, 2016; Lyke, et al., 2011, Pike, 2017) were used to identify foundational keyboard experiences in group piano (e.g. sight-reading, transposition, harmonization, improvisation, and accompanying). However, Choi (2020) pointed out that group piano teaching materials have quickly become outdated because of technological advances. Given the lack of up-to-date technology resources in group piano, it was necessary to synthesize findings regarding technology, pedagogy, and college age students from music and general education literature to fully understand today's students. All sources were found using Google Scholar, JSTOR, and other library databases, and I searched specific music education journals using SAGE. I also looked at targeted journals (e.g., *Active Learning in Higher Education, Journal of College Student Development, Research in Higher Education)* for studies focused on collegiate adaptation, since students enrolled in group piano are also often new to college. Although group piano students are a diverse population that should not be over generalized, they are adapting to college at the same time as they are developing piano proficiency skills, and this may be an important facet of understanding them in the classroom. My search terms included all piano, keyboard, group piano, class piano, and piano pedagogy combinations and derivatives, music learning, practice, and education phrases (e.g. content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, practice habits, practice skills, professional development), higher education and collegiate transition terms (e.g. adaptation, adjustment, effectiveness, emerging adulthood, functionality, life skills) and relevant technology descriptors (e.g. 21st century learning, asynchronous learning, digital, digital natives, flipped classroom, technological pedagogical knowledge). I did not limit my search using specific criteria or dates given the lack of existing research in this area.

My examination of existing literature enabled me to identify three facets of today's group piano students that will facilitate this review. In the following sections I will describe: a) the context of group piano coursework as described by

research, history, standard teaching practices, and potential 21st century growth opportunities, b) digital nativism and other technological attributes of today's collegiate learners applicable to group piano, and c) the process of collegiate adaptation/adjustment as it relates to group piano students. Further group piano research can be developed within this understanding of today's students through the lens of technology and college adaptation.

A Brief Overview of Group Piano History, Research, & Growth Opportunities

Group piano coursework constitutes a significant component of the core music curriculum that should be addressed in research, because it reaches the vast majority of undergraduate music students. In addition to providing the foundation for students' other music coursework, piano classes may prepare today's music majors with skills for practical career applications in multiple music fields (education, performance, therapy, etc.) Teaching and learning piano skills in groups presents a unique dynamic for both instructors and students. The following section of this literature review will briefly address the history and standard practices of teaching piano in groups and existing research in the field. The goal of this section is to provide a foundation of standard practices for group piano at the collegiate level to contextualize further sections that examine today's students. Identifying what still needs to be learned can assist current and future group piano instructors and researchers as they prepare to meet the needs of contemporary students (Crappell, 2019). A review of growth opportunities facing teachers and students in the 21st century will also be included. This discussion may serve as an important resource to promote best practices in a changing market and connect existing group piano best practices with the specific needs of today's learners.

Group Piano History and Standard Practices

The history of group/class piano in the United States can be traced to the growing demand for acoustic pianos and music instruction in the late 1880s (Fisher, 2010; Morrison, 2023). As America became the world's largest manufacturer of pianos, educators saw the need to teach numerous new students at once, and group piano coursework was included in some public-school curricula (Fisher, 2010). By the 1920s, colleges and universities were offering group piano teacher certification programs. This phenomenon expanded throughout the course of the 20th century, as digital piano laboratories made instruction more convenient and cost effective. During this period of growth,

advocates consistently lauded group instruction as potentially more effective than private lessons, because students have the opportunity to learn from both the teacher and their peers (Fisher, 2010; Valle et al., 2016).

Despite the prevalence of group piano classes in university settings, there are few national guidelines and standards for these courses. The National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) provides the most specificity with regards to piano study for music therapy majors, stating that they should develop "advanced keyboard skills, including the ability to play at sight, accompany, transpose, and improvise" (NASM, 2023). These are specific keyboard competencies with a history of inclusion in piano curricula (Betts & Cassidy, 2000). However, the NASM standards for other music majors are far less specific, requiring music education majors to gain "functional performance skills" at the keyboard (NASM, 2023) with little explanation of what constitutes "functional." Guidelines for performance majors are even less detailed, stating that essential development for these students should include "keyboard skills" (NASM, 2023). Based on these open-ended standards, individual programs are responsible for developing coursework to meet the specific needs of their students. Program content and duration vary between schools and the typical group piano schedule of coursework may include 1 to 3 class meetings per week over the course of 1 to 4 semesters.

The standards and accreditation requirements for collegiate music programs highlight the critical need for group piano instruction. Keyboard competency is a requisite performance standard for all professional baccalaureate degrees in music and all undergraduate degrees leading to teacher certification (NASM, 2023). Group instruction is essential because piano classes are required to assist undergraduate students in developing this competency and college budgets, equipment, and faculty teaching loads are just a few of the factors that make it necessary for music majors to learn piano in groups, rather than private lessons (Fisher, 2010). At the same time, there is an imperative need for numerous group piano instructors in order to limit the size of each class section. Based on my experiences at conferences, multiple institutions, and reading the literature, colleges and universities rely on both faculty instructors and graduate teaching assistants in the group piano area because many sections need to be offered to accommodate all music undergraduates.

An Overview of Existing Group Piano Research

Existing empirical research specific to the group piano context and curriculum is limited (Betts & Cassidy, 2000), although recent research initiatives

from national organizations (including the Frances Clark Center and MTNA) are beginning to address this need. Much of the group piano literature that does exist can be separated into four distinct categories; (a) specific student proficiency skills such as sight-reading and harmonization (Betts & Cassidy, 2000), (b) student practice habits (Cremaschi, 2012), (c) student beliefs and perceptions (Jutras, 2006), and (d) teaching strategies (Duke & Benson, 2004; Pike, 2014). American pedagogues have written a vast array of textbooks for the piano teacher, including those by Agay (2004), Baker-Jordan, (2003), Bastien (1988), Coats (2006), Crappell (2019), Fisher (2010), Jacobson (2016), Lyke, Haydon, and Rollin (2011), and Pike (2017). According to Pike (2014), however, none of those authors conducted formal research on group instruction, and rapid advances in technology have caused group piano teaching materials to quickly become outdated (Choi, 2020). The most effective group piano teaching is fast-paced and combines a carefully sequenced curriculum with a variety of learning opportunities for individuals and small groups alongside diverse technological and musical components to meet each student's needs (Pike, 2017).

Potential Growth Opportunities for 21st-Century Group Piano Students

The accessibility of technology, changing education standards, and the evolving job marketplace are three growth areas that may heavily influence the perspectives of group piano students. Research has indicated that the modern-day music student requires different skill sets when compared to previous generations, specifically in regards to communication, time on task, and general productivity (Dorfman, 2016). A discussion of today's group piano students would not be complete without mentioning the skills identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Learning, a joint public-private venture that developed the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning. Based on input from educators, education experts, and business leaders, this framework defines and illustrates the skills, knowledge, expertise, and support systems that students need to succeed in work, life, and citizenship (P21 Partnership, 2019). The P21 Framework notes that learning and innovation skills help students to prepare for increasingly complex life and work environments in the 21st century. These learning and innovation skills include what P21 identifies as the "4Cs: Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Communication, and Collaboration." Since its inception in 2002, P21 has promoted this practical 21st century approach to education (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Many educational fields increasingly focus on 21st-century skills and current frameworks recognize that there are multiple ways to be a good teacher and to

teach effectively. However, effective teaching within the 21st-century paradigm requires a shift from teacher-directed to student-centered learning (Marland, 2007). The group piano lab environment is already equipped to facilitate student-centered learning and collaboration (Fisher, 2010; Pike, 2017). Interactive exchanges in the classroom and a focus on equipping students with relevant career skills (e.g. accompanying, score reading, sight-reading) and problem-solving processes (e.g. quick music theory analysis, creating piano reductions of band and orchestra parts, cognitive chunking) allow educators to cater learning to the individual needs of students. In music education research, preparation for a broad range of careers has been noted among music student course recommendations (Marland, 2007).

Skills for the 21st century have potential for inclusion in the curricular considerations for group piano classes, and some of the inherent strengths of group instruction should naturally support recommended practices. For example, when group piano is well sequenced and carefully administered, it involves social activities and constant informal assessment (Pike, 2014). These criteria match the collaborative element of the P21 Framework 4Cs, which teaches students to work respectfully with different teams, and to compromise and communicate to achieve goals (P21 Partnership, 2019; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Social interactions with classmates and continuous teacher and peer feedback can also prepare students for a job market that is heavily reliant on the leadership skills of interpersonal communication and networking (Myers, 2016). Trilling and Fadel (2009) argue that the proliferation of digital technologies in modern life has created a new demand for these communication skills. In addition, group piano instructors may facilitate cooperative learning by promoting positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, group processing, and simultaneous interaction (Kagan, 1994).

Group piano study has a fundamentally different focus compared to private lessons (Fisher, 2010; Pike, 2014). Although technical exercises and repertoire often make up the bulk of assignments in private or applied study, group classes focus on additional skills that students will use in their future careers (especially sight-reading, transposition, harmonization, improvisation, and accompanying). Recent survey results indicated that elementary general music teachers use accompanying skills more often than any other piano skill in their classrooms (Baker, 2017). Accompanying is a focus of existing group piano curricula, but teachers may consider introducing accompaniment skills earlier in the sequence. Even first semester music majors would benefit from the collaborative nature of accompanying a solo instrument. The ability to accompany and sight-read necessitates cognitive chunking—the identification of meaningful chunks and

patterns (Pike & Carter, 2010). Technical exercises and repertoire can be useful in the development of this cognitive skill, but 21st-century teachers should be able to identify short excerpts that emphasize these techniques without taking too much practice time away from other core proficiencies. Group piano teachers may also carefully budget student practice time to include a myriad of practical skills, instead of pushing their students' focus toward extensive technique and repertoire demands.

Student projects provide an excellent opportunity for music majors to showcase their group piano knowledge and playing skills in a creative endeavor (Fisher, 2010). Skill projects for today's evolving job market can be completed outside of class so that students can synthesize and apply their knowledge throughout the semester. Examples of "real-life" projects include accompanying a junior-high level solo, arranging a popular song for piano, teaching and playing a choral warm-up, improvising music for an elementary classroom game, or conducting an ensemble and playing individual parts. Semester projects should be assigned with enough detail to inspire participating students and guide creative choices, but open-ended enough so that students can blend their interests with career crossovers in the field (Myers, 2016).

Another foundation of group piano pedagogy and curriculum planning is ensuring that teachers can demonstrate both what to practice and how to practice. Although research results indicate that practice checklists may have little effect on student grades (Cremaschi, 2012), the literature has also provided evidence that cognitive chunking and other methodical practice strategies contribute to increased accuracy and improvement in piano performance (Pike & Carter, 2010). Providing thorough expectations about outside practice and in-class responsibilities is key to student success (Pike, 2014). Weekly assignment sheets, online class discussion boards, and in-class review activities may be used to convey these expectations. Assignments should not only include a list of activities and exercises to be practiced, but also an estimate of how much time to spend on each item, and what steps to follow. To share practice strategies, group piano may include opportunities for "open lab hours" or collaborative tutoring.

When considering instruction versus assessment time, collegiate piano teachers may grapple with the substantial amount of class time needed for formal assessments (including quizzes, exams, and proficiencies). However, peer-assessment and self-assessment can help to ensure the effective use of classroom time (Valle et al., 2016). Students can receive valuable feedback from both their instructor and their classmates, and casual peer-assessment in the form of partner or small group work and large group performances can provide performers and audience members with learning opportunities (Fisher, 2010). When formal

assessments are needed, teachers can easily expand these measures beyond the limited class time by using technology. Performance and practice videos cut down on the amount of class time spent listening to individual student playing, provide students the opportunity to use practical recording technology as suggested in recent curricular trends (Myers, 2016), and give teachers the chance to view students' practice environments and habits.

Curricular planning for group piano teachers may involve increasing attention to technological implementation (Dorfman, 2016). Easy access to recording and score-reading technology on smartphones, tablets, and laptops could help ensemble and group playing become more effective and convenient (Burrack, 2012; Johnson Turner, 2013). Students in the modern era can easily share recordings from their home practice, and interactive apps may assist teachers in providing constructive feedback (Menscher, 2017; Mishra & Fast, 2018). Assessment of practice strategies via recordings should be just as important as the assessment of in-class performances. This pedagogical technique is consistent with current trends in education, which have increasingly promoted process rather than performance-based learning (Myers, 2016).

The objectives of group piano study closely align with the opportunity to foster creativity and empathy, pattern recognition, and meaning—abilities that are lauded in 21st-century skill development. The key to teaching creativity and innovation lies in providing students with experiences solving real-world problems and utilizing higher-order thinking (Anderson et al., 2001). Research indicates that music students placed a high value on experience-based learning activities such as student teaching, ensembles, and applied lessons (Groulx, 2016). Today's group piano students should be encouraged to identify gaps in their coursework and to find ways to fill those gaps. The act of solving musical problems with peers in the group setting may empower students to solve problems on their own through experimentation (Myers, 2016; Pike, 2014). Collectively, 21st-century skill development, the P21 Framework 4Cs, and other modern trends in education provide natural growth opportunities for group piano curriculum planning.

Digital Nativism and the Contemporary College Student

The phenomenon of *digital nativism* has been used to describe students who were born after 1980, and have grown up with increasing access to technology, specifically social digital platforms (Cleveland et al., 2016; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). To understand today's group piano students, it is important to first understand their *digital native* identity. The term *digital natives* was coined as

early as 2001, when Mark Prensky noted the radical changes taking place in society, particularly that the needs of contemporary students were not adequately met by the existing educational system (Prensky, 2001). Numerous authors have stated that students who have grown up in the digital era think and process information differently than their generational predecessors (Cleveland et al., 2016; Cremata & Powell, 2017; Prensky, 2001; Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Furthermore, music educators have suggested that digital devices hold legitimate potential as both practice aids and as full-fledged musical instruments, but are often misunderstood or poorly utilized (Bauer, 2014; Mishra & Fast, 2018; Randles, 2013).

Research regarding the unique characteristics of digital natives is still emerging, but early scholarship has indicated that identity formation, information overload, privacy, and safety factors related to technology use may impact students' classroom behaviors and attitudes (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). A study from the first decade of the 21st century found that approximately 64 percent of teens in the United States had created and shared some sort of Internet content, and similar findings have been observed on a global scale (Lenhart et al., 2007). This percentage of creators has certainly increased in recent years, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Although digital tools may facilitate a plethora of creative pursuits, it is unclear if social media activity translates to tangible academic skills, or if the benefits outweigh the risks (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Findings of a 2006 study indicated that 13.7 percent of adult participants reported finding it difficult to stay away from the Internet for several days at a time, and 8.2 percent used the Internet to escape problems or relieve negative moods (Eboujaoude et al., 2006). Such feelings have been a common, lifelong reality for today's collegiate students. The influence of technology in university group piano is likely unavoidable, and the array of technological resources employed in a piano lab may be distracting (Pike, 2017). It falls to instructors to harness the unique traits of digital native learners for pedagogical purposes.

TPACK For 21st-Century Students & Educators

For today's *digital native* group piano students, technology is an ever-present part of learning and daily life. Therefore, teachers should regularly refresh their teaching strategies with technology in mind (Crappell, 2019). Musical technological pedagogical and content knowledge (TPACK) is a conceptual framework that describes the educator knowledge necessary for effective integration of technology in teaching and learning (Bauer, 2012). Given the recognizable differences between today's collegiate students and those of

previous generations, group piano faculty and graduate student teachers may encounter challenges in finding appropriate uses for technology to guide students in the pursuit of curricular objectives. Calls for teacher improvement in this area have outlined the need for individualized and self-defined professional development opportunities, enhanced feedback using videoconference technology, and more diverse preservice and in-service offerings specific to urban school settings (Anderson & Denson, 2015). For group piano, this need is currently being met through the conferences and online resources of MTNA and the Frances Clark Center, which have both expanded their professional development offerings in recent years. In addition, online applications, including personal learning networks have been cited as practical means to facilitate long-term, individualized professional development experiences within mentorship and collaborative exploration (Bauer, 2010). More specific applications of TPACK for today's students in group piano are needed.

Understanding Collegiate Adaptation for Today's Group Piano Students

Understanding how today's music majors in group piano courses adapt to college may provide a key to designing instruction for digital natives. I am operationally defining the process of academic adaptation/adjustment as the development of productive educational habits (Crede & Niehorster, 2012) that facilitates a smooth transition to the new developmental and psychosocial demands of college courses (Conley et al., 2013). Such processes have been studied extensively in the broader college environment and first-semester seminars are often used to help new college students navigate this difficult transition. However, research indicates that music majors may require individually tailored interventions beyond the scope of mainstream college preparation seminars (Karp, 2011). Given the full course loads and time constraints of music majors, it is unlikely that such seminars specific to the music school would be a viable option. Instead, individually tailored interventions such as student mentors, open piano lab hours staffed by graduate teaching assistants, and more frequent faculty check-ins may be required of group piano and other core curriculum instructors.

Teachers of first-year college music majors should understand their students' adaptation/adjustment processes, and the ever-changing nature of adaptation in a technology infused society. A study of higher education practices indicated that individual student differences (including selection bias based on high school GPA and ACT or SAT scores) might be more closely linked to retention and long-term GPA than the presence or absence of any first-year seminar (Clark & Cundiff,

2011). Group piano teachers do not have the time or means to differentiate instruction according to such individual differences but should understand the impact they have on adaptation processes and adopt flexible approaches to help all students (regardless of background) achieve at the highest level. Group piano research supports the practice of simplifying student tasks moment to moment and identifying proximal goals to set the pace of instruction according to the least skilled students in the class. Setting the class pace in this way not only allowed all students to succeed, but also did not bore the higher achieving students, who maintained positive feelings about the class pace (Duke & Benson, 2004). However, even the most effective instrumental teachers are limited in their ability to address all student needs because instruction time comprises less than ten percent of a student's total instrumental study (Puopolo, 1971). Given this limited instruction time, teachers may need to develop extremely efficient methods to meet individual student needs during class, and harness artificial intelligence and other smart learning digital resources for video, written, and verbal assessment feedback.

Non-Music Factors Related to Student Adaptation

Non-music factors, including schedule considerations, may also impact students' adaptation and the efficiency with which students develop effective practice habits that are applicable to group piano. The demands of outside activities have the potential to affect piano practice routines. When students are not equipped with consistent and reliable practice habits, they may not feel well prepared for class and will likely experience adaptation difficulties. Adult group piano students cited their busy schedules, and conflicts with other activities as factors for discontinuing piano lessons due to lack of practice time (Cooper, 2001). Although group piano is required for most music majors, the schedules of some students may be more demanding than others. For example, marching band students may be unable to practice on game days, and music education majors may face the strenuous time commitments of practicum and student teaching. For music minors and nonmajors, intensive courses or schedules may also impact their group piano success. Teachers should assist time-crunched learners in developing practice routines.

Class size has also been cited as a potential factor that influences student adaptation and success. Jackson (1980) compared the achievement levels of students in large and small beginning piano classes and found no significant difference. However, the participants in Jackson's investigation ranged in age from preschool to college, and class sizes ranged from 2 to 8 students. The results

may be different for today's collegiate piano classes, which typically include 12 or more students in each course section. Class size and faculty-to-student ratios have been often associated with instructional quality in other areas of higher education (Bandiera, 2010; Martin, 2015), and several authors have suggested that instructors may engage in more active learning when they transition from large to small group teaching (Wright et al., 2017). Music education research indicates that a key component of efficient student learning relies on instructor identification of critical skills to teach in limited amounts of class time (Betts & Cassidy, 2000). Evaluations of group piano pedagogy and curricula may assist teachers in identifying essential proficiency skills to prioritize so that students adapt to course demands in an efficient manner.

Grit and perseverance may also affect student adaptation. In a study of collegiate, instrumental music majors, grit was the strongest predictor of practice efficiency (Miksza & Tan, 2015). However, encouraging grit and perseverance may also divide students according to specific attitudes and behaviors (Kirchgasler, 2018). Students struggling to complete short-term practice objectives may need extra assistance outside of class to achieve long-term goals. Grit is also significantly related to flow and self-efficacy (Yoon et al., 2018). Students who display grit are likely to practice more, thus increasing their skills, which in turn leads to flow and fluency. The gap in skill level between students who display grit in their early practice and those who do not is likely to widen quickly over time because of societal influence (Kirchgasler, 2018), as students whose practice is efficacious become increasingly comfortable at the piano, and their less effective peers continue to struggle with fundamental, short-term tasks.

Miscommunication between group piano students and teachers may also impact adaptation success. Research has indicated that communication issues may lead to the erosion of students' personal confidence in music coursework (Gavin, 2016). This type of confidence crisis may lead to inefficient practice, unsuccessful adaptation, and even withdrawal from the music degree program. Authors of a study of collegiate instrumental music majors reported that communication disconnects were common between teachers and students and may result in substantial differences between the practice approaches that are taught by instructors and those used by students outside of class (Miksza & Tan, 2015). Just because collegiate instructors introduce a specific rehearsal strategy does not mean students will remember or use the suggested techniques in the practice room. Researchers and educators could benefit from continued exploration of the factors that may impact student adaptation in group piano.

Conclusions

Group piano is a core class in undergraduate music programs that endeavors to help students develop functional skills for a variety of future careers in an environment that is both practical and engaging. To develop high quality curricula and pedagogical plans, instructors should understand the foundations of group piano alongside the unique traits of today's students and how they are impacted by rapid changes in technology and the ongoing process of adapting to college. When considering how to best meet the needs of contemporary students, I recommend that educators evaluate how 21st-century skills will be developed in group piano courses and how the unique adaptation processes of today's collegiate learners impact student success. This investigation found that although there is little existing research pertaining to group piano (Betts & Cassidy, 2000; Cremaschi, 2012; Pike, 2014), piano pedagogues have successfully used anecdotal, experience-based evidence to drive professional development for much of the past century (Pike, 2014). Further investigations are beginning to emerge thanks to the dedicated research initiatives of the Frances Clark Center for Keyboard Pedagogy, Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), and others, and are necessary for understanding the current state of the profession and any curricular changes that are needed. Using this review as a starting point for ongoing commitments to understand today's students, piano educators may initiate further progress by undertaking additional empirical studies. Valuable knowledge may be gained through research of established and emerging teaching practices as they relate to diverse student groups.

In today's educational culture, group piano courses remain highly relevant to the collegiate music curriculum because piano proficiency skills have important and legitimate career use in music therapy, education, and performance (Betts & Cassidy, 2000; Pike & Carter, 2010; Baker, 2017). Group piano also promotes personal gratification and future career confidence for music majors. However, the wide variability between programs, nonspecific standards, and lack of curricular updates pertaining to technology may contribute to some ineffective teaching and learning outcomes. The unique needs and adaptation patterns of today's digital native learners require further study, which may lead to necessary updates in pedagogical practices and curricular guidelines for the modern group piano instructor. To determine whether piano curricula meet the needs of 21st-century students, educators may consider how classroom activities and assessments can prepare students to tackle changing technologies, education standards, and an evolving job marketplace. Undertaking new research in these

areas would be valuable for educators as they explore the intricacies of understanding group piano students in the 21st century.

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Before and After: Experiences of a Trans Male Band Director

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The purpose of this narrative case study was to explore the experiences of one trans male band director, both before and after coming out as transgender. Specific research questions included the following: (1) What was the nature of his experience of coming out as trans, specifically in the workplace? (2) How have his experiences as a male-presenting band director compared to his previous experiences as a female-presenting band director? Qualitative analysis of interview data revealed two main themes, one in response to each research question. The first theme centered on the participant's coming-out experience as characterized by relief that his gender identity and his career as a band director could co-exist and that he could be accepted and valued for who he truly is. The second theme focused on the juxtaposition between the gendered treatment he experienced when presenting as female and the feeling of a removal of gendered obstacles when he began presenting as male. Implications include the need to further examine factors that contribute to positive coming-out experiences for trans music teachers, how music class setting and geographical location may influence the experiences of trans students and teachers, and the persistent gendered inequities that exist within the band teaching profession.

A persistent gender imbalance exists within the band teaching profession. For a complex collection of reasons (Bartleet, 2002; Jackson, 1996), recent studies show the percentage of high school band directors who are cisgender men[1] ranges from 73% to 87% in various regions of the U.S. (Regier, 2021; Shanley, 2020; Shouldice & Eastridge, 2020; Shouldice & Woolnough, 2022). While this imbalance tends to be less pronounced at the middle school level (Leimer, 2012; Shouldice & Eastridge, 2020), it is even more prominent among those in leadership positions, such as festival adjudicators and directors of bands invited to perform at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic (Leimer, 2012; Shaker, 2020; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012). Though one might assume this imbalance has improved in recent years, only 13% of bands selected to perform at the Midwest Clinic during the years 2009-2018 were led by women, and only 5% of bands selected to perform at the Collegiate Band Directors National Association national conference were led by women during the years 1993-2019 (Shaker, 2020).

Music education researchers have thoroughly documented the marginalization many cisgender women perceive in their work as band directors. Female band directors have reported struggles in the hiring process and/or interactions with administrators, a lack of female role models, and feelings of isolation and exclusion, with many referring to the band community as a "good old boys' club" (Shouldice, 2023, 2024; Bovin, 2019; Coen-Mishlan, 2015; Fischer-Croneis, 2016; Gathen, 2014; Jones, 2010; Mullan, 2014; Sears, 2010). Some even describe discrimination from colleagues due to their gender (Shouldice, 2024; Bovin, 2019, 2020; Gathen, 2014; Jones, 2010; Mullan, 2014) or a perception that they are judged more harshly in adjudicated events (Coen-Mishlan, 2015; Mullan, 2014; Sears, 2010). Two studies of festival scores in Virginia revealed that bands directed by women tended to receive lower ratings than those directed by men (Shouldice & Eastridge, 2020; Shouldice & Woolnough, 2022).

As an even smaller population with unique experiences, transgender and gender-expansive band directors likely also face marginalization in their work. However, while there is a growing body of research pertaining to trans students in music classes (Greer, 2022; McManus, 2022; Nichols, 2013; Palkki, 2020; Palkki & Caldwell, 2018), few researchers have focused on trans or gender-expansive music teachers. One narrative study of a new music educator who transitioned while she was a pre-service teacher documented her experiences with transphobia in her college choir classes and subsequent struggles in the hiring process (Bartolome, 2016; Bartolome & Stanford, 2018). The participant, Melanie, felt frustration and confusion when women and men were directed to different rooms for sectional rehearsals, commenting, "I am finally living full-time as a female, but I still sing Bass II in the choir. Where do I go?" (Bartolome & Stanford, 2018, p. 126). Melanie later encountered difficulty finding a teaching job and was told "You might want to move out of Texas if you want to look for jobs. You might want to go somewhere less conservative" (Bartolome, 2016, p. 39). Silveira's (2019) narrative study of a pre-service music educator, Joseph, who was in the process of transitioning, focused on his developing transgender identity and the challenges he faced, such as music faculty not using his proper name or pronouns. Joseph also noted the misogyny and "male privilege" that became apparent to him after he transitioned. The experiences of both Melanie and Joseph reveal systemic issues of marginalization in the music education profession related to gender identity.

While the aforementioned researchers have explored the experiences of trans pre-service music teachers, little research exists that examines the experiences of music teachers who transition or come out as trans or gender-expansive after

entering the profession. Palkki (2023) interviewed three trans and/or gender-expansive music educators, only one of whom "had to navigate disclosure after being an established member of the school community under his dead name" (p. 109). This participant worried about negative reactions from parents and experienced misgendering, but also shared that being "an 'out' trans teacher" was a valuable source of support for his trans and gender-expansive students. Outside of music education, Wells (2018) studied the experiences of three transgender teachers in Canada who came out at work in three different decades. The most recent experienced a much higher level of support from her school administration, "demonstrate[ing] how transgender issues are slowly emerging out of the educational closet" (p. 1555), and all three described a feeling of relief after coming out as trans at work because it freed them from performing a "gender façade" that felt deeply troubling.

Beyond the field of education, a number of researchers have focused on the experiences of persons transitioning or coming out as trans in the workplace (Brewster et al., 2014; Budge et al., 2010). Schilt and Wiswall (2008) studied the workplace experiences of 43 trans individuals and found that trans men's experiences tended to differ from those of trans women. Specifically, trans women generally lost earnings while trans men gained earnings, and the former were more likely to comment on negative experiences with transitioning at work while the latter were more likely to report positive experiences. Although this does not mean trans men face no challenges, such as transphobia and/or discrimination, it does suggest that trans men may experience lessening of other challenges they had faced when presenting as cisgender women.

Because they had previous experience presenting as female in the workplace, Schilt (2010) posited that trans men who transitioned while in the same job or who worked in a new job since transitioning may have an "outsider-within" perspective that could allow them to "see the advantages associated with being men at work while still maintaining a critical view on how this advantage operates, and how it disadvantages women" (p. 9). To examine this phenomenon, Schilt interviewed 54 such trans men in a variety of occupations in California and Texas, two-thirds of whom "reported changes in their treatment at work after they began working as men," (p. 16). Specific benefits included the perception that others viewed them as having more authority and competence and that they received more respect and recognition when presenting as men than when they previously presented as women. For example, Thomas noted that "once he passed as a man, people who were unaware of his transition began to view him as more competent" (p. 72) and described a man who worked at an associated company who had "commended Thomas's boss for firing 'Susan' because she was

incompetent. He added that the 'new guy' (that is, Thomas) was great" (p. 73). After not getting an interview for a particular job when he presented as a woman a few months prior, Trey "applied for the same job as a man and was hired," while Nathan described his post-transition performance reviews as "the absolute highest that I have ever had" (p. 75). Schilt noted, "This sense of increased authority and perceived competence was particularly marked for trans men who had worked in male-dominated occupations as women" (p. 74) and that their stark differences in treatment "illustrate the hardships that women working in male-dominated jobs often face: being passed over for hiring and promotions, having their hard work go unrecognized, and not being socially accepted" (p. 76). Workers in such places tend to build homosocial workplace cultures, which manifest "as women exclude[ing] men from 'girl talk' and men exclude[ing] women from 'the boys' club'" (p. 98), thereby creating a "gender segregation that contributes to women's lack of access to men's social networks, a key factor in moving up the workplace hierarchy" (p. 96). In contrast, "trans men who described their workplaces as gender-equitable . . . reported little change from working as women to working as men" (p. 82)."

A decade after Schilt's (2010) study, Clements et al. (2021) surveyed 227 trans masculine individuals across the U.S. regarding their perceptions of male privilege to seek "new understandings of gendered power as enacted in daily life" (p. 124). Similar to Schilt's findings, almost half of Clements et al.'s participants "perceived that their male identities seemed to evoke assumptions of authority and competence, often without any evidence" (p. 126). "Some noted that their accomplishments were rewarded (with money or attention) only at the point that they were perceived as men" (p. 127). Another theme was that many now felt included as "one of the boys" but that, for some, "being included in male spaces came at the cost of exposure to disparaging attitudes and sexist comments about women" (p. 128).

That many trans men report gaining advantages in the workplace post-transition suggests the experiences of a trans male band director may shed unique light on the phenomenon of gender in secondary band teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of one trans male band director, both before and after coming out at work. Specific research questions included the following: 1) What was the nature of his experience of coming out as trans, specifically in the workplace? and 2) How have his experiences as a male-presenting band director compared to his previous experiences as a female-presenting band director?

Theoretical Framework

Feminist standpoint theory, first proposed by Sandra Harding, is rooted in the idea that individuals in certain social/political positions have access to information that those in other positions do not (Crasnow, 2014) because "knowledge is situated in a specific time and space" (Cohen et al., 2022, p. 921). Accordingly, the standpoint of women enables the identification of "practices of power" by providing "distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works" (Harding, 2004, p. 21). Notably, Black feminist scholars have advanced standpoint theory by highlighting the ways in which Black women have historically occupied "a position both outside and inside the dominant culture" (Cohen et al., 2022, p. 922). Collins (1986) coined the term "outsider within" to refer to the unique standpoint of Black women who served as domestic workers and caregivers because they often had a close "insider" relationship with the white families they served but also "knew they could never belong to their white 'families'" and so "remained 'outsiders'" (p. S14). This "outsider within" status has facilitated "distinctive analyses of race, class, and gender" (p. S15) because "their difference sensitizes them to patterns that may be more difficult for . . . insiders to see" (p. S29). Similarly, a band director who has presented as both a cisgender woman and a transgender man in the workplace inhabits a unique "outsider within" standpoint that may provide further insight into gender dynamics in the band profession. Thus, the "outsider within" standpoint is used in this study as a unique lens for analyzing the participant's coming-out experiences (from presenting as cisgender to presenting as transgender) and comparing his experiences before and after coming out (from presenting as female to presenting as male).

Method

This study implemented a narrative case study design. The participant, who chose the pseudonym Martin/Marty, was purposefully selected because he is an "exemplar of [the] phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2015, p. 266). I first encountered Marty in a virtual conversation within a band director group on social media, where I read about his experiences receiving lower band festival ratings when he presented as female than he does now that he presents as male. I contacted Marty to invite him to participate in a research study about his experiences because his comment distinguished him as "a single case that manifests the important major dimensions of the issue" (Patton, 2015, p. 266).

Data collection spanned 7 months and consisted of four interviews, each lasting 75-90 minutes. I conducted interviews via video-conference due to the large physical distance between Marty and me, as well as the fact that multiple interviews would be needed. Although there are limitations to video-conference interviewing (e.g., non-verbal cues being harder to interpret), I believe the lack of physical proximity provided a sense of safety that allowed conversation to flow freely. Interviews were semi-structured, using a combination of predetermined questions and probes as well as open conversation as the interview unfolded. After transcribing each interview, I shared the transcript with Marty to elicit further comment or clarification.

Data analysis occurred throughout, as well as after, the data collection period, which allowed "the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 185). I coded each data source first through open coding, in order to "assign symbolic meaning to the . . . information compiled" (Miles et al., 2014, p. 71). The sharp decrease in new codes across the third and fourth interviews and was taken as an indication that data saturation had been reached. Next, I read through all data sources multiple times and edited my codes, combining codes to reduce redundancy and creating new codes or subcodes to reduce bulk (Miles et al., 2014). I then used pattern coding to group codes into categories (Miles et al., 2014). From the groupings constructed during pattern coding, two main categories emerged as themes.

In an attempt to balance the inherent researcher-participant power dynamics, I checked in with Marty frequently throughout the data collection, analysis, and writing processes to be sure that I was describing him as he wished and providing an accurate depiction of his story. Trustworthiness was enhanced in several ways. First, I conducted member checks by inviting Marty to read and give feedback on raw data sources (i.e., transcripts) after each interview. Second, I shared my tentative findings with Marty in our final interview and elicited his thoughts about the accuracy and authenticity of the two emergent themes. Finally, after revising the themes based on his feedback, I shared a draft of this manuscript with Marty and made edits based on his comments.

Researcher Positionality

I am a white, neurodivergent, heterosexual, cisgender woman in her mid-40s. Although I participated in band from middle school through my undergraduate experience and hold a bachelor's degree in instrumental music education, I have never worked as a band director. This makes me an "outsider within" of sorts, in that I am an outsider to the band profession but have a position of privilege as a music teacher educator and scholar. I believe that

my own "outsider within" perspective helped me to connect and build trust and rapport with Marty and brought unique insight to my data analysis and interpretation.

Marty

Martin ("Marty") Bernstein is a middle school band director in his mid-30s in a Western U.S. state, and he knew while in middle school that he wanted to be a band director:

> There was a moment in my seventh-grade band class where . . . my flute was in my lap, and I was watching my band director teach, and I was like, 'Language arts teacher or band director?' Those are my two choices . . . and I was like 'Yeah, band director. DEFINITELY band director [*laughs*]!'

Marty attended college approximately 40-45 miles from where he grew up and from the neighboring city in which he now teaches, double majoring in music performance and music education. After graduating, he obtained his teaching credential and secured a job as a middle school band director, a position he had held for just over 10 years at the time of this study.

Marty was assigned female at birth and given the name Rachel (pseudonym). It wasn't until his 30s that he gradually began to question his sex assigned at birth and eventually embrace his gender identity. According to Marty, "I've always felt, even from a little kid, that there was always something wrong that needed to be fixed." First, it was a difficult relationship with his mother from which college gave him space, followed by the uncertainty of graduation and entering the job market, an itinerant teaching assignment in his district, and then problems with his marriage. However, as each of these struggles was resolved, "things still felt wrong." Finally, Marty gradually realized the problem was that the gender he was presenting to the world did not match how he felt on the inside. Marty described how, after he built his band program to the point that he no longer had to travel to a second school,

> That's when I started to kind of pick at my marriage and be like, 'Yeah, this isn't fine' and then to finally go inward and go 'THIS [*gestures to self in an up-and-down motion*] isn't fine.' The person I present to our outer world isn't me, and this is messing me up, and THIS is the thing that feels wrong.

After acknowledging his identity as a trans man in late 2018, Marty came out to his husband (from whom he is now separated) and several close friends. He changed his name from Rachel to Marty during the 2018-2019 school year,

informed colleagues, students, and parents of his name change and desire to be called "Mx. Bernstein" at the start of the 2019-2020 school year, and began testosterone therapy in November 2019. After returning to in-person instruction in March 2021 (after a year of virtual instruction due to Covid-19), Marty officially shared his pronouns with colleagues and students, and parents.

Findings

Two main themes emerged regarding Marty's experiences as a trans male band director, both before and after coming out. These themes were (a) relief and (b) removal of gendered obstacles.

Relief

The first theme centers around Marty's coming-out experience as ultimately characterized by relief. This was both a general relief from the "nagging sense of wrongness" he had been feeling as well as a specific relief from his fears about coming out as trans in his work as a band director. His experience of relief came about as Marty reconciled "who he was supposed to be" with "who he was."

Earlier in his life, Marty seemed to be in denial about his gender identity, avoiding questioning or even thinking about it, in large part because he assumed he would not be able to have a career as a band director as a trans person:

> [In college] I feel like I danced towards understanding that I was transgender but never fully accepted it. And then I wasn't ABLE to accept it at that point because I kind of knew that that would be a THING. . . . If I say I'm queer or I'm trans, I will not have the experience that I want. . . . If I transition, maybe I can't be a band director.

Marty felt he needed to choose between acknowledging his gender identity and pursuing the career he had desired since middle school:

> I think in college I kind of decided somewhere not to look at this [the possibility of being trans] because I wanted to be a band director so much. I was willing to set aside myself for my goals career-wise, and it was like. . . Before when I realized who I was, there was a point where I was like, 'Well, maybe I'm just who I am in my own life and maybe I'm just still this other [at work].'

However, Marty eventually realized that this would not be sustainable—that he needed to try to reconcile his gender identity and his career as a band director:

> In my head I always knew that I was going to be a band director until I like burned out spectacularly and just had to leave the profession . . . when it was too much for me to be able to be this person that I'm supposed to be [*holds up one hand*] and really be who I am [*holds up other hand*]. . . . It kind of came to a point where it was like, 'Okay, I could keep pretending and be a band director and probably have to quit my job in a year or two. I don't think I can handle this much longer.' OR I can just take a deep breath and be like, 'No, here's who I am, take it or leave it' and possibly be able to be a band director for longer than that. . . . At a certain point, it was like, you can keep pretending and also not have the goal that you want, or you can stop pretending and maybe still get to have the goal that you want. And it was really easy at that point to go, 'Well, I think I'd like to have both!' [*laughs*]

Behind Marty's avoidance of examining his gender identity and coming out as trans was a fear of how others would respond. "In my head, I was sure that I would come out and . . . there would immediately be a crusade to get me fired." Because of this fear, Marty started exploring his gender identity gradually in 2016. First, he started to dress in a more masculine way at work after he was awarded tenure. "I kind of slowly went more and more casual and definitely more masculine." Months later, he also cut his very long hair into a short style, which he had always wanted to do but was afraid:

> I was terrified of cutting my hair. I think in retrospect . . . even though I didn't personally realize that I was trans, I think my subconscious always knew, obviously, and was convinced that everyone else would know, that I would cut off my hair and everyone be like 'Oh, you're queer,' and I wasn't ready to be queer.

However, Marty quickly realized his fear of others' reactions was unnecessary:"I was really scared to go to school that Monday, but then everyone was fine with it. They're like, 'You look cute' and I was like 'okay' [*shrugs and laughs*]." Marty was "excited to realize that my life hadn't crashed around me" and describes this experience as "one of the first little cracks in the armor" because "it was way less of a big deal than I built it up in my head . . . No one's mad at me about my hair [or] about how I dress. Maybe it is okay to be myself."

In late 2018, Marty embraced his identity as a trans man and began coming out in his personal life, which he refers to as "growing my support system." He came out to his husband and a week later to his best friend but then "spent four months not telling anyone else, just pretending as much as I could." In March 2019, Marty "took a chance on two more friends, and they turned out to be very

supportive, and at that point it got a lot easier." As Marty came out to more people who were supportive, he began to worry less about negative responses.

After coming out in his personal life, Marty started to feel more confident about coming out at work, though he was still nervous. For this reason, he says, "I was very sneaky about coming out [at work]." He informed his colleagues and parents of students that he was going by Marty instead of Rachel and using the honorific "Mx." but did not share his pronouns. "If people ask[ed] me my pronouns, I [told] them, and otherwise [I was] just very vague about it." Marty was surprised to find that coming out at work was "way smoother than I thought it would be," and his fear of a "crusade" gradually subsided. He feels this was in part because "there's been an understanding for longer than I've known that I'm a queer person" (meaning others already suspected his queerness). Instead of colleagues or parents "spewing vitriol," they were mainly "trying to be supportive and polite and just not actually realizing what to do [*laughs*]." In fact, he found the students to be more "with it" than the adults. "They were always very careful about calling me Mx. Bernstein. They caught on super-fast." He even recalled a parent telling him about a time when her child corrected her after she referred to him as "Miss Bernstein." Marty believes this is because "the younger you are right now, the more experienced you are with being more tolerant and more accepting and more able to see that other people have different cultural backgrounds and perspectives."

Finally, upon returning to in-person instruction after Covid-19 in March 2021, Marty emailed his colleagues to officially inform them of his pronouns:

> I got a lot of really sweet notes back, which is really cool. All the people that I figured would be not cool with it . . . were just quiet, which is fine. . . . It was cool to have this confirmation that yes, my colleagues are listening. And it was nice for the kids to address me correctly.

After coming out at work went "really surprisingly smooth," Marty felt an intense sense of relief—relief that his gender identity and his career as a band director could co-exist and that he could be accepted and valued for who he truly is. In addition, he felt a broader sense of relief that he could exist as his true self in the world. "Now finally it's such a relief to not feel that nagging sense of wrongness . . . And, oh, it's so much nicer."

Removal of Gendered Obstacles

The second theme focuses on the juxtaposition between Marty's experiences as a band director before and after coming out as trans. This was characterized by

gendered treatment when presenting as female and then a feeling of a removal of those gendered obstacles when he began presenting as male.

Prior to coming out, Marty had noted the gender imbalance and the lack of female representation in the band teaching profession, particularly at the high school level and in leadership. "When I was a kid, I couldn't name a woman band director for you. We went to festival all the time and . . . there were some festivals where I saw zero female band directors." Later in his teaching career, Marty noted the gender imbalance specifically among judging at band festival: "I've been teaching for 11 years now, and there's three judges and then one sight-reading judge, so four judges every time. So I've seen 40 judges and two of them were women." This lack of representation in the band profession shaped his experiences and the opportunities Marty perceived were available to him as a female-presenting band director. When he started teaching, he worried that he would "be perceived by the kids as not a good band director because of who I was." Marty had considered pursuing a master's degree in conducting but decided against it because "how many people did I know that look like me that had conducting master's and were conductors? I knew I think one."

Marty also perceived the regional band and orchestra association to be an "old boys' club:"

> [The organization] has had a reputation for a good 50-odd years as being like the [*makes air quotes*] 'old boys' club.' Like to the point where sometimes people just call it 'the old boys' club,' and we all know they mean [the organization].

Before coming out as a trans man, Marty did not feel fully included and valued as a female-presenting band director in this "old boys' club." Men seemed to be the ones whose voices were heard and who received recognition. "We have an award for a best 'up-and-comer.' You know, like rookie? . . . That always goes to a white dude. Always. I have never seen it NOT go to a white dude."

Beyond this lack of female representation in the field and a feeling of not fitting in with the "old boys' club," Marty experienced instances of gendered treatment when he was presenting as a female band director. One significant experience he recalled was being advised to pursue middle school band teaching instead of high school band. "I really wanted to be a high school band director, like my dream since high school." However, the professor who determined student-teaching placements "sat me down and . . . was like, 'Look, you're probably not cut out for high school. You shouldn't student-teach high school. I don't think you should do it.'" To Marty, this felt very much due to his gender:

> It seemed really gendered. I felt like she was trying to make it like a shortness and presentable-ness thing but that it really wasn't because she wasn't doing that same thing to other students. . . . She was like, 'You need to work on your confidence.' She also said something about [me] being more nurturing [and thus better suited for middle school].

Marty now enjoys teaching middle school but still feels frustrated by his experience with that professor, musing "Do you have to hold me down?"

Other experiences of gendered treatment occurred in the context of band festival. In fact, Marty feels his "main experience personally with gendered treatment is definitely all around festival." One example was judges using sexist language:

> When I first started, I would wear the makeup and I would wear the very feminine accented outfits, and I would get like a lot of 'Sweeties' in my judges' tapes. . . . They'd be like, 'Oh, good job, sweetie.' And that's so awkward for me to play for my kids! Even aside from not being treated like that, how do you play that for 12-year-olds? That this dude I don't even know is calling me sweetie!

Marty noticed that this happened less as he began dressing more masculinely.

Marty also observed differences in his festival scores when he presented female compared to when he began presenting as male. He recalled being frustrated by lower-than-expected scores when he presented as female:

> I had to fight so hard for any superior ratings. . . . I would listen to the other bands, like the other middle schools that would compete at our festivals, and I would notice that my scores were always just a hair lower than people that I felt played the same as me. . . . It didn't feel like there was good reasoning in the judges' comments about, like, why is this an excellent instead of superior? Often in the tapes, they would be super complimentary, too, and there would be only good things said. And then on the paper, more compliments and maybe some feedback and then an excellent, and it's like this doesn't make sense.

Marty recalled an instance in which a mentor was also surprised that Marty's band was not receiving superior ratings. He was expressing frustration to his former pre-student teaching supervisor, whom he had invited to clinic his band, "And [my mentor] stood back and was like, 'You should be getting a superior with this band. I just clinic-ed this band. They can play. Why are you not getting superiors?'" Marty had a notably different experience the first year he attended festival as a male-presenting band director:

> The very first year that instead of putting Rachel I put Martin on our judges' sheets—And the judges see our sheets first. They get our sheets and they start filling in their name and stuff, and then we come on stage and then we play. Because I was wearing a suit but I was still very—I wasn't on testosterone yet, so like probably would get clocked really easily. But the judges saw 'Martin' on the grading sheet, probably thought 'Martin is a dude.' That was the first year that I got unanimous superiors, and it felt like it took no effort.

Marty receiving higher scores after he began presenting as male is an example of the contrast between his marginalized experiences as a female-presenting band director and the removal of barriers he experienced as a male-presenting band director. Marty feels that presenting as a male has removed many gender-based obstacles that he had experienced when he was presenting as female. He notices that people, including other music educators, interact with him differently now that he presents as male, especially on social media:

> I noticed that I have this like newfound power because my Facebook profile says I'm a dude and my name is Marty, and a lot of people don't click on profiles. It's pretty obvious once you click on [mine], because I have my wedding pictures and stuff and so it's like 'Okay, you're trans.' But if you just look at the little tiny [profile picture] and you see my name or you mouse over it and it says 'add him as a friend,' I feel like most cis dudes just assume I'm one of them.

Marty feels he is shown more respect now that he presents as male: "I get treated with a lot more respect online and get a lot less argument. And even when there is argument, it's so much more respectful. You actually talk about things instead of [people] just being super dismissive [of you]." While Marty observes female teachers being discredited or disrespected in band director groups on Facebook, he can speak out without being questioned, with "no men in my responses yelling at me about my opinions. I just get to say my piece and be done." Marty remembered a heated post on which he had commented to call out "a super fragile white dude," who "accidentally tag[ged] me and [said] a bunch of super rude and condescending stuff and then responds to that and goes, 'Oh, I'm sorry, Marty. I didn't mean to tag you. I meant to tag [a woman].'" Marty referred to this ability to speak and be respected as his "newfound power," which he tries to use to speak up for others.

In addition to being treated differently in general, Marty also feels he now fits in more with the "old boys' club" in the band teaching profession:

> The boys are a lot more welcoming to me, which is awesome but also kind of frustrating in a way, because that's how 'old boys' clubs' develop! No one on

> purpose excludes women, but you just kind of like drift to who you're friends with and who you feel a connection with, and then that does exclude people. So yeah, I notice more of like a camaraderie with my male band directors . . . I definitely feel more included [now].

Rather than simply taking advantage of his "newfound power," Marty hopes he can use it to speak out about sexism:

> It's so, so interesting being a trans man and especially trying to navigate this privilege thing. . . . It definitely is newfound power in a way. My perception of it has been less 'oh, look at these powers I have' and more 'why is this easier?' It's so clear from my perspective that there's all these restrictions on being a woman and that there's just cages all around. Or like obstacles. And it's just so easy as a woman to try and do anything that any man would be able to do and try to even just follow exactly what a man would do, but they just get to walk forward and a woman has to go like this [*gestures in a zig-zaggy, roundabout motion*]. . . . I haven't gained a superpower. I just get to flatten some of the obstacles that women have to walk through all the time. Some of those walls just fell over, and I just get to walk straight through.

Discussion

Marty's story as a trans male band director offers valuable insights into the challenges and potential triumphs faced by transgender music educators. His experience highlights the gendered expectations within the profession and invites reflection on how cisgenderism shapes these experiences. Due to the qualitative nature of this case study of one individual, it would be inappropriate to generalize findings of this research to all music teachers. However, Marty's story can help us reflect on the coming-out process for music educators and provide insight into gendered experiences within the music teaching profession.

After realizing and accepting he was trans, Marty initially believed he could not be both a band director and an "out" trans person because his perception of the typical band director was cisgender. This assumption of band director as cisgender and fear that his true gender identity would be pathologized in the context of his work is another example of the "cisgenderism" Palkki (2023) observed in the experiences of his three participants. Later, after contemplating and beginning to take gradual steps toward a more masculine appearance and persona (e.g., changing his clothing, cutting his hair, changing his name and honorific), Marty made the decision to come out as trans at work and felt a subsequent sense of relief that his gender identity and his career as a band director could co-exist.

It should be noted that the Covid-19 pandemic likely had a large impact on Marty's experience of coming out at work. Although Marty did change his name and honorific at school before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020, the effects of his testosterone therapy did not become notable until after the extended school shutdown began. Marty's interactions with students and colleagues in the virtual environment throughout most of the 2020-2021 school year were likely quite different than they would have been in person, which seemed to help him build up the courage to finally announce his pronouns upon the return to in-person instruction in the spring of 2021. The physical distance created by virtual interactions during the pandemic may have reduced immediate social pressures, allowing Marty to gradually adjust to his transition in a less confrontational space.

The gradual, "sneaky" nature of Marty's coming out as trans may be why he had a smoother experience than Melanie, the preservice music educator who participated in Bartolome's (2016; Bartolome & Stanford, 2018) research. By first changing his hairstyle and clothing, Marty lessened what Schilt (2010) referred to as "the gap between 'before and after' appearance" (p. 144), allowing him to "ease into" his new presentation as a trans man by gradually moving into a more masculine gender expression. In contrast, the "rigidity of acceptable clothing norms for men" meant that Melanie was unable to "ease into wearing skirts or dresses . . . without making a stir" (p. 145).

Another possible explanation for Marty having a more positive coming-out experience than Melanie is that Marty lives in a more progressive state. In contrast to Melanie's experience of being told she might need to move somewhere less conservative in order to be hired, Marty felt comforted that, because of his state's anti-discrimination laws, "even if someone doesn't feel like being supportive, if they're in a position of power over me, they are legally required to be supportive." Another factor that differentiates Marty from Melanie and Silveira's (2019) participant, Joseph, is the age at which they came out. Unlike Melanie and Joseph, who came out as transgender in college, Marty had already been in his teaching position for 6 years before he began his coming out process. That Marty had already been granted tenure and had established relationships with colleagues may have prevented him from having to face more discrimination or transphobia. Additional research is needed exploring the ways in which varied state and school district policies impact the experiences of trans teachers as well as students. For example, researchers might undertake a comparative analysis of state-level anti-discrimination policies and their tangible effects on the experiences of trans educators in music settings, particularly involving teachers at various levels and in various teaching contexts.

Teaching setting is an additional difference that might explain the contrast between Marty and Melanie's coming out experiences. While both band and choir are gendered spaces, choral settings seem to carry more visible gender markers through attire, language, and association of voice parts, which can complicate the coming-out process for transgender individuals. Marty did not have to navigate these challenges in gendered language or attire in his work as a band teacher. Shouldice and Timmer (2024) surveyed 145 secondary choral teachers in the U.S. and found that many still used gendered ensemble names, concert attire, and language in the classroom. Future researchers might further explore use of these gendered practices and the ways in which they may affect the experiences of trans and/or gender-expansive students.

Perhaps the most striking difference in Marty and Melanie's coming out experiences stems from the fact that the former came out as a trans man while the latter came out as a trans woman. While Melanie lamented all the time, effort, and money spent to acclimate to "girl culture" (Bartolome, 2018, p. 125), Marty observed what felt like a removal of barriers that made his life smoother than when he presented as female. Marty noted this difference in our final interview:

> There's a lot of privilege, even in my transition as a trans man. If I was a trans woman, I don't think there's any chance I'd be having this smooth of a transition. . . . No one has policed my clothing, no one has told me that I'm not manly enough. It's totally okay socially for me to want to be a man.

Marty pointed out that, in coming out as a trans man, he had the "experience of moving from less privilege to more privilege."

Being granted male privilege allowed Marty to more clearly notice the biased treatment he had previously experienced when presenting as female, which was also noted by Joseph, the preservice music educator who participated in Silveira's (2019) research. Joseph's observation that his identity as a trans man enabled him to see "observed instances of misogyny and sexism in his interactions with others" (p. 435) is similar to Marty's comment regarding "newfound power" and his experience of a removal of gendered barriers. Marty's experience also aligns with the findings of Schilt and Wiswall (2008) and Schilt (2010), who found that individuals who came out as trans men in the workplace reported more positive experiences and/or gaining of advantages than did those who came out as trans women. Similar to Schilt's (2010) participant who described receiving higher performance reviews in his work after coming out as a trans man, Marty described receiving higher ratings at band festival after changing his name and attire, suggesting "how men and women can be evaluated differently when doing the same work" (Schilt, 2006, p. 478). Marty's reflection on male privilege sheds light

on the gendered power structures within the education field, revealing how gender-based advantages may shape professional success and interactions.

Marty's experiences illustrate what Schilt (2010) called trans men's "outsider-within" perspective into men's advantages in the workplace. According to Schilt (2006),

> Not being 'born into it' [being perceived as male] can make visible how gendered workplace disparities are created and maintained through interactions. Many [trans men] can see clearly once they become 'just one of the guys,' that men succeed in the workplace at higher rates than women because of gender stereotypes that privilege masculinity, not because they have greater skill or ability. (p. 473)

While Marty likely faces marginalization due to his identity as a trans person, he also feels there are barriers or obstacles that have been eliminated now that he no longer presents as female. Similar to Marty's comments that he "get[s] to flatten some of the obstacles that women have to walk through all the time . . . and I just get to walk straight through," one of Schilt's (2006) participants stated, "I swear they let the guys get away with so much stuff . . . and the women who are working hard, they just get ignored" (p. 473). Both he and Marty expressed that this new awareness compels them to use their "newfound power" as men to speak up and help empower women.

In describing his experiences as a female-presenting band director prior to coming out as trans, Marty mentioned many of the same experiences cited in the existing literature on female band directors, including a lack of female representation in the profession (particularly in leadership), sexist language, existence of an "old boys' club," being advised to teach middle school rather than high school, and the perception of receiving lower festival scores due to gender (Bovin, 2019, 2020; Coen-Mishlan, 2015; Fischer-Croneis, 2016; Gathen, 2014; Jones, 2010; Leimer, 2012; Mullan, 2014; Sears, 2010; Sheldon & Hartley, 2012; Shouldice & Eastridge, 2020). Many of these experiences could be considered gender microaggressions, which are "brief and commonplace daily verbal or behavioral indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative gender slights and insults that potentially have a harmful impact on women" (Sue, 2010, p. 164). Shouldice (2023) reviewed existing research pertaining to female band directors and found that all but one of nine types of gender microaggressions were thoroughly documented in the literature. Shouldice (2024) later surveyed female and feminine-presenting band directors' experiences with gender microaggressions and found that the most commonly experienced type was second-class citizenship (including feeling

excluded from the "good old boys' club"). Unlike overt sexism, microaggressions can be difficult to recognize, and men may be less aware when gender-based microaggressions occur (Basford et al., 2014; Midgette & Mulvey, 2021). As the dominant group in the band teaching profession, it is important that cisgender male band directors work to understand and recognize gender-based microaggressions so they can avoid them in their own behavior and help rectify them when observed from others.

Marty's experience being welcomed into the "old boys' club" illustrates how homosocial workplace cultures are perpetuated and exacerbate women's exclusion from these networks: "No one on purpose excludes women, but you just kind of like drift to who you're friends with and who you feel a connection with, and then that does exclude people." However, Schilt (2010) argues that the "workplace incorporation of trans men and marginalization of trans women by heterosexual men illustrates a key point about power: the power to exclude is also the power to include" (p. 156). Just as Marty is committed to challenging the gender inequalities made visible to him via his "outsider-within" perspective, it is imperative that cisgender male band directors acknowledge the gender inequities that persist and take an active role in challenging them in order for true gender equality to be achieved in the band directing profession. Ultimately, Marty's experience underscores the need for continued efforts toward inclusivity in music education. By acknowledging and challenging existing gender biases, the profession can move closer to fostering environments where all educators, regardless of gender identity, can thrive.

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RESEARCH TO PRACTICE ARTICLES

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Composing in the Classroom

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Composing is highly regarded as a form of creativity and musical expression by music teachers and students alike. Still, in performance-heavy musical contexts, it can be challenging for teachers to incorporate composition into their activities and objectives for their students both because of time and resource constraints and lack of knowledge on how to introduce, incorporate, and assess composition in the classroom. Fortunately, there is a wealth of recent research on student composition, both in and out of the classroom, to assist and inspire teachers.

Many teachers may struggle knowing where to begin with integrating composition activities into their curriculum. A great place to start is by practicing composing! Riley (2015) noted that "Before my collegiate music education students can provide their future students with composition guidance, they need experience with composing themselves" (p. 22). Ideally, music educators will have been given composing exercises and feedback during their undergraduate or graduate degrees, but if not, Riley suggested starting by composing simple pieces for one's own enjoyment, for private students, or to be played by friends and colleagues. She also suggested that teachers practice mentoring budding composers either through community music initiatives or with peers and colleagues. Riley recommended that teachers guide students with suggestions and questions rather than directive statements, and offer specific feedback and encouragement.

Some teachers may feel hesitant to incorporate composition activities or assignments in their music classrooms because they lack guidelines or strategies for assessing student compositions. Deutsch (2016) offered a wealth of ideas, techniques, and considerations for assessing composition in the classroom and, notably, suggested the elimination of rubrics from a teachers' "toolkit" for assessing composition. According to Deutsch, teachers should focus on the artistic and expressive value of student compositions and offer individualized, contextual, and personal feedback to students. She urged that composing should be an ongoing, multi-phased process and that students should be encouraged to refine and edit compositions, and instructors should avoid imposing strict deadlines or criteria (such as length), particularly

composition. Rather than letter/points grades, performances of compositions (or sharing recordings) for the public or just the class can represent the completion of composition projects.

Composition can also offer opportunities for collaboration and communication between students. Hopkins (2015) observed the compositional processes and group dynamics of high school students in string chamber ensembles. Hopkins' main findings were that mixed-gender groups performed better overall (suggesting that teachers may want to avoid splitting groups by gender), all groups spent a larger amount of time completing tasks than talking/off-task activities (suggesting that, while still prone to distractions, high school students may be mature enough to generally remain on-task with limited teacher monitoring), and that enjoyment correlated with composition quality (possibly indicating that enjoyment led to increased focus and productivity and a higher level of creative freedom). Another interesting finding from Hopkins' study was that two of the groups ended up with less time (three sessions instead of four) due to a change in testing schedules but still completed the task to the same level as other groups. These groups also had among the lowest rates of off-task behavior. Parkinson's Law (1955) is an adage that states "work expands so as to fill the time available for its completion." Hopkin's findings seem to corroborate Parkinson's Law and suggest that teachers may want to avoid giving students too much time to complete composition tasks and that time constraints may increase productivity and focus. On a practical level, Hopkin's findings also suggest that teachers may not need to sacrifice a great deal of class time for students to produce substantive compositions.

In contrast, research from Menard (2015) found that time constraints were among the biggest concerns for high school students enrolled in both an accelerated general music program for musically gifted students and a traditional band program. However, the student responses indicated that time concerns were often related to pressure from the teacher to complete certain tasks within a restrictive time frame. Teachers may be able to mitigate some time-related concerns by being flexible and relaxed with deadlines and composition requirements. Despite time concerns, student participants in this study responded very positively to composition activities, citing benefits of composing including increased musical knowledge and understanding, enjoyment, personal expression, and respect for the compositional process. In the post-instruction interview, one student said, "Now I look at a piece of music and I can tell that the person who composed it was probably feeling something that they were trying to express. Knowing about composition makes me feel like I should try hard to bring out that feeling" (p. 14). This response highlights that, while a valuable experience on its

for younger students or those newer to own, composing may be a worthwhile time and resource investment for teachers considering the possible benefits to students' performance on their instruments and sensitivity to the score.

Composition activities can also be easily integrated into the classroom before the high school years. The elementary general music classroom offers a variety of avenues for exploring composition with students. Birnie (2014) suggested integrating composing with the recorder playing common in many general music classrooms. Birnie discussed the importance of inspiring young students to compose and giving a general introduction to the terms "compose" and "composing," as young students may not have a firm grasp on these concepts. This discussion can present an opportunity to tie in popular music and musicians and allow students to explore questions about the composing process. According to Birnie, teachers should demonstrate each phase of the composing process (title and composer name, clef and meter symbols, notes and rests, lyrics, etc.) using a projector or doc cam, and have students complete a rough draft of their composition before playing it independently on their recorders to make edits. The next phase involves peer feedback with a classmate and the composition process culminates with producing a clean, laminated copy of their composition and a final performance for classmates, friends, and family. This approach allows for students to work independently and create a final product that represents their musical knowledge and skills, with more advanced students having the opportunity to create a longer or more complex composition, while students with less musical experience may include only the elements and ideas with which they are familiar. Using the recorder also provides natural limitations (one note at a time, treble clef, limited range, etc.) to help elementary-aged students feel confident, unintimidated, and creative in their composing endeavors.

Munroe (2021) has also explored the creative benefits of composition in the general music classroom, but with middle school student populations. Munroe's article highlights the benefits of allowing students to work independently and at different levels as incentives for middle school teachers to integrate composition into their classrooms. Composition tasks can also be structured as open or closed assignments, that is, assignments with fewer/no parameters to spark creativity and imagination or assignments with more guidelines and structures in place, which Munroe mentions may actually be more comfortable for many teachers and students and foster creativity within the assignment parameters. Munroe also suggested allowing middle school students to self-assess their compositions using a rubric with categories for creativity, effort, notation, etc. This approach allows students to assess the quality and competency of their work (and build their self-assessment skills) without being discouraged by negative teacher feedback or

receiving a grade for the assignment. This approach also functions well when considering that composition allows for differentiation of instruction based on students' musical knowledge and skill, as students are not comparing their work to their peers and are primarily assessing their compositions based on effort and adherence to directions. Munroe also raised the possibility of using non-traditional notation (or no notation) for composition activities in the middle school classroom. Clauhs (2021) wrote about the uses of iconic and non-traditional notation in music classrooms and pointed out that a vast amount of songwriting and composing in both classical and popular spheres has occurred without the use of traditional western musical notation. Using different writing techniques offers teachers an opportunity to introduce and incorporate a variety of songwriters and composers into their curricula. Many of these techniques also allow teachers to incorporate the technology students use regularly into the music classroom. Clauhs outlined several ways to break down music and notation into simple building blocks including drum grooves for rhythms (using a MIDI keyboard or drum pad controller), chord progressions of original compositions or favorite pop songs (using lead sheet writing or a variety of online tools for creating interactive chord charts), and lyric writing (which may provide an interdisciplinary opportunity with students' study of literature or poetry English classes). Echoing the sentiments of other authors, Clauhs emphasized process over product for assessment and advises teachers that summative assessments may be counterintuitive and unnecessary.

There are as many options for bringing composing into one's music classroom as there are types of classes and ages of students, and all provide an opportunity to inspire creativity and allow student independence. The scholarship reviewed here provides teachers with a variety of avenues to begin incorporating composition activities into a variety of music classes at different levels. Further, these articles present a convincing case for the creative and musical benefits of giving our students opportunities to compose.

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Cultivating a Culture of Creative Belonging Through Beginner Improvisation

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Music teachers endeavor to create a welcoming classroom where all students feel like they belong and can create freely. In middle school, students who are first-time members of large ensembles may experience feelings of anxiety, frustration, or alienation. One way to help alleviate these feelings is to incorporate improvisation into the classroom. According to Palmer (2106), "the inclusion of improvisation in instrumental study enhances performance positively, affects development of creative thinking, and is meaningful and enjoyable" (p. 363). Improvisation can help create a learning environment for students to establish a feeling of social belonging, increase confidence, and develop executive functioning and regulating skills. Palmer explained that "as children grow older and participate in more music-making activities, their improvisation becomes more purposeful and complex, including the use of motives, referents, and phrase structure. Improvisers draw upon a wide storehouse of knowledge when improvising." (p. 363).

Social Belonging

The feeling of belonging that a student can develop is one of the best reasons to incorporate improvisation into the classroom. Improvisation has two noteworthy characteristics: (a) it can be done by anyone regardless of musical talent or age, and (b) it helps all students develop their musical identity. Students make decisions collectively in this type of democratic classroom setting through valuing their peers' views and musical creations, fostering trust in their community, and alleviating feelings of anxiety (Niknafs, 2013). Through group improvisation the musician utilizes skills and knowledge that they have learned via their instrument by strategically working together for a shared outcome (de Bruin, 2017). However, there are not extensive models of how to engage fully through improvisation in the school setting. It is important for music educators to explore ways of fostering learning, peer teaching, and mentoring experiences within the process of improvisation (West, 2015).

Student Confidence

As students engage in improvisation, their confidence and ability to perform can grow; however, this does not happen on its own. Teachers must create space in the class that allows full exploration of students' own musical ideas, which can result in positive feelings, ownership of ideas, and episodes of cultivated creativity (Hickey, 2015). Children need encouragement to develop these ideas over time, especially when working with their peers. The consideration of prompts and structural scaffolding provided by the teacher directs students' attention towards improvisation and hopefully allows them to find their authentic selves (Beegle, 2010). This purposeful encouragement by the teacher reduces pressure and helps students find their voice (Teichman, 2020).

Student Executive Function & Self-Regulation Development

Executive function and self-regulation skills are defined as general-purpose control processes that regulate one's thoughts and behavior (Norgaard, Stambaugh, McCranie, 2019). The concept of self-regulation is important when performing any form of improvisation, either individually or collectively. Students construct both personal and social strategic plans, develop monitoring skills, and engage in self-reflection (de Bruin, 2017), all skills that students acquire more quickly when improvising music. Fostering environments for students to use these skills allows for more musical interactions with their peers and diminishes social pressures (Teichman, 2020).

Teacher Beliefs

Some teachers might encounter the same anxious feelings their students have about incorporating improvisation in their classroom. It is important to understand that as we teach our students musicianship and the skills necessary to be lifelong learners, we need to exemplify examples of these teaching and learning processes ourselves. One way to do this is to switch our thinking from *routine expertise*, defined as the ability to efficiently solve standard or routine problems, to *adaptive expertise,* which is the ability to apply, adapt, and otherwise stretch knowledge so that it addresses new situations—often those in which key knowledge is lacking (West, 2014). When embracing this concept, teachers signal to their students that the classroom environment is open and adaptive.

Effective Implementation Strategies for Teachers

When working with middle school students, it is important to not deviate too much from routine. Improvisation can be approached through minor changes to the warm-up period or end of class procedures that could positively enhance how students develop executive functioning (Siljamäki & Kanellopoulos, 2020). Another way to begin implementing improvisation in lessons is by having students listen to and play along with model recordings, from which both teachers and students can find inspiration (West, 2014). To gain a sense of what their students will experience with these activities, teachers can practice with model recordings on their own instruments in preparation. Teachers can then incrementally move towards student-improvised material (e.g., creating melodies on a few scale patterns) at the beginning or conclusion of class.

Another introductory activity is allowing students to work in pairs to improvise a two- to four- phrase piece with an approachable tempo marking (e.g., MM = 84) related to a prompt that the teacher selects. This prompt can be a story, something related to the student announcements, or a cross curricular subject area topic (e.g., The Westward Expansion that students were learning about during history class). Another suggestion is to have students create a short improvisation using specific musical characteristics, such as repetition and contrasts (Beegle, 2010). Additional activities and resources are listed at the end of this article.

Conclusion

Although improvisation traditionally has not played a large role in the beginning large ensemble classroom, there are so many benefits that improvisation can bring to young musicians. By beginning students with improvisation exercises at the start of their musical journey, teachers can help create more engaged and welcoming class communities where every student feels a sense of creative belonging while developing valuable musical skills and understanding.

Resources for Improvisation

Below is a list of improvisational resources that can be used in the classroom. These resources are selected due to the accessibility of the exercises for beginners.

- Creative Exercises that Introduce Students to Improvisation (Turner, 2017) https://alfredledgerlines.wordpress.com/2017/09/21/creative-exercises-for-introducing-students-to-improvisation/

- Call and Response – First Steps to Improvisation (Graham, 2019) https://banddirectorstalkshop.com/call-and-response-first-steps-to-improvisation/
- Improvisation Games (Dimoff, 2003) http://www.acadiau.ca/~dreid/games/Game_descriptions/Improvisation_Games.html
- Teach Improvisation to Your Entire Ensemble at Once (Hirsch, 2016) https://www.smartmusic.com/blog/teach-improvisation-entire-ensemble-at-once/
- Exercises from the article, "Developing Musical Creativity through Improvisation in the Large Performance Classroom" (Norgaard, 2017) https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432116687025

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It Starts with the Teacher: Creating a Gender-Inclusive Environment

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Fostering an environment that is safe and affirming for all learners is the goal for music educators, regardless of grade level or area of music taught. We are called to understand and embrace each student as an individual, with unique life experiences, identities, and diverse learning styles. Fundamental to teaching is our ability to attract and retain students by drawing each in, developing rapport and weaving connections, and creating community. This is a huge undertaking, considering the diverse range of students in our classrooms. It is unsurprising then that, despite the best of intentions, many teachers might unconsciously reinforce stereotypes, heteronormativity, and various kinds of racism, bigotry, or discrimination as a result of their upbringing, background, and experiences.

As a white, heterosexual female, I acknowledge that my own privilege and implicit bias influence my teaching every day. I endeavor to empower my students who don't identify in the same way as I do through careful reflection on the decisions I make and the way I teach. Two years ago, I was tasked with spearheading a name change at my university from "Women's Choir" to a more inclusive title. This spurred my own research and reflection into how, for our LGBTQ+ students, language, policy, and traditions used in educational settings have the potential to create barriers to learning and inclusion. Heterosexual teachers don't always have the necessary framework for facilitating safe and inclusive spaces for these students. The four research studies I will present here provide a unique perspective and set of tools for educators desiring to better meet the needs of their LGBTQ+ students, as well as their colleagues.

Teachers' words and actions, or lack thereof, can be powerful weapons of either support or opposition for LGBTQ+ students. Regardless of one's personal beliefs, every educator should strive to better understand each student's lived experiences in order to provide meaningful and rich connections to instruction. Palkki and Caldwell (2018) surveyed over one-thousand LGBTQ+ college students who reflected on their own middle and high school choral experiences. Based upon the quantitative data collected and responses from the open-ended questions, the authors provide helpful advice for teaching practice and policy.

Because words carry important meaning and can make a tremendous impact in the classroom culture, adjusting the language used is critical in making students feel comfortable. Students reported feeling left out from classroom discussions when they did not see themselves represented, like in the starkly heteronormative texts of some of the choral music.

The choice between the open acknowledgment of or silence surrounding LGBTQ+ issues in the choral classroom was a topic of many responses to Palkki and Caldwell's survey. To the respondents, silence signaled a lack of support. Teachers can facilitate a safe and inclusive environment through open discussion of their support of LGBTQ+ individuals and the inclusion of LGBTQ+ composers and topics in the repertoire. Additionally, according to the authors, gendered ensemble titles, like "Women's Choir," or "Men's Glee," and certain rehearsal language can isolate members from feeling fully part of the community, as shared in one of the responses:

> A trope that has become standard choral parlance of referring to TB voices as 'men' and SA voices as 'women' is EXTREMELY CISSEXIST IN NATURE and [makes] me as a trans person singing in a choir feel very awkward and uncomfortable. (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018, p. 40)

While simple adjustments to semantics can make a world of difference to students, the actions teachers take can make a difference, too, according to Palkki and Caldwell. Having detailed non-discrimination policies in place that offer protection for a variety of groups (not just LGBTQ+) from bullying and even the simple posting of a safe space sticker can impact students' feelings of security and support, according to the authors. Many transgender respondents in the study reported the quandary of 'gendered' choir uniforms (e.g., dresses and tuxedos). For some subsets of the LGBTQ+ community, these guidelines can be problematic and uncomfortable. Language, uniforms, and policies that reinforce gender stereotypes should be avoided so that every member feels comfortable being their authentic self. As one participant stated, "Just having an authority figure who accepted all people was life changing. It's part of the reason I'm going into music education. I want to be that person for somebody because of who my choir teacher was for me" (Palkki & Caldwell, 2018, p. 36). And, while some students reported not disclosing their identity in the context of the school choral program, many expressed gratitude for knowing they were safe regardless.

For many music educators desiring to create gender-inclusive classrooms, it is less about "the why" and more about "the how." According to Garrett and Spano (2017), music teachers are well poised to have a positive impact on their students. In their study of three hundred secondary music teacher participants—

87% of whom reported as heterosexual male or female—most indicated a strong level of comfortability supporting LGBTQ+ individuals in the classroom. Any discomfort stemmed largely from not knowing how to incorporate related topics and issues into the course curriculum, citing a lack of resources and training. Among the most important finding from this research is the suggestion that professional development training related to LGBTQ+ issues may increase the number and types of inclusion strategies used.

Much like Garrett and Spano (2017) suggested, Taylor (2021) also recommends the critical importance of teacher training and open dialogue for educators and preservice teachers. Taylor's case study offers a unique perspective from the lens of four openly gay white male music teachers in separate school districts across the United States. The participants had full administrative support without the need to hide their orientation, although the author acknowledged this is a privilege not always afforded to others; ". . . mentors would be remiss to assume everyone lives in a world free of anti-gay prejudice. Those who have witnessed homophobia may be especially concerned for preservice teachers' professional and personal safety" (p. 443). With this in mind, forging new teacher identities is particularly challenging for those members of the LGBTQ+ community who must decide if they will live openly or in secret. Data from this study showed that when teachers were open about their sexuality, under the right circumstances, students and teachers felt empowered. One open teacher participant said he felt his ability to be open strengthened "his empathy and connection to students" (p. 442). Each individual's coming out journey is unique and worthy of respect, which is critical for heterosexual teachers to acknowledge and support. Not only should educators strive to support their students, but it is important they have empathy and understanding for the experiences of their colleagues, too. A strong collegial atmosphere benefits the entire school, influencing, among other areas, school quality and student performance.

Music educators desiring to support their LGBTQ+ school populations must make great efforts to fully educate themselves on the terminology and differences between the individual subsets as each group represents diverse experiences, challenges, and concerns. This should be an ongoing endeavor so that as society's understanding, recognition, and inclusion of diverse identities and expressions continues to evolve, so must our comprehension and proficiency with them. Nichols (2013) warned that the combining of LGBTQ+ persons into essentially one large undifferentiated group can be problematic. Not only does this obscure the concerns of the individual groups, but it can have dangerous repercussions on a student's physical, emotional and mental state. For singers, there are vocal considerations concerning physical changes, changes to the voice, and vocal

identity. Nichols's research is a narrative account of Ryan (referred to interchangeably as Rie), a highly expressive, gender-variant student, and his experiences in public school and school music. Honoring Rie's voice and expertise through emancipatory storysharing, the author highlighted the importance of music for self-expression and community-seeking in the lives of transgender students. In speaking of her experiences with significant bullying and lack of support from multiple constituents, Rie shared:

> It was a nightmare. I wished I was dead every day because I didn't want to go. The only thing that kept me going was knowing that I would be able to go and play [in band] and I would be able to go and sing [in choir], because that was the one thing that no one could take away from me was my music. I could express myself the most freely through music. So that, to me, was my safe zone because it was my out. (p. 267)

For Ryan, the band and choir rooms were his sanctuaries, as it is for the many other "Ryans" and "Ries" in the world. And while this is in itself an important takeaway, the author offered an even more compelling closing message for educators:

> Rie viewed this project as an opportunity to be heard. I viewed the project as one answer among an infinity of responses to the rhetorical question, "Who do we teach?" Scholars have critiqued the relevancy of the current practices of music education and called for change. I posit that meaningful change will happen as we listen to the voices of our students, engage their lives in all of their complexity and daily approximations, and become open to what may be learned in the process. (Nichols, 2013, p. 276)

As educators, we should be committed to the highest levels of ethical and professional practice. Regardless of personal beliefs, it is our responsibility to advocate and provide educational opportunities for all students, making connections to students' cultures, languages, and life experiences. As society's understanding of diverse sexual identities and gender expressions has grown more inclusive, it is our role as educators to practice cultural competency by staying informed and reflective about our own curriculum and instruction so that we are truly cultivating an environment that is safe, inviting, and open to all.

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MISSOURI STUDENT ABSTRACTS

A Multiple Case Study of Preservice Music Educators' Experiences in Rehearsal Clinic

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Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to describe the experiences of preservice music educators in an advanced conducting and rehearsal skills course. Additionally, I explored preservice music educators' perceptions about the intersections of conducting ability, rehearsal skills development, and their effectiveness as a music educator. The primary research question that guided this study was: What are the perceptions of preservice music educators regarding their conducting and rehearsal experiences as a result of an advanced conducting and rehearsal skills course? Further, two sub-questions provided depth and additional insight about preservice music educator development: (a) How do these students view their conducting ability, rehearsal skills development, and effectiveness as a music educator? and (b) Does participation in an advanced conducting and rehearsal skills course influence preservice music educators' perceptions about their teacher effectiveness? If so, in what ways?

Participants in this study were four preservice music educators in at least their third year of study in their music education degree program who were enrolled in Rehearsal Clinic. Findings indicated all four participants (a) believed there to be a clear difference between rehearsing and teaching, (b) encountered conductor "blackout" while teaching a large ensemble, and (c) attributed the perceived growth in their teacher effectiveness to their experiences in the course. Furthermore, findings from this study may suggest that music teacher educators should consider including more frequent large ensemble teaching opportunities within collegiate curricula prior to field experience and student teaching.

Student Perspectives of Music Courses in a Southwest Missouri School District: An Exploratory Case Study

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to investigate student personal perspectives (grades 8-12) of music courses, their value, and what music courses they might choose or recommend. Numerous researchers and educators have debated and researched how music course offerings and instructional approaches used are central to the relevance, inclusiveness, accessibility, and equity in music education (Abramo, 2011; Clauhs & Cremata, 2020; Cooper, 2013; Green, 2006; Kelly & Heath, 2015). However, few researchers have investigated how students think about the motivations and barriers to different types of music courses. A semi-structured interview was used to explore secondary music students' (a) perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of music courses, (b) perceived value of both traditional and nontraditional music courses, and (c) motivations for enrolling in particular nontraditional music courses. The results explore student insights on the motivations and barriers in school secondary music ensembles and how these experiences relate to their own musical experiences after high school graduation. I analyzed the results with a qualitative lens and a lived awareness of the music curriculum as a former teacher in the district. I found that participants were motivated to play an instrument that aligned with their sense of self and to perform in ensembles that they perceived to produce beautiful sounds. The desire for authenticity, autonomy, and identity were common themes in the students' responses. Based on the results, I provide strategies for teachers that will help them to get to know students personally and learn about their motivations. Given that there is still much that remains unknown about the motivations for different approaches to music education, I also recommend that future researchers explore the perceptions of students who do not participate in school music courses and investigate the motivations of students from different communities and school environments.

An Action Research Study Exploring Beginning Percussion Students' Music Reading Abilities

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Abstract:

This action research study explored the effects of rhythmic training, understanding of musical styles, and accompanying as a means to improve the reading and performance accuracies of my sixth-grade percussion students. I designed this study as an adapted modification of Zhukov's (2006) exploration of how these three teaching methods enhanced college piano players' music reading skills and to improve my own teaching. Participants participated in a week of beginning percussion lessons that focused on these three teaching strategies. Pre-test and post-test results were used to compare the effect of the teaching strategies. Analysis of the results focused on participants ability to read rhythms, pitches, and their fluency. While all three areas showed improvement, some areas had greater improvement than others. Overall, results show promise of success, but future research into amount of time using these teaching techniques is needed.

A Music Teacher's Use of Informances With Primary Level Classes and Study of Family Attitudes for Music Education: An Action Research Study

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Abstract:

Concerts are often the summative project for the elementary music room. However, the emphasis on concerts creates challenges for music instruction. The preparation for a traditional concert often takes away from instructional time, which is already limited for music instruction. Second, the use of concerts conceals many aspects of the instructional process from students' families. This results in a limited view and understanding of their child's formal musical education. By designing opportunities for parents and other stakeholders to see students beyond a traditional concert, I thought that I could help to deepen families understanding of music education in my elementary school programs. Informances are performance opportunities during which students demonstrate their learning in the music classroom with an audience present. In this action research study, I developed and implemented informances with the intent to bring forth positive change in my classroom and explore parental and family attitudes. I discuss my perceptions on the experience and how I intend to use a balance of traditional concerts and informances to build deeper partnerships with families through my teaching. My intentions for my program are described in the discussion.

Using Intentional Strategies to Promote Self-Efficacy in a Choral Classroom: An Action Research Study

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Committee Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Hellman

Abstract:

As a choral music educator, I investigated the impact of strategies I designed to foster self-efficacy in one of my choral classes. Drawing on Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, I used enactive mastery, vicarious experience, verbal/social persuasion, and affective/physiological states to design specific classroom tasks that would serve as critical influences on an individual's self-efficacy. The action research study was conducted with a mixed-gender choir class of grades 10-12 students, using Michael Zelenak's Music Performance Self-Efficacy Scale as a pre-and post-survey measure. Observational and qualitative data were also collected to enable a reflective examination of teaching practices and student-teacher interactions.

Practicing without Playing: A Phenomenological Study of Mental Practice

Johanny Veiga Barbosa, PhD
University of Missouri–Columbia
Spring 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Brian Silvey

Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenology study was to describe the experiences of professional musicians who are practitioners of mental practice (MP) strategies. I aimed to understand and better define the phenomenon of MP, recognizing the individuality of this technique. Twelve participants were interviewed separately in a one-on-one setting using Zoom. Each initial interview was about 45 minutes, and each second interview was approximately 60 minutes. The third interview was a follow-up interview that occurred via email to gain extra information or clarity about their responses during the first two interviews.

There was one main research question: What is the lived experience of music professionals using mental practice? And five sub-questions: (1) How do participants define MP? (2) What are the MP strategies experienced by professional musicians? (3) How do participants who use MP describe the benefits/difficulties? (4) How/from whom did the participants learn to use the technique, and how did they teach others? (5) Do the participants also use MP in other aspects of their lives?

After my analysis, I found six themes: (1) Personal Realization of MP during School Time, (2) Collective Strategies for MP, (3) Personal Beliefs of MP, (4) The Need for MP, (5) Strategies for Implementing MP, and (6) Benefits Related to MP. These findings suggest that MP is effective and positive in music because it can be easily accessed as, for example, in a hotel room or on an airplane, and it is a transferable skill for other situations in life once learned properly. Participants emphasized the importance of teachers in presenting and teaching the technique, which is essential for student development with MP. They also indicated their beliefs that MP allowed them to feel more calm, confident, less anxious, and with a better provided mental health.

Culturally Responsive Musical Theatre Production for High School Students With Diverse Identities

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Spring 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Wendy Sims

Abstract:

Geneva Gay's culturally responsive teaching (CRT) approach into high school musical theatre production. First, I completed a review of the literature to examine the challenges associated with multiculturalism in school musical productions and to explore the potential applications and implications of CRT in theatre and choral education that can be applied to musical theatre production. For the second investigation, I undertook a qualitative study to investigate the lived experiences of music and theatre teachers before, during, and after casting high school students with diverse identities in musicals. Themes emerged from interviews with music teachers (n = 5) and theatre teachers (n = 2) including (a) *students' identities* and (b) *students' skills*. The findings indicated that participants utilized the "identity-conscious casting" approach when making casting decisions. It also uncovered that this emphasis on inclusivity and diversity in the casting process was linked to both prior-to-casting and post-casting processes. The third investigation is a survey study through which I explored how music teachers integrate the CRT approach into their high school musical productions. Analysis of the responses (N = 119) revealed that participants prioritized and integrated cultural awareness, which related to Gay's CRT principle, within the various stages of their musical theatre productions, encompassing musical selection, materials preparation, and rehearsal processes, despite encountering some challenges. Results from these three projects indicated that participants integrated Gay's (2002) five key elements to implement CRT into their musical productions, fostering diversity, and inclusivity, as well as enhancing the overall presentation of the musical.

Older Adults' Singing Experiences in a University-Community Chorus

Ruoxi Deng, PhD
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Spring 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Jared Rawlings

Abstract:

This research targeted retired singers from the university choral ensemble, offering an in-depth examination of the older adults' choir experiences, with a focus on their experiences and reflections. Prior studies have highlighted the benefits of musical involvement for retirees, including extending life expectancy, enhancing quality of life, and providing a means to counteract loneliness and social isolation. This study underscores the vital role of choir participation in the socio-cultural lives of the older adults. Serving as a complement and contrast to previous investigations, it aims to showcase the experiences and dynamics of retiree choir participation.

Faith Hall, PhD
University of Missouri–Columbia
Spring 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Brian Silvey

Abstract:

Teacher decision-making is a cognitive activity in which teachers identify problems, extract relevant cues from the environment, and evaluate potential strategies to decide the most appropriate action (Calderhead, 1981; Clark & Peterson, 1978). According to Clark and Peterson (1986), teachers' decisions are informed by thought (e.g., planning, interactive decisions, reflection, and beliefs) and action (e.g., teachers' classroom behavior, students' classroom behavior, student achievement). Teachers make decisions in three stages: before, during, and after instruction (Colton & Sparks-Langer, 1993; Jackson, 1968; Westermann, 1991). These stages are cyclical and reciprocal (i.e., reflection from a lesson can contribute to future planning of instruction) (Hayes, 1996; Yinger, 1977).

The study of expert music teachers is of great value to the music education profession as it provides clear models of successful instructional practice. Although research exists about the observed behaviors of expert music educators, there have been few investigations about the decisions behind their behaviors and the connections between them. In an attempt to fill this gap, I utilized a multiple case study approach to gain an in-depth understanding of expert music teachers' decisions within the real-life context of expert teachers' teaching environments.

The purpose of this study was to describe expert instrumental music educators' instructional decision-making processes. Specifically, I sought to describe the thought processes underlying expert middle school band teachers' decisions before, during, and after instruction. Participants were three expert middle school band teachers. I collected data via semi-structured interviews, researcher observation, participant observation through verbal protocols (i.e., think-aloud and stimulated recall,) and physical artifacts (i.e., written lesson plans, copies of music scores with teachers' annotations, photos and/or diagrams of the classroom environment). Data analysis revealed cross-case themes for participants' decision-making processes as they planned, while they taught, and as they reflected on their rehearsals. Findings indicated that these expert middle school band teachers' decision-making processes were consistent with previous research related to expert teachers' decisions. The themes that emerged about expert middle school band teachers' decisions before instruction were (a) Forming Expectations, (b) Learning Goals, and (c) Time. The themes that emerged about

expert middle school band teachers' decisions during instruction were (a) Reacting and Responding, (b) Filters, and (c) Emotional Intelligence. The themes that emerged about expert middle school band teachers' decisions after instruction were (a) Self-focus, (b) Short-term vs. Long-Term Goals, and (c) Reflection is Ongoing. Future research into the decision-making processes of both expert and novice teachers in additional contexts (i.e., beginning, high school, and collegiate ensembles) and continued use of verbal protocols to study music teacher cognition is recommended.

Parental Involvement in Children's Piano Learning: Parent-Child Interaction And Teacher-Parent Communication

Lun Tong, PhD
University of Missouri–Columbia
Spring 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Wendy Sims

Abstract:

This dissertation consists of three projects that were designed to investigate parent-child interaction and teacher-parent communication about children's piano learning. In the first project, I reviewed the literature on the theoretical frameworks, methods, and influential factors in parental involvement and teacher, parent, and child interactions in music learning. The second investigation is a qualitative descriptive study of the characteristics, intended results, and children's perspectives of Chinese parents' interaction with their children about piano learning. Emergent themes included (a) multifaceted motivational strategies aimed at consistency in piano learning, (b) verbal and non-verbal guidance about piano learning, (c) preferring supportive over critical parental interactions, (d) well-rounded education, and (e) self-driven or parent-influenced motivation. The third project investigated piano teachers' perspectives, barriers, and strategies in communication with their students' parents. Results indicate that most participants are open and positive towards the various expectations of parents, and perceive that parental involvement benefits the piano learning of young children. The main communication barriers are the lack of time participants have to communicate with parents and the unrealistic expectations of the parents. The strategies include reporting to parents about piano lessons, encouraging parental involvement, and encouraging a home music environment change according to age level. Taken together, results from these projects indicate that parents should (a) be positive and encourage the students, (b) cooperate with teachers, and (c) align expectations with teachers before classes. Piano teachers should (a) adapt involvement strategies as students age, (b) maintain open communication channels, (c) align expectations with parents before classes, and (d) be flexible in communication with parents.

Development and Implementation of a Practice and Assessment Tool for Middle School Orchestra

Linda Kathy Hughes, MM
Missouri State University
Summer 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Hellman

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a practice and assessment tool, Skill Ladders, as used by my 7th grade orchestra students. This is a tool that I created to help students focus on specific skill acquisition and musical development during their practice time. Designed for the middle section of intermediate level playing skills and aligned with curricular goals, students were to utilize this tool to set goals, practice, self-assess, and demonstrate progress. Prior to utilizing Skill Ladders, students completed a survey of baseline attitudes toward individual practice. After the trial period of the study, a second survey was conducted on how students perceived the tool's usefulness. I also recorded my assessments and observations of the tool's effectiveness in a journal. Analysis of the results showed that students who have played instruments for a longer time or took private lessons were slightly more likely to find Skill Ladders helpful, but most students found it difficult to navigate, challenging and boring. I discuss the potential and problems of Skill Ladders and what can be done to make the tool more useable for middle school students.

Early-Career Secondary Choral Educators' Conceptions of and Approaches to Teaching Music Literacy

Kacey Kennedy, PhD
University of Missouri–Columbia
Summer 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Kari Adams

Abstract:

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to explore early-career secondary choral educators' conceptions of and approaches to teaching music literacy. Additionally, the researcher explored the influences on their conceptions of and approaches to teaching music literacy. The following research questions guided this study: (a) How do early-career secondary choral educators conceive of music literacy? (b) What are the approaches early-career secondary choral educators use to teach music literacy?, and (c) What experiences influence these early-career secondary choral educators' approaches to teaching music literacy?

Participants in this study were five early-career secondary choral educators in the state of Missouri who taught at least one choir in the regular school day. Findings indicate that participants considered music literacy instruction to extend beyond that of sight-reading instruction and included other skills and competencies that contributed to the development of musical independence. These teachers valued hands-on, constructivist-oriented instruction that encouraged students to develop deep, meaningful connections to the music. Participants' instructional practices were influenced by their own experiences as social constructivist learners.

Exploring Band Students' Motivations Regarding Instrument Selection

Aaron S. Morley, MM
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Summer 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Hellman

Abstract:

When choosing a beginning band instrument, students are faced with a choice that may be influenced by a variety of factors. These factors also interest band directors, who want students to choose an instrument that will be a good fit for their strengths while also being engaging to them. To assist directors in guiding students through instrument selection it is helpful to know what factors could influence students when they are choosing an instrument. To identify the factors that students report as impactful, beginning band students in five northwest Missouri school districts were surveyed about the influence of selected factors. Students reported being most influenced by their perceived enjoyment of playing their instrument, followed by instrument timbre. Other influential factors included the perceived ease of students' chosen instruments, parents and other family members, and band directors. Male and female students reported differing levels of influence from perceived ease, perceived challenge, and non-parental family members. Brass, woodwind, and percussion students reported varying levels of influence from the people in their lives and perceived enjoyment. These survey results suggest that students are particularly influenced by their perception that an instrument will be fun to learn and play. To best engage this reported influence, band directors should present every instrument as fun, particularly those that may be underrepresented in the band.

Sixth Grade Music Ensemble Exploratories: Promoting Accessibility in Music Education

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Fall 2024
Committee Chairperson: Dr. Daniel Hellman

Abstract:

School music ensemble participation has many benefits for students, including social well-being and improving academic performance; however, a variety of barriers, such as fear or lack of interest prevent many students from participating. To improve recruitment in music ensemble classes, Pittsburg Community Middle School created an exploratory class schedule that commenced with the 2022-2023 school year during which almost all sixth-grade students enrolled in three-week rotations of band, choir, and orchestra with the option to choose one option for the rest of the school year. This action research examined this new curriculum and the self-motivations of students who enrolled in the 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 school years. This study surveyed students, parents, and music teachers involved in Music Explorations. Students who took the course fall semester 2022 or fall semester 2023 completed surveys on their self-identified reasons for enrolling or declining a music ensemble course past the trial period as well as outside factors that examined their motivations, such as peer influences, family influences, social influences, and self-influence. The parents and all music teachers who taught this curriculum were also asked to describe their experiences in individual interviews. The data collected were analyzed by calculating the mean average responses and looking for common opinions among the subgroups of the participants. I concluded that overall, students, parents, and teachers find this curriculum to be helpful in recruitment of new music students who otherwise may not have enrolled in a music ensemble. I discussed the implications of this program on recruitment and retention and speculate about how this information could help future and current music educators examine how sampling music ensembles could be beneficial for reaching and recruiting more music students.

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