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

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STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF MUSIC COURSES IN A SOUTHWEST MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

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In Partial Fulfillment

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By

Mary Elisa Wren

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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.

KEYWORDS: participation, nontraditional, popular music education, accessibility, perspectives, inclusivity, autonomy, authenticity, identity, intrinsic motivation

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INTRODUCTION

Music education in public schools has historically and primarily operated within the realm of traditional ensembles including band, choir, and orchestra (BCO) (Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011). The language surrounding "traditional" versus "nontraditional" ensembles/music classes within the music education field is sometimes used to describe the ensembles that were initially offered in schools (those being band, choir, and orchestra), and those that were not (Sanderson, 2014). Many popular music education and nontraditional music advocates are products of traditional music education programs. In recent years, the demand to integrate popular music education in schools has become increasingly prevalent. Prominent professional organizations in the music education field, including the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and the International Society for Music Education, (ISME) have developed special interest groups in popular music education, and many music educators, researchers, scholars, and advocates have made calls for the incorporation of popular music education (Powell, et al., 2019). Several schools across the nation have incorporated various nontraditional music courses into their music programs; however, barriers to popular music education present a variety of challenges for many schools.

Traditional music ensembles have staked their claim within American public schools; hence, the shift in philosophy among some music educators to expand music programs that include nontraditional and popular music education courses has generated pushback and controversy. Knowledge of student interest levels and student motivations for particular approaches to music instruction may provide insight for decision makers on what music courses

might offer students the greatest level of academic and musical success, enjoyment, and opportunity.

In 2007, members of the Florida Bandmasters Association were asked to select factors that would prevent them from offering nontraditional courses in their schools. The findings indicated that inadequate facilities and equipment, lack of training and experience, scheduling difficulties, and lack of support and funding were significant concerns: however, lack of student interest was not (Juchniewicz, 2007). All students are musical in nature, but not all course offerings appeal to every student. Therefore, it can be hypothesized that if music programs were to diversify and expand their course offerings, more students would be interested in participating in school music. Certainly, numerous factors affect which courses are offered at any given school. Discerning which courses would be of most interest to students in a particular school could be the first step in maximizing participation and increasing relevance for students. If schools were to offer additional non-traditional courses, which courses would generate the most student interest and thus the greatest potential for student enrollment? In this study, I investigate student perceptions of non-traditional music courses to analyze their attitudes, beliefs, what shapes students' views, and to determine which course(s) (if any) would yield the greatest potential for participation.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, music programs have only reached approximately 20% of students (Abril & Gault, 2008; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Elpus & Abril, 2019). Many schools have made efforts to reach the remaining 80%, but nationally speaking, little change in enrollment has been observed. One of the ways in which schools have tried to increase participation was by expanding course

offerings to include non-BCO (courses that are not band, choir, or orchestra) courses, including modern band, music technology, or other popular music education options (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020). These schools did see enrollment increases in ways that more accurately reflected their student body.

In a study with the purpose of enhancing the relationships between school administrators and music teachers, Morong (2019) found that both parties agreed that music programs "give students a creative outlet, [are] part of a complete education, [and] brings the school and community together," (Morong, 2019, para. 5). She then acknowledges that “a good music program is one that offers many opportunities for students to get involved. The more students who are involved the greater the impact the music program has on the larger school community," (para. 8).

It is essential to be mindful that all music courses and ensembles have merit and provide unique music-making opportunities for students. Still, a music course (traditional or otherwise) that does not reach one student might provide extremely meaningful instruction for another. This is precisely why a wide range of music courses is necessary for each student to have access to high-quality music education that is relevant, meaningful, and inclusive. Band, choir, and orchestra are the archetype of secondary music education, but many students–especially those of minority populations–face barriers to music participation with the current model (Culp & Clauhs, 2020). Students of various populations, including certain ethnicities and races, lower socioeconomic status, and English-language learners, have decreased access to music education (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020; Elpus & Abril, 2019; Lorah et al., 2014).

Many music educators and researchers believe that non-traditional music ensembles offer complementary experiences to traditional ensembles and allow for unique opportunities under

the Core Arts Standards[1], especially within the Creating standard (Clauhs & Powell, 2021). Students often report that self-expression is one of the main reasons for joining a secondary music ensemble. Typically, the music performed in traditional ensembles is chosen by a director and often does not culturally reflect or represent the students in the ensemble (Bull, 2022; Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Kratus, 2007; Williams, 2011); therefore, it may not always allow for the level of self-expression some students are looking for in a music program. “Students from historically marginalized groups may also struggle to see themselves represented in the music curriculum when the repertoire does not reflect the members of the school” which “can send messages to students, parents, administrators, and the community—implicitly signaling who and whose music belongs in school settings" (Culp & Clauhs, 2020, p. 46). To reiterate, traditional ensembles are not inherently problematic. However, certain characteristics and elements of participation in traditional ensembles may present barriers to individual students or student populations. Other types of music classes may provide greater access to these students without negatively impacting the access offered to beneficiary students of traditional music classes (Powell, 2019).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perspectives of music courses. The perceptions of students are important indicators of which music courses are relevant and meaningful to them. These perceptions illuminated which nontraditional music courses the

[1] The National Core Arts Standards are a set of standards for K-12 arts education in dance, theater, music, and visual arts. They outline what students should be able to demonstrate at each grade level. More information about the National Core Arts Standards can be found at https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/ (National Core Arts Standards, 2023).

students at this Southwest Missouri school district desired to participate in. The secondary aims of this study were to identify (a) factors that affected in school music participation, (b) perceptions of music course value and (c) motivations for these perceptions. Identifying the perceived value of music as a course of study is an important factor in creating a more complete picture of a particular student's perceptions of nontraditional (and traditional) music courses.

Research Questions

1. What are students' perceptions of specific nontraditional music courses (modern band, popular music, digital music, etc.) and of nontraditional and popular music education courses, in general?
2. Do students believe that the study of music is valuable? Do they believe that traditional music courses are more, less, or equally valuable than nontraditional music courses?
3. In which nontraditional music courses would participants enroll if offered at their school?
4. What reasons do BCO students give for continued participation in secondary music?

Research Design

Students grades 8 through 12 were interviewed for their perceptions of music in school and the concept of non-traditional music courses. Though a survey would ideally result in a wide scan of student perspectives, the realistic likelihood of a high yield of responses within this school district is negligible. Furthermore, I have personal connections to the district and the students in which a great level of depth from participants could be obtained through one-on-one conversations. Therefore, to increase the feasibility of procuring in-depth responses, I elected to interview participants. This study utilized a survey as a recruitment tool, followed by semi-structured interviews of participants who returned signed parent permission and informed

consent forms. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. As the interviews were conducted, I also took notes on body language, tone, and inflection of each participant in their responses.

Significance of the Study

Student perspectives provide unique insight into what matters to them and what they want (or need) from a music program. With nontraditional music course additions into music programs on the rise, considering student perspectives will ensure these courses are as relevant to as many of the students as possible. The students of each region, district, and school will have varying perspectives. Though this study is confined to a single school district, commonalities among the age group of participants in this study may be an indicator of what students of other districts may be experiencing. For example, all students who will be in middle school or high school in the spring semester of 2023 have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the formative years of adolescence. This shared experience had the capacity to change the way the younger generation perceived nearly all aspects of their lives, including their musical experiences. Though the results of this qualitative study are not generalizable, this study may have the potential to illuminate some perspectives of students in grades 8-12, especially those within the Southwest Missouri region. By collecting and analyzing data on student perspectives on non-traditional music courses, administrators and educators may make informed decisions regarding music course offerings in order to increase participation and accessibility.

Assumptions

1. Participants' responses are honest and thoughtful.

2. Participants are voluntarily sharing their own unique perspectives and experiences.

Limitations

This study focuses on a specific population in a particular region. While these data may be applicable to surrounding areas and school districts, it may not be applicable to other regions in which similar studies have been conducted that have differing results. Some studies focusing on student perspectives of non-traditional courses have been conducted but have gathered the perspectives of those students who have participated in (or were currently participating) a non-traditional course. This study has been conducted in a school district in which few non-traditional courses are not being offered. Thus, the perspectives gathered in this study reflect only the desire or interest for a particular course(s), not the experience of actually participating in one, and may not accurately reflect the perspectives of students who have participated in/are participating in non-traditional music courses in their schools.

1. The study was confined to a specific region.
2. Data were collected via interview, thus reducing the sample size and perhaps a wider array of perspectives.
3. Interview settings may have caused biases among participants.
4. The demographic profiles of participants beyond grade level were not part of the criteria for participant selection.
5. Participants who volunteered were limited to those enrolled in a BCO course.
6. The potential for researcher bias was present.
7. Data was not independently coded by multiple researchers.

Definition of Terms

1. BCO: a band, choir, or orchestra course.

2. BCO student: a student enrolled in band, choir, or orchestra.
3. Nontraditional (Non-BCO): a music course that is not a band, choir or orchestra course. Examples include modern band, music technology, songwriting, guitar class, ukulele, and steelpan. For the purposes of this study, the term nontraditional will refer only to the content of a course, not the pedagogy or methods of instruction.
4. Modern band: a branch popular music education that "explore[s] a repertoire of popular music (often chosen by students) through an instrumentation that usually includes guitar, bass, keyboards, drum kit, ukulele, vocals, and technology (e.g., computers, tablets, MIDI instruments, synthesizers)" (Clauhs & Powell, 2021, p. 26).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perspectives of music courses. The perceptions gathered in this study can be further understood through contextual information that may affect a student's perspective. Background information that informs this study includes the historical and contemporary context of music education, barriers to participation in music, perspectives of influential adults in the lives of students (e.g., teachers, parents, administrators, community members), perspectives of peers and students who have experienced participation in nontraditional music courses, the status of music programs in their respective schools, and more.

This chapter will begin by examining the historical and contemporary contexts of music in schools which informs how curriculum has evolved and why. Next, I explore some of the challenges stakeholders in music education face, including accessibility issues and other barriers to participation. The challenges that I explore in this review include (a) student motivations for music courses, (b) how nontraditional courses are being implemented and (c) the corresponding impact on student motivation and enrollment. Given the numerous stakeholders involved, I include sections on the current perspectives of music teachers and students of nontraditional music courses, The last topic addressed is student motivation and identity within music programs given its important for this topic. In the summary, I emphasize the connection among the challenges identified and motivation and emphasize how student perspectives of particular music courses can provide a valuable source of information for teachers interested increasing and motivating the students who are served.

Context of Music in Schools

Historical Context. Understanding the current model of music education does not come without an awareness of its history. The most offered music ensembles of today are band, choir, and orchestra. How did these mediums become the archetype for music education? Initially, music education in America was simply referred to as vocal music since prior to the early years of the twentieth century, instrumental music in schools was not widely practiced. The origins of vocal music education in America can be traced back to singing schools. "The term 'singing school' refers to a tradition in which music teachers, or singing masters, held classes in communities where people desired to learn to sing by note" (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 78). These singing schools of the mid-eighteenth century served both a social and musical purpose. They provided members of church congregations with a social outing while working toward improved singing to enhance church services. Singing schools and other musical experiences allowed the greater part of society to be involved in music in various ways, thus increasing appreciation for music among Americans. As an appreciation for music grew, a push for the integration of music as a curricular subject emerged.

Early influential advocates of music education, including William Channing Woodbridge (1794-1845), Lowell Mason (1792-1872), and Elam Ives Jr. (1802-1864), were largely responsible for the incorporation of music into public schools in the nineteenth century. Pestalozzian principles were introduced in American education by Woodbridge, who studied Hans Georg Nägeli's implementation of the famous pedagogue's theories while in Europe. The principles, adapted for music education, include teaching sound before sign; leading students to observe, hear, and imitate sounds; teaching various aspects of music separately (rhythm, melody, expression, etc.); mastering steps before progressing to another; and teaching principles and theory after practice (Mark & Gary, 2007). These principles would become the basis of music

education in American schools. The movement to incorporate vocal music in schools as a funded curricular subject succeeded in 1838 when the Boston School Committee approved a motion for the Committee on Music to appoint a vocal music teacher for Boston public schools after a largely successful exhibition concert.

Though it is reasonably assumed that the people of eighteenth-century America were learning instrumental music privately, instrumental music would not take its place in public school curriculum until the early 1900s. Interest in instrumental music was stirred with touring orchestras and bands, particularly the Theodore Thomas Orchestra founded in 1864, as many Americans were exposed to quality orchestral musicianship and literature for the first time. While orchestras adhered to the traditional European model, concert bands "met the popular needs of the people", which included performances at amusement parks and other entertainment venues (Mark & Gary, 2007, p. 297). Concert bands gained popularity through touring bands of Patrick Gilmore (1829-1892) John Philip Sousa (1854-1932), Arthur Pryor (1869-1942), and other influential bandmasters (Zorn, 1989). Though music has always held a place in military settings, the popularity of American bands during World War I in the public eye initiated the adoption of military-style bands into public education. School orchestras preceded school bands, but the numbers of both grew quickly and steadily throughout the country at the turn of the century.

The traditional ensembles that are the quintessence of public music education developed out of specific societal needs (Mark & Gary, 2007). Singing schools, designed to enhance worship in the church, led to choral singing in public education. The European orchestra and its music were brought to America by immigrants and stimulated interest in preserving the highest level of instrumental music. Bands provided entertainment and roused patriotism among

Americans during the Civil War and later World War I. The appreciation for what these various musical experiences imparted upon society was shared by many Americans, to the point that many believed and advocated for music to be taught in schools.

After World War II, American music educators began to reevaluate the purpose of music education and sought to create a vision for the future (Mark & Gary, 2007). The Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 was a landmark event in which educators and academics met to respond to social and cultural happenings of the mid-twentieth century, including the Civil Rights Movement and the surge of rock'n'roll music (Gurgel, 2019). Three main questions guided the discussions held among members of the convention: "What are the characteristics and desirable ideologies for an emerging post-industrial society? What are the values and unique functions of music and other arts for individuals and communities in such a society? How may these potentials be attained?" (Choate, 1967, p. 4). The members of the convention ultimately agreed on the following points:

1. "Music serves best when its integrity as an art is maintained.
2. Music of all periods, styles, forms, and cultures belongs in the curriculum. The musical repertory should be expanded to involve music of our time in its rich variety, including currently popular teenage music and avant-garde music, American folk music, and the music of other cultures.
3. Schools and colleges should provide adequate time for music in programs ranging from preschool through adult or continuing education.
4. Instruction in the arts should be a general and important part of education in the senior high school.
5. Developments in educational technology, educational television, programmed instruction, and computer-assisted instruction should be applied to music study and research.
6. Greater emphasis should be placed on helping the individual student to fulfill his needs, goals and potentials.
7. The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems as in the “inner city” or other areas with culturally deprived individuals.

8. Programs of teacher education must be expanded and improved to provide music teachers who are specially equipped to teach high school courses in the history and literature of music, courses in the humanities and related arts, as well as teachers equipped to work with the very young, with adults, with the disadvantaged, and with the emotionally disturbed," (Choate, 1967, p. 5).

The Tanglewood Symposium has been reflected upon years later to examine its implications for music education in the 21st century (Gurgel, 2019). Some of the language used by today's standards is offensive, ignorant, and exclusionary, including words like "culturally deprived" and consistent use of the term "mankind". It is highly unlikely that members of underserved populations were present at the Symposium to offer their perspectives. Though the Symposium identified critical issues in the profession and a plan to address them, it is important to address the insensitive language within and to make efforts toward inclusivity moving forward (McKoy, 2017).

Contemporary Context. Music educators today often find themselves in a position of survival, constantly advocating to keep their programs in place, vying for funding, recruiting, or simply defending the notion of funding fine arts in education. Despite this, principals, parents, teachers, and community members nationwide value music and believe music education has positive effects on students (Abril & Gault, 2007; "Americans for the Arts", 2018). Classroom teachers tend to value music education in schools more if they have completed a music course in college (Loring, 1996). Secondary principals were found to believe music programs were successful at helping students reach musical and extramusical goals (Abril & Gault, 2008), though principals and music teachers do not similarly prioritize all instructional matters (Abril & Gault, 2007).

The declarations made at the Tanglewood Symposium in 1967 have significance over fifty years thereafter as we look at the emergence and pervasiveness of technology in the world and especially in schools (Gurgel, 2019). Students now have immediate access to music at their fingertips. Additionally, the concept of including popular music in curricula was and still is a point of contention. Though additional music courses and popular music ensembles have emerged throughout the nation's music programs, the traditional ensembles (band, choir, and orchestra) are still the most pervasive and most commonly thought of when one hears the term "music education." These have been the founding and sustaining models of music in schools, so it may be difficult for music educators to consider major changes to this norm (Williams, 2011).

Aside from traditional ensembles and the musical styles performed in them being the conventional and widely accepted medium, the argument of musical depth and complexity permeates the debate of adopting popular music education (Gurgel, 2019). Some responses to the concept of popular music education argue that "rock music [is] not as valuable as Western art music in school curricula due to its lack of what [Tanglewood] Symposium members described as 'complexity of the elements,'" (p. 61). Symposium members Paul Williams and Mike Stahl suggest a different approach in which "complexity of the elements" would be replaced by other analyses such as the idea of the composer being the performer, musical originality in conjunction with lyrics, rhythms, and melodies, and the social implications of a song. This view of popular music's inferiority is still shared by current preservice and veteran teachers (Springer & Gooding, 2013). The measurement of a genre's or work's inherent value is one that has musical, societal, and cultural implications. Though music teacher education is still largely centered on Western art music and its applications for teaching (Kruse, 2015; Wang & Humphreys, 2009),

growing appreciation and representation efforts for musical diversity are emerging among future and veteran music educators.

Challenges in Contemporary Music Education

Researchers have identified several factors that may present barriers for students who wish to participate in music, including socioeconomic status, level of parental support, scheduling, time commitments, and the nature of traditional ensembles (Culp & Clauhs, 2020). Though many schools offer traditional secondary music courses such as band, choir, or orchestra, it is important to recognize that these offerings are not accessible to all students and that the mere existence of a music program does not "necessarily translate into access, participation, or equity" (Elpus & Abril, 2019, p. 324). Unfortunately, the students who are most likely to benefit from music education are the ones who are least likely to have access to high-quality music education (Catterall, et al., 2012). Furthermore, these external factors play a role in shaping the internal perspectives that young people have for the variety of aspects and forms of music education.

Socioeconomic Status. Multiple studies have identified correlations between socioeconomic status (SES) and participation in music (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2006; Kinney, 2008, 2010; Klinedinst, 1991). In a study that examined demographic profiles of students participating in high school music ensembles, Elpus and Abril (2011) found that students of higher SES families were 1.71 times more likely to participate in music than students of low SES. Another study indicated that students in high-poverty schools have less access to music and arts compared to more affluent school districts (Abril & Gault, 2008). Students of low SES status are also even less likely to

enroll in instrumental music than vocal music due to costs associated with instrumental music courses.

Parental Support. Parental support and involvement, while a child is learning a musical instrument, has been shown to increase musical skill development (Davidson, et al., 1996; Margiotta, 2011; McPherson & Davidson, 2002). Young children form attitudes and beliefs about their musical capabilities through interactions with their parents (McPherson & Davidson, 2002, 2006). It can be assumed that these beliefs developed in childhood directly influence a child's self-efficacy, a powerful mentality that can affect one's life, including the choice to participate in music (Bandura, 1997, 2006). When parents and teachers encourage students in caring, supportive, and non-threatening surroundings, high levels of intrinsic desire for music are more likely to result. (McPherson & Davidson, 2006).

However, the opposite is also true wherein lower levels of intrinsic motivation can arise when a child, who is engaging with something interesting to them, is ignored by a parent or guardian (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 235). The profound impact of parental influence on the development of children is widely known. Administrators and educators strive to develop positive relationships with parents to earn trust and support, including support of school-offered programs. Without the perception of parental support, students may be less likely to persist in school music (Culp & Clauhs, 2020). Parents might not be supportive of a particular music program or music programs in general for various reasons; however, the lasting result of the student being less likely to participate in music remains.

Scheduling and Time Commitment. Students have reported time commitment and scheduling to be a major factor in music participation (Baker, 2009; Culp & Clauhs, 2020). Students of low-income families may be required to work outside of school to support their

families and therefore must forfeit their involvement in music (Clauhs, et al., 2017). Students from families of lower socioeconomic status may be disproportionately affected if students must spend time outside of school working to assist with supporting their family (Clauhs, et al. 2017). Scheduling and time commitment issues may still arise even without the added difficulties of financial constraints. Students participating in a 2009 study reported that they could no longer participate in orchestra because it was during the same period as an AP class (Baker, 2009).

Traditional Ensemble Characteristics. Many students value the social and musical benefits gained from participating in traditional ensembles (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020). However, the model and typical characteristics of traditional ensembles present barriers to many students (Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Kratus, 2007). Traditional ensembles are generally measured by their performance quality at contests and assessed by performance accuracy. Traditional ensembles are also customarily based in standard music notation, are conductor-led, are based in Western Art Music, and include a given set of traditional instruments that students learn to play starting in the 5th or 6th grade (Bull, 2022; Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Williams, 2011). Student autonomy in relation to choice of instrument and repertoire is limited (Williams, 2011). Additionally, with music directors often being the class decision makers, student musical creativity may be stifled. The quest for musical and technical accuracy found in many traditional performing ensembles may be a barrier to students. The focus on the correction of musical mistakes and accuracy has a negative effect on young students, especially those from “less privileged or somehow marginalized backgrounds” (Bull, 2022, p. 66).

Moreover, students may not have choices besides traditional ensembles if they want to participate in secondary music. They might opt out of music entirely if the courses offered are uninteresting to them. "[T]he greater majority of students choose not to participate in our

traditional offerings, and most of them do not because they find this musical participation uninteresting. Even many of those who do participate are less than enthusiastic about the experience" (Williams, 2011, p. 53). The emphasis on rehearsal and polished performance of Western Art music excludes a large portion of students who simply do not relate to this genre. Although some music educators strive to incorporate diverse musical selections into their curriculum, music publishing sites are oversaturated with music composed and arranged by white men, thus BCO arrangements of multi-cultural music are often recreated through the Euro-centric lens of white arrangers and lose the authentic musicality and value of that culture (Lundquist, 2002; Nethsinghe, 2013; Palmer, 1992; Szego, 2005).

Williams (2011) posits that instruments used in traditional ensembles hold less social relevance for students and are therefore less motivated to participate. Traditional band and orchestra instruments were once popular in society, which is why they were used. The same is true for the music these ensembles performed. Today, however, these instruments and musical styles are less than popular, especially among adolescents. In fact, the decline in popularity of these instruments and musical styles began as early as the 1970s. Williams (2011) affirms, "more students gain personal satisfaction and meaning from performing instruments that appeal and intrigue them, and new models of music education must make use of newer technologies and instruments that are of interest to students and are part of the culture in which they live" (p. 54). It is crucial to stress the significance of valuing all forms of music making that students can engage in. This includes the traditional ensembles and courses that most schools currently offer. Several researchers and music education advocates endorse the idea that school music education can both progress in its practices and preserve current offerings that students value (Powell, et

al., 2019; West & Clauhs, 2015). These researchers argue that tradition and evolution can coexist and benefit all students.

The "Other Eighty-Percent". Music educators have frequently problematized the reasons for low rates of music participation rates in secondary schools by referring to students who do not participate as the “Other Eighty-Percent. "Although school music experiences can be motivating for students, formal school music education reaches a relatively small proportion of secondary school aged children. Though well-established institutions characterizing our profession (school band, orchestra, and choir) thrive, the participation gap between school music and non-school music persists," (Confredo & Brittin, 2014, p. 44). Approximately 20% of high school students have participated in at least one year of a music class (Choate, 1968; Elpus & Abril, 2019; Williams, 2007). This statistic has remained relatively unchanged nationally for over fifty years. Within this statistic, it is important to note how underrepresented students of color and economically marginalized are in music classes, especially in band and orchestra as these courses tend to incur financial responsibilities (Elpus & Abril, 2019; Knapp, 2020).

Nontraditional Music Courses

The most offered and enrolled music courses are band, choir, and orchestra, though orchestra programs are present in far fewer schools (Abril & Gault, 2008; Elpus & Abril, 2019). Though enrollment is far beneath that of BCO courses, popular music education and nontraditional music course offerings are gradually increasing across various school districts, and secondary school principals have indicated an interest in offering various nontraditional music courses at their respective schools, including jazz/rock ensemble, general music, music theory, guitar, piano, music technology, composition, and Mariachi ensemble, (Abril & Gault, 2008, pp.

73, 77). These findings may signify the principals' desire to engage more students in music.

However, popular music education is not yet standard across all schools (Kratus, 2019). Kratus (2019) advocates for the acceptance of "musical amateurism" which is the idea of participating in music simply for the love of music. He believes this has the potential to be achieved through the incorporation of popular music education because it affords many more opportunities for lifelong participation compared to BCO courses. Furthermore, he argues that it is nonsensical for 21st century students to be studying music in ways that were established and practiced in the 19th century and that music education must evolve in the way that music itself has evolved.

A variety of initiatives are currently underway with the aim of expanding the presence and quality of popular music education in American schools. With the slow but steady rise of integrating popular music education, the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and the International Society for Music Education (ISME) have developed research interest groups focused on popular music education (Powell, et al., 2019). Similarly, advocacy groups including Music Will (formerly Little Kids Rock[2]) and the Association for Popular Music Education (APME) have emerged. APME's mission statement is "to promote and advance popular music at all levels of education both in the classroom and beyond" (Association for Popular Music Education, 2023). Music Will is the largest nonprofit music program in U.S. public schools and has served over 1.2 million students in over 6,000 schools. Their mission is to make music education that reflects the culture of the students served a right, not a privilege. The State Department of Education of California recognizes the impact of this work, noting, "Music

[2] In September 2022, Music Will (formerly Little Kids Rock) had undergone a name change to more adequately assert their mission and their impact on students nationwide.

Will [Modern band] students are able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and are culturally validated as the music is representative of their own identity," and "contemporary popular music is an overabundant cultural asset that has been underrepresented in public education," ("Music Will", n.d.; "California Arts Education Framework for Public Schools", 2020).

Informal Learning and Nonformal Teaching Strategies. Nontraditional music ensembles are typically more student-centered than traditional ensembles, which is an attractive attribute of non-BCO courses (Powell & Burstein, 2017). Some aspects that deter students are the (a) conductor-led nature of ensembles, (b) minimal opportunities for input on which music is performed, and (c) types of strategies used for rehearsals. Allsup and Benedict (2008) argue that this traditional dynamic can estrange students from the "creative process" and "sets up a duality between how they have known music to be constructed and created—whether through a garage band model, or jazz band, or even a chamber ensemble experience" (p. 170).

Models of some nontraditional ensembles such as modern band are based on informal learning theory, which removes "predetermined curricular constraints" (Knapp, 2020, p. 50). Informal learning possesses different meanings and implications for individuals, but it can be surmised to mean (in terms of music) (a) teaching and meeting the students where they are (Green, 2002, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2014), (b) increased student empowerment and (c) a decreased role for teachers as the central point for knowledge transmission (Folkestad, 2006). It often involves student learning without awareness that learning is taking place (Ziehe, 1986). West and Cremata (2016) discuss the value of blending formal and informal methods within music education.

Knapp (2020) argues that popular music education models, compared to traditional models, better allow teachers to construct and modify their instruction based on the needs and interests of their students. Williams (2011) contends that popular music education models serve individual students by creating student-centered classrooms that allow for greater student engagement, shared music decision-making, reduced focus on summative formal concerts, minimized use and importance of traditional standard music notation, and continuous points of entry, which allow students of various ability levels to join and participate.

Williams (2011) names class size, student-centered learning, and musical/creative decisions (along with several others) as considerations in improving all modes of music education. Some researchers have indicated that the least favorable method of instruction for students is exclusively teacher-led instruction (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020). Although many traditional ensembles are operated exclusively under conductor instruction, student-centered and student-led learning is growing. Nevertheless, it is commonplace for ensemble directors to lead a majority of their classroom's activities and independently select the music students will perform. However, Pendergast and Robinson (2020) found that over 60% of secondary school students participating in a survey indicated they would want their input or suggestions to be considered when selecting music. They also found that nearly 30% wanted a system in which only students would manage music selection, and fewer than 10% preferred a teacher-only music selection system. Nontraditional music ensembles such as modern band focus on allowing students to make creative decisions. The repertoire of popular music ensembles is “student-centered first and foremost, reflecting the music that students listen to on their own and with others” (Powell & Burstein, 2017, p. 245). This paradigm shift in music instruction could be central to involving more students in music programs and could perhaps be applied to traditional ensembles as well.

Both informal and formal learning processes have benefits; however, the long-standing value placed on formal methods may lead some educators to perceive informal learning processes with disdain: "If educators view music learning through a formally (“classically”) trained lens, processes of informal learners that are distant from formal methods may incorrectly be considered inferior, unorganized, or haphazard" (Confredo & Brittin, 2014, p. 45). This, in combination with the notion that popular music is not as valuable as Western art music, has led to a generalized perception that popular music education and other nontraditional music courses that practice informal learning processes are less important than formalized BCO courses.

Effects of Nontraditional Music Courses on School Music Participation. One major concern of BCO educators regarding the adoption of additional nontraditional courses into their curriculum is how it will affect BCO enrollment (Powell, 2019). Researchers have examined how the addition of modern band has affected enrollment in traditional offerings. Clauhs and Cremata (2020) found that overall enrollment has only increased and diversified participating populations in a New York school district. A similar study conducted one year prior found parallel results, in that the addition of modern band into a school's music program did not deplete enrollment of traditional ensembles and brought in new students who had not been involved in school music previously (Clauhs, et al., 2017; Powell, 2019).

Current Perspectives of Nontraditional Music Courses

Teacher and Preservice Teacher Perspectives. Educators' perceptions inform the level of acceptance and openness of nontraditional music courses. Klonowski (2021) explored the attitudes and opinions of high school music teachers in Ohio regarding the potential inclusion of a rock band class in their music programs. These teachers were asked for their thoughts on how

offering a rock band class during the school day might affect their music programs. While some teachers expressed concern that a rock band might pull students away from existing ensembles, others communicated that a rock band could appeal to a different student population and had the potential to recruit students into larger ensembles. More teachers shared favorable perspectives when asked about offering a rock band as an extracurricular activity, describing it as "enhancing", "positive", "strengthening", and "diversifying" (p. 37). Klonowski (2021) also identified several factors that could potentially motivate teachers to consider offering a rock band including "student interest, money, equipment, time, and resources" (p. 38). Teacher training and administrative support and interest were also recurring motivators. Conversely, teachers expressed a lack of training, knowledge, and experience to be preventative factors. A lack of financial resources was also identified as a factor that could prevent offering a rock band class.

Springer (2016) studied music teachers' perceptions of popular music education and their preparation to teach popular music. These teachers expressed a general lack of preparedness and reported a lack of popular music pedagogy in their own training. In another study by Springer and Gooding (2013), 83.6% of participants reported having only one or no classes that incorporated "teaching skills specific to popular music in their undergraduate coursework" (p. 28). Springer and Gooding (2013) also uncovered some preservice teachers' attitudes towards popular music education. The majority of participants indicated that popular music education was better suited for older students than younger students.

Varied opinions of popular music education emerged from Springer and Gooding's (2013) study. One participant shared the belief that a considerable number of students would engage in school music if popular music was even somewhat incorporated because "*everyone* listens to music" (p. 31). Another participant expressed, "Kids really love it. To teach certain

musical elements, popular music works really well because you don't have to orient them to the music first. They already know it, or can very easily learn and then go and build on it" (p. 31). Other participants with differing opinions expressed concern over certain inappropriate content, "perceived inferior musical quality", "perceived inappropriateness for advanced musicians", and "perceived inappropriateness for performance-based ensembles" (pp. 31-32). One participant responded that popular music was "no comparison to music we play as band students" (p. 32). The researchers, prompted by this response and others, asked if music should be purposefully "egalitarian", or designed to include only the most talented students. A different participant revealed a contrasting opinion, stating that "popular music, when correctly chosen, can have as much musical importance as a Beethoven symphony. . . I think [our university] should prepare us to teach and perform all musical styles, not just classical" (p. 32). The differing opinions of preservice and veteran teachers have the potential to shape what students believe about popular music and popular music education.

Participatory Students' Perspectives. Some studies have focused on student participant's perspectives of nontraditional music courses, but minimal work has been done to collect perspectives of non-participant students. One such study (Kelly & Veronee, 2019) gathered the perspectives of high school band, choir, and orchestra students of 29 different nontraditional music courses. Participants responded to three questions: (a) What nontraditional music courses were being offered at their schools? (b) What were their perceived values of specific nontraditional music courses? and (c) In which nontraditional music courses would participants enroll in if offered at their schools? The findings showed that nontraditional music courses with perceived value were more likely for students to want to enroll in. There was also a strong correlation between the desire to enroll and the type of music course; for example,

orchestra students had a stronger desire to enroll in Irish Fiddling than band and choral students. A similar correlation was found in Pendergast's and Robinson's (2020) study that indicated that BCO students preferred larger group learning environments, similar to traditional secondary music ensembles. This points to familiarity being a factor of student preferences.

The findings of Kelly and Veronee (2019) indicated the top ten most common nontraditional offerings in participants' schools were AP Music Theory, Musical Theatre, Piano/Keyboard, Music Theory, Guitar Ensemble, Music History, Music Appreciation, IB Music, Music Composition and Arranging, and Music Technology/Audio Recording and Engineering respectively. Kelly and Veronee (2019) point out that perhaps the reasoning for these courses being offered more often, as opposed to courses like Irish Fiddling Ensemble and Gamelan Ensemble, is that they require less additional training or experience on the part of the teacher beyond that needed to earn certification. Of these courses, eight (Music Theory, AP Music Theory, Music Composition and Arranging, Piano/Keyboard, Music History, Musical Theatre, Music Technology/Audio Recording and Engineering, and Music Appreciation) were perceived as having the highest value when compared to the other 21 courses. The courses that the most participants would enroll in if offered were Music Composition and Arranging (84.11%), AP Music Theory (83.33%), and Music Theory (80.62%). These courses, of the 29 options, might seem more traditional on the traditional-nontraditional spectrum because they are more directly related to college music curricula; however, it is presumable this is due to all the participants being BCO students. Again, these results point to familiarity being a factor in course selection.

Some research has been conducted to determine the perspectives of students who have participated in modern band ensembles. One study found that students who participated in

modern band programs reported that their involvement positively affected their musical, social, emotional, and academic skill development (Weiss et al., 2017). Abeles et al. (2021) found that students participating in modern band expressed improved interpersonal skills, conflict resolution skills, and collaboration skills. Powell (2021) is of the belief that participation in modern band ensembles leads to lasting friendships, enhanced cultural awareness, and creativity. Another study through a series of interviews found that students who participated in modern band continued to have diverse and meaningful musical experiences post-graduation (Burstein, 2016).

Critiques of Modern Band and Popular Music Education

Though a great deal of existing literature points to positive enhancements through the inclusion of popular music education and nontraditional music courses, critiques of certain branches of popular music education have been voiced. Modern band curriculum has been criticized for its instrumentation and repertoire, despite the aim to focus on including music students are passionate about ("Music Will", 2020). Nielsen (2018) found that hip-hop is the most popular genre among students in the United States, yet many modern band programs prioritize guitar playing (Randles, 2018), an instrument infrequently used in hip-hop. Furthermore, training in modern band has typically focused on guitar (Powell et al., 2017).

Fonder (2014) responded to the beliefs of some educators that traditional ensembles can be exclusionary and inaccessible. He argued that the calls for reform of traditional ensembles confuse prospective music educators and has formed a point of contention among university large ensemble conductors and music education faculty. Additionally, he criticized critics of traditional ensembles for wanting to "abandon the 20 percent—the most motivated and interested

students—to accommodate the other 80 percent" (Fonder, 2014, p. 89). Though some might find the dissonance between educators to be harmful to the profession, others may view differing opinions to be the catalyst for positive change within the field.

Intrinsic Motivation and Musical Identity

Educators consistently concern themselves with the ways in which students are motivated to participate in music ensembles, as evident by the large amounts of research surrounding the topic of motivation in education. The concern is not without cause, as research shows that students who have higher levels of intrinsic motivation are more likely to continue their musical learning over time (McPherson & Renwick, 2001). Increasing students' intrinsic motivation to participate and persist in a music ensemble has a great deal to do with identity. Identity and sense of self is a hallmark of development in adolescence, and a secure sense of self is highly integrated with a student's level of intrinsic motivation (Hargreaves et al., 2002; Pitts, 2016). Music has also been shown to have powerful impacts on adolescent development (Miranda, 2013). A student's sense of identity may evolve from a multitude of sources, including cultural influences, musical preferences, or any experiences with music. If these sources offer fulfillment, connection, and enjoyment in music, a student is much more likely to continue to participate and to seek out these positive experiences, thus resulting in increased intrinsic motivation.

Some researchers hypothesized that if students participate in music courses that provide them with authentic experiences that bolster their sense of identity, long-term persistence in music is more likely to occur. This is especially true when students feel they are being culturally represented in their music program (Clauhs & Cremata, 2020). Clauhs and Cremata (2020) also found that students who were given the opportunity to participate in a modern band class

reported increased confidence and sense of enjoyment. Enjoyment is also a crucial factor of intrinsic motivation (Kulakow & Raufelder, 2020). Accessibility to music courses is enhanced by the inclusion of music that is relevant for students--for instance, music enjoyed by students in their daily lives and music of various cultures and backgrounds. This may result in several benefits for students: (a) more enjoyment, (b) stronger musical and self-identity, and (c) increased intrinsic motivation (Powell et al., 2019). These are important topics for music educators both theoretically and practically that can be useful in designing and implementing curricula.

Summary

Music in schools developed out of societal needs (Mark & Gary, 2007). Orchestras fulfilled the aesthetic need for a high level of artistry, bands entertained masses and boosted morale alongside a sense of patriotism and nationalism, and choirs developed proficient singers who could enhance religious services. These types of ensembles were forged into the archetype of secondary music education and have provided students and communities with a mode of musical experiences. Though BCO courses serve many students, nearly 80% of secondary students either have not or are not participating in a secondary music course (Elpus & Abril, 2019). Non-BCO courses may provide additional accessibility to those who need it most, including students of low-income families and minority racial/ethnic groups.

Popular music education professional organizations and special interest groups are emerging and making large impacts on the students they serve nationwide. Perspectives from other stakeholders such as parents, administrators, teachers, and community members can be influential on a student's beliefs about music education in general and about specific mediums of

music in and out of school. Student perspectives are also influenced by their personal experiences with music, whether positive or negative, challenges they face regarding participation and accessibility to music programs, and their cultural background. The many experiences of students who have participated in popular music ensembles in school are telling and illuminate one of the reasons why many music educators and scholars advocate for popular music education integration. Furthermore, when students are provided with music course offerings that align with and can improve their sense of self, it is probable their participation in music with be sustained. The perspectives offered by students of their music programs are telling and vital in enabling schools to make informed decisions about course offerings and instructional methods. The project that follows focused on exploring these perspectives.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify student perspectives of nontraditional music courses. The driving questions for this research were (a) What are students' perceptions of specific nontraditional music courses (modern band, popular music, digital music, etc.) and of nontraditional and popular music education courses, in general? (b) Do students believe that the study of music is valuable? Do they believe that traditional music courses are more, less, or equally valuable than nontraditional music courses? (c) In which nontraditional music courses would participants enroll if offered at their school? And (d) what reasons do BCO students give for continued participation in secondary music?

The method has been designed to obtain in-depth responses from these three groups of students spanning from grades seven through twelve. My method followed a qualitative approach that involved an emergent coding process, "pre-coding", coding, and re-coding the data, followed by an examination and synthesis of relevant school and district information.

Research Design

For an exploration of student perspectives of music courses, I chose a qualitative research approach with select elements of a phenomenological approach, which "focuses on an individual’s first-hand experiences rather than the abstract experience of others," (Selvi, 2008). To develop a more complete picture of what encompasses a student's perspective, I decided to interview participants to allow them to provide detailed accounts of their experiences and perceptions. The interviews conducted in this study are considered "semi-structured interviews", which may be defined as "an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life

world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 6). I asked a predetermined set of questions to each participant; however, the model of a semi-structured interview allowed for leeway in the dialogue. This provided the participant with the opportunity to follow up on any points, which they considered to be important and relevant. I was also able to equally focus the discussion on what I was aiming to gather from the participant as the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Student participants of the school district in grades 8 through 12 were asked a series of interview questions regarding their perspectives of nontraditional music courses, their perceived value of music education, and any nontraditional music courses they would want to enroll in, if given the opportunity. Though sample sizes for qualitative research vary, researchers recommended a sample size of anywhere from 1 to 25 participants for phenomenological studies (Boyd, 2001; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Thomas & Pollio, 2002). The music course offerings of the middle and high schools within Southwest Missouri vary, yet nearly all offer band and choir. Several schools offer orchestra, general music, and music appreciation.

Site of the Study

The study was conducted on the high school and middle school campuses of a Southwest Missouri school district where I previously taught. The interviews were conducted during the school day in the main office conference room. The demographic breakdown of the school district provides context for the participants of the study. In the district in 2021, 56.8% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch, a decrease from 66.2% in 2020. The 2021 population breakdown of students 9-12 is 3.2% Asian, 1.2% Black, 37% Hispanic, 0.4% Pacific

Islander, 2% Multiracial, and 56.2% White. 17.57% of 7-8 students and 16.12% of 9-12 in this district are considered English Language Learners (ELL), and 18.09% of 7-8 students and 16.64% of 9-12 students have an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) ("Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education," n.d.). The music program in this district at the secondary level offers two instrumental and two vocal performance ensembles, as well as some nontraditional offerings including guitar, piano, ukulele, music in pop culture, and world music.

Participants

Participants in this study are students in a Southwest Missouri school district in grades 8 through 12. Though a study focusing on the demographic profiles of students and their relationship to music enrollment is a worthwhile endeavor, I chose not to let demographic information be a qualifying factor of participating in this study. As this is an exploratory case study, I sought to understand multiple perspectives through the lens of surrounding contextual information. I have chosen pseudonyms for each participant to protect their identities. See Table 1 for participants' pseudonyms, grade level, and the music courses they are currently enrolled in.

I recruited students via an interest survey. The survey and a brief description of the study were posted in the schoolwide Google Classrooms by the middle and high school principals. All survey responses were sent directly to the researcher. Participation in the study was incentivized by a drawing for a $25 Amazon gift card. The informed consent and parent permission form was then emailed to the parents of students who indicated an interest in participating in the study.

Though 43 students returned the recruitment survey showing an interest in participating in this study, only 13 returned a signed informed consent and parent permission form (Appendix A). Of the 13, 11 were present at school on the day the interviews took place. The actual sample

size of this study is only 60% of the size I had hoped for, therefore presenting another limitation to the study. Of the 11 participants that I interviewed, 10 had been students of mine for one to two and a half years. I provide details on my background in "The Researcher's Role" subsection on myself and the implications of my relationships with students that are relevant for this study.

Table 1. Participants' Pseudonyms, Grade Level, and Music Classes Currently Enrolled In

Pseudonym	Grade	Music Classes Enrolled In
Mia	8	Choir
Evelyn	8	Band
Lucas	9	Band
Jordan	9	Band & Choir
Ava	9	Band
Elijah	10	Band
Isabelle	10	Band
Sophia	10	Band & Choir
Henry	11	Band
Noah	11	Band & Choir
Liam	12	Choir

Data Collection Tools and Procedures

Prior to data collection, I received approval from the IRB and the participating school district to conduct this study. The IRB approved my study, IRB-FY2023-254, on January 31, 2023. (Please refer to Appendix B for the IRB Approval Letter). The interviews were recorded

via the iPhone Voice Memo application and later transcribed. During the interviews, I took typed notes on my MacBook Pro in Google Docs. Each interview had its own separate page and sections for "descriptive notes" where I described factual observations, and "reflexive notes" where I detailed my own impressions, interpretations, perceptions, speculations, and feelings of these same observations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I utilized a semi-structured interview format and asked follow-up questions to certain comments and remarks made by participants as I deemed necessary or appropriate. Each interview explored individual experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs; therefore, no two interviews were exactly alike. The interview guide can be found in Appendix C.

Data Analysis

My data analysis has been modeled on the process described by Giorgi and Giorgi (2008), which, summarized by Silveira (2019), involves "interviewing the participant[s], transcribing and reading the data, locating and interpreting key phrases/statements that speak directly to the phenomenon, transforming those key phrases/statements that highlight the participants' lived experiences, and finally describing the structure of the experience," (p. 432). I chose to utilize emergent coding to capture all the facets of the participants' experiences, not just the ones I might expect to emerge. Repetition, regularity, or consistency of the data was identified before codes were compiled into subsuming categories (Saldaña, 2016). In coding the data in this way, I identified common themes and recurring sentiments expressed by the participants. "Pre-coding", a term coined by Layder (1998) enabled me to identify phrases, words, or remarks that were particularly intriguing or significant, leading to more thorough and accurate coding. I coded the interviews collectively and combined a top-down coding process (in

which I identified codes from the first interview and carried them into the following interviews) with an emergent coding process as codes continued to emerge in subsequent interviews. The codes that resulted from this process formed my lower-level codes which were then analyzed for similarities and connections. Codes with similar undertones were grouped and re-coded to describe the underlying narrative. A second round of re-coding took place which resulted in the main themes of the data across all the participants.

The Researcher's Role

I recognized that my own bias could influence how I might conduct the interviews and my interpretation of the results. My personal experiences in music-making place me in both traditional and nontraditional camps. I am a product of seven years of secondary band and choir, six years of collegiate band, and one year of collegiate choir. I taught secondary band and choir for two years after graduating from university. Additionally, I am also the outcome of private guitar lessons and "self-taught" singing, which led to my ongoing involvement in a traditional and contemporary Irish band, a soft-rock cover band, and a blues-rock band that performs original songs. The culmination of these experiences has created my own unique outlook on this topic and music education.

My identity as a music teacher and music education graduate student does pose a limitation to this study as well as strengthen my analytical position. It is also important to note that 10 of the 11 students interviewed are my former students. Because of the relationships I had previously formed with these students, I believe they felt more comfortable talking with me than they would have with a stranger. However, these students might have been more inclined to speak positively about their musical experiences because many of those experiences had been

shared with me or felt the need to speak about their musical experiences in a positive light because of the opinions they believe I hold about music.

The connections I have with the students I interviewed varied significantly. Some students I connected with on a deep level and felt that I had a profound impact on their musical growth. These students sometimes met with me before or after school for individualized lessons and practice time or even began studying an instrument separate to what they played in class during the school day. Often, these students felt they could confide in me or referred to me as their "trusted adult", a term given to a teacher, coach, or other adult a student felt they could trust and talk to during difficult moments in their lives. Other students I interviewed I had what I would call a "surface-level" connection with. It is likely that many of the students who volunteered to participate in this study opted in because of the connections formed when I was their teacher. During my time in this district as a music teacher, I felt that I always gave students space to share their honest thoughts regarding music selection, the learning process, or other miscellaneous classroom business, no matter how positive or negative, and strove to validate the students and healthily navigate their feelings. I strongly feel as though this practice is a valued expectation within the connections my students and I have in every interaction; this study is no exception.

To reduce the potential for bias, I explicitly told each participant I wanted them to be open and honest, to share their real thoughts, and to not tell me what they thought I would want to hear as their former music teacher or as a music teacher in a general sense. It was my assumption that each participant shared their honest thoughts, but the potential for our connections to influence their responses was impossible to eliminate entirely. I avoided asking leading questions which could have influenced participants to simply say what they thought I

wanted to hear. I asked several open-ended questions to allow participants to focus on their own experiences and beliefs. Participants were given the opportunity to listen to their recorded interviews and read their interview transcripts to ensure the information was accurate and properly represented their voice and story.

RESULTS

This chapter contains an analysis of the interviews I conducted with 11 secondary school students, grades eight through 12. The participants were enrolled in at least one school music class during the period I conducted this research. In my analysis of the interviews, I aimed to stay as true to the participants' voices as possible. My relationships with each of the students formed in my years as their teacher enabled me to interpret the meaning of their remarks to a further extent than perhaps a stranger to them could. However, to prioritize the data's validity, I included in my analysis an examination of the participants' body language, tone of voice, what was said, and how I phrased the questions and responded to their comments. Regardless, I am the sole researcher on this study and no other researchers independently coded the data. I had also hoped to collect data from the population of students this age not enrolled in school music, however, no students within this population indicated an interest in participating. Therefore, one of the research questions I had intended to explore lacked the participants population to answer it.

My approach to coding the interviews involved a combination of top-down coding and emergent coding. Initially, I identified codes from the first interview and used them as a starting point for subsequent interviews. As the interviews progressed, I continued to allow new codes to emerge naturally. These codes became my lower-level codes and were analyzed for commonalities and relationships. I grouped codes that shared similar themes and re-coded them to capture the underlying story. Following this, a second round of re-coding took place to identify the main themes that emerged from all the participants' data. My familiarity with the interview content gradually increased throughout the coding process and analysis and resulted in

findings beyond the initial research questions. My lens as the former music teacher of 10 out of these 11 students strengthened my analysis. I was able to draw upon observations I had made when I was teaching to contextualize what students had said in the interviews. I report the results in narrative form to preserve the authenticity of participant responses. I have interspersed several direct quotes from participants throughout the chapter to reflect the representative nature of various emergent themes. Participants were given the option to read through their interview transcripts and listen to their interview's recording. None of the participants opted to review their transcripts or their recordings, therefore, none of the data were revised following data collection.

This chapter will include relevant contextual information including my perceptions and observations as a former teacher within the district and an interview I held with the middle school principal. It will also address each of the four research questions followed by other emergent results which include (a) student beliefs of how music courses provide breaks; (b) attitudes toward orchestra as a course not currently offered; (c) student awareness of their future, specifically after high school graduation; (d) desire for authenticity, autonomy, and identity in and out of music; and (e) connection of lower-level codes to intrinsic motivation. The four research questions are as follows:

1. What are students' perceptions of specific nontraditional music courses (modern band, popular music, digital music, etc.) and of nontraditional and popular music education courses in general?
2. Do students believe the study of music is valuable? Do they believe traditional music courses are more, less, or equally valuable than nontraditional music courses?
3. In which nontraditional music courses would participants enroll in if offered at their schools?
4. What reasons do BCO students give for continued participation in secondary music?

Relevant Contextual Information

My Perspective. My analysis was informed by the contextual information I gathered from the years I was a teacher within this district, the informal conversations with former coworkers in the time that has past when I was not teaching there, and the interview I held with the district's middle school principal. My experience in this district allowed me to conclude that the community, parents, administration, and students, in general, valued the fine arts. In most cases, we were given the resources we needed to provide students with high quality music education, including funding for repairs, textbooks, accessories, and rehearsal space. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (the 2020-2021 school year) our administration was incredibly supportive and was willing to help us purchase personal protective equipment for us and our students, including voice amplification for the teachers to overcome the difficulties of teaching with a mask on, masks students could wear while playing their instrument, instrument bell covers, absorbent underpads to sanitarily collect and dispose of condensation from brass instruments, latex gloves, and more. They were also in constant support of whatever we needed to do to make sure students were given the opportunity to make music in the safest way we could think of.

Though my perception through my experience of the district is quite positive, I did not want my bias to affect the method, analysis, or results of this study. I strove to remain as neutral as possible during the interviews with participants and tried to not respond affirmatively or negatively to student responses but did encourage follow-up with additional details. My relationships with each of the students led to a more casual and conversational type of interview in which there were moments in which I did respond enthusiastically or amicably rather than remaining strictly neutral or showing no emotion. During the interviews and the analysis, I

attempted to be aware of my experience and consciously check my bias by being aware of how my perspective could influence my perceptions. In the analysis stage, I checked for moments in which it appeared that I could have asked a leading question or encouraged a student to say something they might not have said otherwise. I looked for instances in which I may have responded with too much enthusiasm or perhaps not enough to verify that what the students were saying was actually true.

Principal Interview. To establish some context for the students' interviews, I began the project with an interview with the middle school principal before beginning the project. This enlightening interview explored many of the changes experienced by the middle school since I left the district. In the past two years, the middle school had absorbed the sixth-grade class, as the intermediate building was now too small to house both fifth and sixth graders. As a result, the middle school received a directive from the district office that class times needed to be extended. The building transitioned from an eight-period day with 43-minute classes to a seven-period day with 50-minute classes. Additionally, all grade level students became required to take a year and a half of math and communication arts courses, filling up three periods of the seven allotted. I was unable to clarify the exact reasons for the course requirements and schedule changes; however, I would speculate that the directives were a response to test scores or staff complaints about class times being too short. With other requirements added, only one year-long course or two semester-long courses were available for students to choose as their elective(s). As someone who taught both band and choir at the middle school, this would have put my students in the position of having to choose between band or choir, whereas they were previously able to do both. These directives resulted in several changes for the music program at the middle school level, including transitioning from separate sixth, seventh, and eighth grade bands to a beginner

band and a concert band (mixed seventh and eighth graders), moving jazz band from a class to an after-school activity, and condensing two sections of middle school choir to a single class.

Nine of the 11 participants were high school students who were not affected by the recent changes experienced by the middle school students and staff. The information gleaned from the interview with the middle school principal provides insight into how the district is working toward solutions for the ramifications of the recent changes in scheduling and course requirements. The participants, however, also endured some negative experiences as a result of school and district policies. The principal explained that there was a decrease in enrollment in both band and choir. He said that this was absolutely not his intention, but simply a byproduct of creating more instructional time for each class period. He shared that he, the counselor, and the music team are working to create solutions to increase enrollment. He described how in every decision, there is a cost-benefit analysis he was to weigh. In this case, the choice lay between giving teachers more time with students or limiting student choice. Though decreasing student choice was never the intention, it was a byproduct of the decision and one they will have to continue to work through.

In discussing course offerings for students, he shared how open he was to the idea of expanding course offerings and exploring new courses that might appeal to students: "Other than the current classes we're teaching, what are some other elective offerings that might attract kids to the music side?" Since music teacher education currently lacks training in several areas surrounding popular music education, I asked him if he would be willing to fund professional development in these areas for teachers who would be open to teaching nontraditional electives. He responded, "Absolutely. It's one of those things where if the class doesn't fit or it doesn’t interest our kids, then what? What is that thing in that arena of music that entices kids?" The

support for providing course offerings that interest students is an incredible indicator of support for students and helping them find their niche.

Perceived Value: BCO vs. Non-BCO

What are students' perceptions of specific nontraditional music courses (modern band, popular music, digital music, etc.) and of nontraditional and popular music education courses in general?

Do students believe the study of music is valuable? Do they believe traditional music courses are more, less, or equally valuable than nontraditional music courses?

In this section, I describe the results associated with student perceptions of nontraditional music courses. Participants (11) were shown a list of 29 nontraditional music courses (Appendix D) compiled by Kelly and Veronee (2019) and presented with the question prompts. After discussing which courses they or their friends would be interested in, they were asked whether they believed the courses on the list were less, more, or equally valuable than band, choir, and orchestra. Eight students reported they believed the non-BCO courses were of equal value to BCO courses, two said less valuable, and one said more valuable. My analysis led me to conclude that the determination of value had much to do with the student's own definition of music or their personal value of music. It also found that it depended on the student's own interpretation of valuable, and whether they interpreted the meaning of valuable as personal value or a broader definition of value. The responses pointed to both definitions, as some participants discussed how nontraditional course offerings expanded opportunities to explore other areas of music for either themselves or for other students who may not find value in traditional course offerings. Several participants expanded on the benefits that a wider range of music courses would provide them. Reasons cited included: (a) the ability to experience a different side of music, (b) providing opportunities for students with different interests, and (c)

the possibility to engage in different styles of learning. Additionally, students conceded that no genre was better than another; they were simply different yet provided the same benefits all students of music receive and enjoy.

Liam: "Probably equal value. Just because they all offer different things. Because when we talk about music, I feel it's almost like an umbrella term. Music isn't just one thing, you know? And I feel like it's not supposed to just all be categorized into one same thing or, or two different things like it's just choral or it's just, you know, instrumental or whatever. Each thing is different in its own way just like English is different from science. . . And so, like, while each class maybe considered music or fine art, they each offer their own different thing that's beyond just music. It reaches a different part of the brain whenever you're doing this thing or that thing. Like music theory, or sight singing or reading or whatever, you know? And then like using your voice or breath control and like those things also can help with future life events and not just things in regard to singing or playing an instrument. . .I don't see one as greater than another."

Elijah: "I'd say they're equally as valuable. Because I mean, it's still something that a lot of people would enjoy, and it's something that really does interest a lot of people. And I just think that having that available would be really helpful for most people. . . But I think all music's important and the same, it's all equal. There's no genre that's better than another because it's all just making sounds to enjoy, and to have people enjoy."

Evelyn: "I feel like some of them would be equally valuable because we learned some of that stuff in regular band, but I feel like the rest of them would be more important because it brings more entertainment and more, like, physical learning to band than just playing an instrument."

Ava: "I feel like they're equal because I mean, you can learn about music theory and maybe not be in band. . . One's not better than the other."

Henry discussed how, while no genre or ensemble is greater than another, traditional courses offered a wide variety of genres and instruments to explore and provided a starting point for students who want to specialize later in life.

Henry: "I think they're equal, but I think it's a different kind of thing because the big

three [BCO] are the introduction and not necessarily all the more specific classes are things that you can pursue in college more specific than just band and choir."

Others perceived value as having more options available to students that catered to different needs and interests.

Isabelle: "All of them as a whole are about equally as valuable because they provide extra opportunities for people who don't want to be in band or choir, or can't for some other reason, to play something else, to do something else that is also important. So, they don't have limited options, it just provides more. . . They are as valuable, but without the students that take the classes, there's no point in having them."

Mia: "I feel like they're about the same in value, just depending on who the person is."

Jordan had similar ideas but also referred to the resources that make a course possible, which could have been referring to the availability of qualified teaching personnel to teach those other courses, the availability of particular instruments, financial constraints, scheduling issues, or something else**.**

Jordan: "I feel like they're equal, but a lot of people don't have the resources to get them."

These participants also spoke about the importance of student interests and accessibility in justifying their beliefs about how they found music classes to be personally valuable. Two participants said they believed non-BCO courses were less valuable. One of the two said it was because music learning was already readily available through band, choir, or the other offerings, and because there was less opportunity for competition against other schools in the non-BCO courses. The other student argued that BCO courses explored a variety of genres, included many

instruments, and could offer students "a grand understanding of everything there is to offer" in contrast to the non-BCO courses that often homed in on a single instrument or genre.

Sophia stated that the non-BCO courses were more valuable:

> *Sophia: "I think they're more valuable because there's a lot of different options and they're all very different. So, you could learn more from those classes than if you just have, I guess, the three we have here."*

This statement is contrary to the other student who argued that more could be learned through the variety band and choir offer and highlights the difference in perspectives among students at the same school and in the same music program. This contradiction could be a result of each of their individual experiences with band or choir. It is likely the backgrounds of each student have led them to their conclusions about what is more personally meaningful. The student who expressed the belief that BCO courses offer a wide variety of genres is involved in multiple music-making outlets including band, choir, church music, and has tried to start a garage band. This array of experiences may have led this student to conclude that band and choir have provided the most diverse range of music that he has performed and therefore, already offers a vast collection of music to study. The student who thought more course offerings could provide more musical learning experiences is involved in only band, and likely believes there is much more to be explored.

Courses Students Showed Interest In

In which nontraditional music courses would participants enroll in if offered at their schools?

The courses participants showed the most interest in enrolling in or reporting that people they knew would be interested in were Music History, Orchestra, Rock/Pop/Commercial Band,

World Music, Steel Pan, and Audio Recording & Engineering. Table 2 displays the course offerings students showed interest in from the list curated by Kelly and Veronee (2019).

Table 2. Number of Students Interested in Music Courses

Course Title	#
Music History	7
Orchestra	6
Rock/Pop/Commercial Band	5
World Music	5
Steel Pan	4
Audio Recording and Engineering	4
Music Theory	3
Composition and Arranging	3
Irish Fiddling	3
Show Choir	2
Music Technology	2
Guitar	2
Salsa Ensemble	2
Musical Theater	2
Blues Ensemble	2
Old Time Ensemble	1
Music Appreciation	1
Chamber Ensembles	1
Music Business	1
Entertainment Management	1
JV/Varsity Band	1
Mariachi Ensemble	1
Hand Bell Choir	1

Courses from the Kelly and Veronee (2019) list that no participants showed interest in are not included in the table.

Many of the students had difficulty articulating exactly what it was about some of their choices that made them interested and used descriptors such as, "it just sounds cool", "interesting", "fun", or "cool", or explained that some of the courses on the list would be good for some students within their school, especially regarding how the current offerings at their school were not the best fit for everyone. (Please refer to the section on motivators and barriers for more on this topic.) Many students shared stories that suggested they were seeking flexibility and individuality. I suspect this is a broad critique of school organization and is a common sentiment of many high school students. Participants referred to a variety of musical interests among students and how not all interests were being met. This could provide insight as to why only 9% of students in this district and only a fraction of student bodies throughout the United States are enrolled in music (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). Similar to how students talked about a lack of course offerings being a potential barrier, students also discussed the benefits of what additional courses could bring:

> *Jordan: "I feel like that would engage a lot more people because especially if you like history, but you're not, like, you don't want to play an instrument or sing and a choir, you could learn about the evolution of it versus being in it."*
>
> *Liam: "The music technology one would be really cool. Because I want to be an artist someday and so I wanna learn how to produce my own music. And I know that there's like four or five people here that are like SoundCloud rappers. So like, they already are learning how to produce their own music. So if this class is offered, I feel like a lot of people would show interest in that."*

Other students voice similar concerns yet focus on inclusivity in terms of sensory needs. Inclusivity is related to accessibility. This is an important consideration for music teachers as we

strive to meet the needs of all students. Class size may have an effect on accessibility. Pendergast and Robinson (2020) found that of in-school music participants, out-of-school music participants, and non-music participants, 50.8% preferred a blend of small and large class sizes while 35.9% preferred small class sizes and only 13.3% would opt for a large class size. Williams (2011) also expressed concerns about class size. This could suggest that one of the reasons students give for not joining a large music ensemble is simply the size of the group. It would seem to me that the size of a class has implications on how a class operates and most definitely affects the volume of such a class, which I speculate deters students who feel they might become overstimulated by the decibel output of a large music ensemble. This conjecture may indicate the reason why most students prefer smaller groups for learning. Jordan provided some detailed insight into the reality of how such courses have adverse effects for some students and sees the potential in other music offerings to suit the needs of students.

> *Jordan: "A lot of people are like, they have a lot of sensory issues and they're ways of getting it out are in music. That's how a lot of people are calmed down or they relieve their stress. But not having the right classes can lead to even more frustration and can even lead to some kids dropping out. And I feel like you shouldn't give up on your future just because the school you are in right now doesn't offer you what you need."*

This quote exhibits Jordan's belief that student interests are relevant for course offerings. Creating an idea for a music class, pitching it to teachers who might have the ability to teach it and getting their approval, generating interest among other students, and then presenting the idea to the principal in hopes that the class becomes offered would be strenuous and complex. However, it is the belief this student holds about student interests being important that matters. Ultimately, she is saying that students deserve courses that stimulate and explore their interests.

Some participants described World Music as "inclusive" and could "open a lot of people's eyes to different cultures".

Other participants shared how their personal musical genre preferences influenced their course selections. Students talked about how they enjoyed listening to particular genres or a variety of genres and wished those styles of music were more common in their music program. Some of the students I interviewed spoke about their desire for popular music to be more prevalent in their music program and displayed a level of apathy toward playing their instrument and band in general-- in the time I was their teacher. While they were in attendance, they demonstrated no desire to practice or to even play their instrument during class on occasion. This observation along with remarks made in the interviews helped me to see the connection between their music genre preferences and their desired courses.

> *Ava: "Yeah, I just kind of want to see that [rock/pop/commercial band] be kind of incorporated with us because I mean, I like it and I want to play something like that. And I mean, we already have that, some pop songs with our jazz band, but there's not many. But I would love to see rock songs."*
>
> *Mia: "There are some people who aren't necessarily interested in just doing the regular, like, classy band pieces and they want to do something more, being fun all the time."*

Other students who shared the same desire for the incorporation of music they listen to in their daily lives looked for ways in which to involve themselves in the performing of popular music by either learning a new instrument such as guitar, bass guitar, drum set, or keyboard and trying to join the school's jazz band, or by trying to form their own garage band outside of school with friends. These students are going out of their way to find ways of making music they have a connection with and that is meaningful to them. Participants, though they are generally pleased

with the current course offerings, thought that additional courses could appeal to their preferred musical sensibilities. Furthermore, expanding music course offerings would make the music program more inclusive and accessible.

Motivators and Barriers

What reasons do BCO students give for continued participation in secondary music?

Many of the students had difficulty articulating exactly what it was about some of their choices that made them interested and used descriptors such as, "it just sounds cool", "interesting", "fun", "cool", or explained that some of the courses on the list would be good for some students within their school, especially regarding how the current offerings at their school was not the best fit for everyone.

Participants were asked to reflect on the reasons they decided to join the music class that they were currently involved in and why they continued to participate. I identified these separately as many students explained that what initially drew them into music was no longer a motivator for continuing. A multitude of motivations were described, ranging from (a) a general interest in music, (b) family members who encouraged it, (c) a desire to be a part of a community, friendship, fulfillment, challenge, accomplishment, meeting new people, exploring something new or different, or (d) a want to have an impact on others.

One theme that seemed to emerge was a motivation for experiencing something new in music. Some students felt as though experiencing a new type of music ensemble offered something new or different for them to do as they approached middle school. In my interview with the middle school principal, he touched on how he viewed middle school to be a ground for exploration. He embraced the idea of having many different elective offerings so students might

find an area of interest and build on that foundation in the years to come. With music ensembles as a possibility for incoming sixth and seventh graders, many students take advantage of the opportunity to partake in something completely new to them.

> *Mia: "I just felt like I was in a rut, and I wanted to do something different. And after the first year I realized band is not for me, so I joined choir and I really love it."*
>
> *Lucas: "[I joined band because it was] something different to do after school and in school."*

Others' motivations identified were reasons related to the social aspects of being a part of an ensemble. Some students discussed how they felt a sense of belonging in their respective musical ensembles while others were excited by the opportunities they were given to travel and meet new people in bands or choirs from neighboring schools. Others were grateful for the friends they had made within their ensemble and how the ensemble continued to foster those friendships. A handful of participants shared their appreciation for the chance to make music with friends.

> *Isabelle: "A lot of it is being able to be friendly and open to everybody. I feel like I can be myself in the band room because after band camp, the competitions, we just always spend a lot of time with each other, and it really forms a great bond. And I love being under directors who know what they're doing and can help us make beautiful sounds. That's what I love about it."*
>
> *Ava: "Definitely the people. I mean, yeah, the people. They have their rough patches and their moments, but I love them. And just kind of some of the music that we get, not some of it, most of it."*
>
> *Henry: "[My favorite part is] the music, the stuff that we get to perform. . . I like the people. I like the community of it."*
>
> *Noah: "There's some parts where I really enjoy meeting new people and getting to explore other people's musical experiences and stuff like that. Or just their experiences in general. You could get to go to State and meet a whole bunch of new people and have opportunities to go to other stuff that meet new people and*

do all that."

A general interest in music is a motivator for most students who want to join a music ensemble in their secondary school years. This is a common rationale amongst students universally (Adderley et al., 2003; Kennedy, 2002). Moreover, Noah describes how music has become a part of his identity.

Isabelle: "When I first started, I just really liked music and I knew that I wanted to be in a band. And then my friend who played the clarinet basically told me how to play the clarinet. And I went, 'man, this is a lot of fun'. We did testing for the instruments and I was like, I love making music. So, I decided to do the clarinet."

Elijah: "I always really, really liked music, so I wanted to learn how it was made and I wanted to make some myself, so I wanted to do every possibility that there was in band. So, when they tested us, I wanted to try everything, but they limited us just three things. . . I really like the interaction part and just going around meeting new people and the way that we just make music; it feels alive and fun."

Noah: "Making music and just doing stuff interested me, and so I wanted to try it out. So yeah, once I got into that, I was like, okay, this is something I really enjoy. And so I did it next year, next year, next year. And now it's just become a part of me that, oh, I really enjoyed it."

Evelyn talked about how she was heavily influenced by her parents. Parents play a substantial role in a student's decision of whether to join a musical ensemble, particularly instrumental ensembles, which often incur considerable financial expenses (Culp & Clauhs, 2020). A similar sentiment was shared by a participant of Adderley et al (2003) study, in which a participant in their study shared they were told by their parents to join a music ensemble because it was something they had regretted not doing when they were in school.

Evelyn: "My mom never got to do band, so she put me and my brother in band and I didn't know any other instrument besides what my brother played. Meeting some

of the seventh graders or the beginning band kids is really interesting because you can just look back and be like, man, I used to be like that kid. Now I know so much more! . . .There's a lot-- there's scholarships for band too, if you stay in all year, so that's pretty cool."

Another motive for joining was hearing about what the choir had accomplished, places they had performed, and how they had competed:

Liam: "After hearing things that the choir had done throughout seventh grade, I wanted to join in."

In ensembles I have participated in, many have had goals related to having positive impacts on audiences through musical expression. Noah talked about this type of impact being a motivator and source of enjoyment for him as a member of a musical ensemble. This comment speaks volumes about how some students may find their fulfillment in bringing joy and inspiration to the lives of others.

Noah: "But most of it, or probably most of it, is just creating music that can have an impact on people. If I can play a song that brightens up someone's day, then I'm happy with that."

Jordan spoke about her experience as a transfer student who arrived too late to choose her electives. She wanted to be in band but was placed in choir. I speculate the reason for this was because she had no previous instrumental experience, making a vocal music class the easier solution.

Jordan: "I didn't want to do it, honestly, I wanted to quit. I wanted to do something else. And my dad was like, well you should just give it a try. And I did. And I've been in choir since my seventh-grade year and I got into Chorale for next year."

Chorale is the auditioned choir in this district. Her experiences with her elementary choir caused her to have a distaste for choir and for singing. "I hated it. It was awful," she said. I witnessed this student grow to love singing in choir. She also worked extremely hard to be in band by taking after school lessons to catch up with the rest of the seventh graders who already received a year's worth of instruction. The class environment, the music, and the teachers must have differed immensely from the ones she had experienced in the past, which demonstrates that a teacher can make all the difference. Now, she was able to share with me positive opinions about both band and choir:

> *Jordan: Being in choir is very fun. I just feel like people need to be able to see that more. I just, I don't really know how to show them, *jokingly* other than a punch to the face.*
>
> *Elisa: What are your favorite parts about being in choir and band?*
>
> *Jordan: In band? Definitely marching season. That was the best.*
>
> *Elisa: Is it the competitive part of it or what about it specifically is 'I love this'?*
>
> *Jordan: The support from the crowd after each movement and the other bands either being jokingly competitive or cheering you on. That's my favorite part.*

Barriers or negative aspects to music classes included limited student input, school-life balance, and poor classroom climate. Some participants talked about how they did not enjoy the music selected by the director. Others shared that the classroom environment was sometimes too negative. A few expressed displeasures for classmates who displayed poor rehearsal etiquette, thus keeping enthusiastic students from learning. Henry indicated he chose not to reenroll in band due to a desire to explore other activities and to focus on a sport that conflicted with marching band season. Another commented on how balancing other activities, academics, and

home life was a challenge. Additionally, remarks about graduation requirements preventing enrollment in more music classes were made in frustration. I provided deeper analysis on the role of balance with other activities across participants later in chapter in the section "Authenticity, Identity, and Autonomy".

Isabelle spoke adamantly about the desire for more positivity among fellow students about school music experiences and how it was potentially affected by recruitment and retention. She voiced a great deal of frustration regarding classroom environment and negativity among some music ensemble students. The negative attitudes carried by some of the students was contagious and spread to peers and younger siblings who could be approaching the decision of whether to join a music class. According to Isabelle and a few others, classroom climate is an important part of motivation in music instruction.

> *Isabelle: "I would love to see if the people in the band could portray it in a more positive light, because there's a lot of people who just assume that band kids are the certain type of weirdness or that theater kids or choir kids or a certain type of weird. But I feel like that's a lot brought on from the kids themselves who say certain things about the program. . . [Band] is a great opportunity. We're happy to be here and we should be very positive about the whole experience. . . I think one of the big things is just to encourage people to speak positively about the experience because we don't want to drive people away from the program because it's really great and anyone can name all the positive things that have happened from being in band. But there's still such a stereotype."*

The affinity she has for the program was apparent, yet the negative portrayal of the program from other peers within it prevents her from enjoying an atmosphere of young, passionate music-makers. Social interaction is a significant facet of any group, music classes are no exception. The social climate within musical ensembles and the perception of social status among students permeates the ensemble experience for each student (Adderley et al., 2003). The overlap of

social hierarchy in school and the feelings engendered by students of the "band kid" through their continued involvement is extraordinarily complex and varies from student to student and school to school. The "band geek" stereotype is one that could be studied on its own to explore the effects of music student stereotyping on recruitment and retention.

Music education participants commented on the struggle to balance music classes with other aspects of their lives and student interests. The issue of balance had much to do with conflicting activities. Some conflicting activities, such as sports and extracurriculars, took place before or after school.

> *Noah: "Ugh, I had to learn this whole marching pattern and all this stuff, the drill, all that after the parade stuff, I had to just do the show music and all that stuff. It was a lot in a short period of time. And it was really hard, especially doing— during— I do swim team, stuff like that. So, it's balancing all that was a really tough thing."*

A couple of students also commented on the challenge of participating in activities with overlapping schedules such as the swim team.

Participants also expressed how limited course offerings may be uninteresting or lack relevance for some students or how popular music education courses could be a positive addition for students who were not interested in a traditional music ensemble. Participants voiced how each student had different interests. Elijah commented on how while nontraditional courses might appeal to some, traditional offerings like band and choir were important to others. These opinions also reflected ideas about how music programs ought to be more inclusive and the appeal of popular instruments.

> *Jordan: "I don't feel like [band/choir/orchestra] is for everybody because I'm, I'm not saying 'some people can sing, some people can't sing', but not a whole lot of*

people are passionate about the same subject. . . I just feel like there's a lot more music classes that are kind of being missed."

Elijah: "I think [band] interests a very select group of people. So not like everyone, but there is a majority that do really seek out that type of class."

Noah: "Every single person doesn't have the same interests."

In this district, a guitar class is offered at the high school level. However, I found through my observation that this class lacked a certain structure in instruction that would help students to make musical and technical progress on the instrument. It also seemed to be a mixture of students who had varying levels of experience on the instrument including complete beginners and students who identified as self-taught for several years and demonstrated a great deal of proficiency. This gap in ability made it difficult to structure a single section of this course that would fit the needs of each student. Isabelle talked a bit about how some students she knows who play the guitar opted out of taking a guitar class in school and chose to play guitar on their own. She then describes how a rock/pop/commercial band class might be of more interest to them as opposed to the currently offered guitar methods class.

Isabelle: "I've heard from friends who tried to start their own little bands, and there are people who I would never think would've played those instruments. And they do. And they're the same people who I know probably don't want to be in band or further any music. They'd just rather play it on their own. So I think having that kind of class [rock/pop/commercial band] would definitely benefit those students, the students who know how to play those types of instruments that aren't normal in a band but are for other music areas."

Aside from the guitar methods course, a section of piano and ukulele are also offered at the high school. Historically, the guitar class enrollment is approximately eight to 12 students while the piano and ukulele courses have a bit higher enrollment. Oftentimes, the students in these classes

do not overlap with the students who are in band and choir, implying that these courses are more accessible for students who are trying to fulfill a fine arts credit requirement or are more accessible in terms of providing more musical relevance to the music they listen to regularly.

Music Courses Provide Breaks

Three of the 11 participants mentioned how music provided a break in their school day or could provide a break for students if they chose to enroll in school music. Similar opinions have emerged from students in other studies which found music classes to be "supportive, relaxing, and fun" (Adderley et al., 2003, p. 199).

> *Lucas: "People need breaks in the day in school. It's just not supposed to be flat out the whole entire day."*
>
> *Sophia: "... [music classes are] a nice break from the norm. . . So, if there's a class or a music class that they found enjoyable, then they could take a break from all their hard schoolwork, have some fun learning and playing an instrument and then going back to their schoolwork."*

The last quote demonstrates an opposition to hard schoolwork and harkens back to similar remarks made by Horace Mann in the *Report for 1844: Vocal Music in Schools*, where he proclaims music is "the recreation of the student after his mental exertion" (Mann, 1844). These students, though expressing their appreciation for music classes being a mental reprieve, also maintained music classes were challenging. The challenges music classes offered, however, appeared to be much more welcome.

> *Liam: "I know it helps me a lot because, like, I wouldn't say that they're not a good break from the day because again, I still want them to be challenging and still want them to be treated like a class, but at the same time, to me, they've always,*

> *whether it be choir or piano or ukulele or whatever it may be, it's always felt like a music class can really help with trying to clear my mind and like focus on other things that aren't just academics. It makes me feel like I do want to do music, you know? Like outside of school, sometimes I get so wrapped up in other things and I think like, maybe this isn't for me, or maybe, you know, this is, this might be too difficult. And then I walk into chorale or something and I realize, well if I can do all this then this, then outside of school, this is an easy lead up to everything else. So, it feels like it's really meant to be there to not necessarily be a break from the day, but to really set apart in the mind from other academics."*

Liam, also supportive of music being a break and a challenge, voiced how being in choir has had a tremendous impact on their self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a major predictor of a student's continuation in a program (Bandura & Schunk, 1981; McCormick & McPherson, 2003; McPherson & McCormick, 2006). He revealed how being a part of something that offered a fun challenge while also appealing to his musical interests has been extraordinarily powerful in helping him see he can do anything he sets his mind to. It can be hypothesized that other students feel similarly when enrolled in the ensemble, organization, or activity that best suits their needs and interests.

Orchestra

Six of the 11 participants indicated a desire to participate in the community orchestra or to see orchestra be offered at their school. It ranked as the second most popular choice for an additional music course among the participants. Orchestra is not a course offered within this school district. However, the community orchestra has been in operation for over 40 years, and parents of students, teachers from neighboring districts, and other kinds of local people participate perform in it. This orchestra performs four times a year, typically opening their season with classical repertoire, followed by a holiday concert, a young artists' spotlight concert, and a pops concert. In my time teaching in this district, I have also performed with this orchestra,

and in some cases, so have some of my students.

> *Noah: "Well, I've been thinking of like joining the orchestra that Mr. X has and stuff like that, and just seeing what other opportunities there are just around the area."*
>
> *Ava: "I wish we had an orchestra so badly because it'd be so pretty and all of that, but we don't have the funds. . . Idon't know why, I just, well, I started watching Disney movies and paying attention to the background songs and I realized, I'm like, oh my God, strings are so pretty."*
>
> *Isabelle: "I feel like if we had an orchestra [the program] would be so much better."*
>
> *Lucas: "Mr. X talked about having an orchestra, so that would be fun."*
>
> *Jordan: "I know a lot of kids, like my cousin, she's in orchestra at XYZ High School, and I feel like if that was offered here, that would get a lot more people engaged."*

Orchestra is a common offering in a neighboring district within 30 miles of the studied district, so it is likely that these students have compared those offerings to their own. A student who may have had a desire to learn a string instrument might have simply settled for band instruments when that was the only option they were given. The potential to join the community orchestra on a wind or percussion instrument after they became proficient may have been or be a motivator, yet that is simply speculation. It is also reasonable to assume that students may want to play orchestral music based on what they hear in many movies, video games, and other media. Speaking from a personal perspective, orchestra was also not available in my school. Looking back, had I been given the option, I feel I would have chosen orchestra over band because I enjoy the sound of strings.

Planning for the Future

In my experience as a teacher, I felt that this district highly prioritized putting students on

a career path. Students are given the opportunity to participate in GO CAPS (Greater Ozarks Centers for Advanced Professional Studies) and take courses at a regional technical school including automotive technology, culinary arts, construction technology, health occupations, marketing, and more. Scholarships, certifications, and college credit are also available through the technical school. Many students took advantage of these opportunities and, in most cases, had to make some difficult decisions before committing to enrolling in these opportunities. In my own field of view, I spoke with many students who were having difficulty deciding whether to stay in band/choir or do GO CAPS. In several of the interviews, participants made remarks that demonstrated they were thinking about their future, whether it be thinking about scholarship applications, where they wanted to go to college, what they wanted to pursue or experience in their last year or two of high school, musical opportunities beyond high school, etc. Several students commented on the possibility for scholarships when persisting in musical ensembles throughout high school. Other participants talked about how while music was not going to be their professional path, it was still going to be a part of their life after they graduate.

> *Jordan: "It's like, without my instrument, I know if I don't get into something in college, it could be the end of my band career, but I know I could always play on my own, but do I really want to do that? I could be in a community band."*
>
> *Liam: "I'm gonna major in political science. So [music is], so [music is] not like the main part that I want to do in college, but it's still a big part."*
>
> *Henry: "I'm not going to do [music] in college. I'm talking to some coaches about swimming in college and stuff like that. . . Sometimes at church I like to help lead worship and stuff like that, but more with the youth, not really the whole congregation, but, and I don't think that's going to change. I mean, hopefully I can sing for the rest of my life."*

A couple of participants conveyed their plans to go into music as a career in some fashion:

Elijah: "I think I want to go into [music] professionally."

Liam: "I want to make music my career. I want to be eventually a singer-songwriter, so I plan on getting the recording art certificate at MSU."

Noah thought about preparing students for their lives post high school graduation could be achieved by providing an array of music course offerings to support multiple aspects of musicianship. In this way, students would be offered several avenues toward continued musicianship after secondary school.

Noah: "If you were a principal, I think you should try to do, if you could a mixture of both [offer courses interesting to students and courses that principals think students should enroll in] because, so you have stuff that would advance their careers and stuff like that, and you have what they're interested in."

There was a great deal of conversation that revolved around ways in which these students were preparing for life after high school. In fact, several students pointed to potential scholarships being one of the reasons they chose to continue in band all throughout high school, showing concern for their future. Some recognized that music as a career was simply not their desired occupation but still wanted to be involved in music in some way and to continue using the skills they had developed in school. It could be the opinion of some that the focus on finding a career path in high school is overemphasized and that high school should be used for exploring a variety of interests, classes, and extra/co-curricular activities. Others may argue that getting a jumpstart on a career path in high school is incredibly beneficial for students who want to enter the workforce directly out of high school or who want to accelerate their degree or program. There is a middle ground or gray area here that still needs to be explored.

Authenticity, Identity, and Autonomy

In my analysis, following the coding of the data, I revisited the interview transcripts and recordings and re-coded the data focusing on higher levels codes looking for patterns among the initial codes. In re-coding and further familiarizing myself with the data, I came to a gradual realization that each one of these students was searching for something deeper than simply playing music that they liked. As I analyzed various codes, such as a finding beauty in performing with an orchestra or having a strong connection to their instrument, I discovered the underlying narrative within the lower-level codes: these students are seeking authenticity, autonomy, and identity in some fashion.

The formation of a person's sense of self and identity, which includes their commitments, unique objectives, motivations, and psychological well-being is a crucial part of adolescence (Becht et al., 2016; Klimstra et al., 2010; Klimstra et al., 2016; Meeus et al., 1999). Teenagers seek independence, especially from their parents, while simultaneously forging closer relationships with their classmates (Meeus et al., 2005). As a result, their self-evaluations of themselves grow more sophisticated and complex (Harter, 2012). Teenagers typically show increased self-awareness and show more worry and interest in how others see them (Pfeifer et al., 2009). Therefore, participants of this study are subject to this stage in development and are likely to be seeking autonomy and identity within their school overall and in specific classes. It seems to me that the music classroom is often a place where students can exercise a great deal of autonomy and explore and come to know themselves better.

Examples of how these codes intersected and led to this conclusion include a student's fulfillment experienced by performing with an orchestra, learning a new instrument to play in band, and a desire to select music they wanted to play. For example, one participant explained

how she had been involved with the community orchestra for several concerts, but not on her primary instrument. She supplemented the percussion section, and she also has a family member who regularly performs with the ensemble. This semi-consistent engagement and connection with the community orchestra provides a great deal of insight into her reasoning for wanting to be a part of a high school orchestra, which is offered in many surrounding schools, in addition to what she says about feeling fulfilled and moved by how she perceives the sounds of an orchestra:

Elisa: Would you take orchestra over a rock band class?

Isabelle: Yes. Without a doubt. <Why?> Because orchestra has such a beautiful sound, and their performances are so much more satisfying. Because I performed in both orchestra and band, I performed in an after-school choir a few times and I have not performed in a rock band, so I can't say anything about that, but out of the two, orchestra makes me feel the most fulfilled. Because-- I don't exactly know why… Orchestra, I guess it feels like a different maturity level, personally. Orchestra seems a lot more refined. It's a different type of sound that you get from an orchestra. It's different types of music. It's different everything, and I just feel so much more older I guess when I play.

Elisa: Do you think that you might feel this way because the people you play with in the community orchestra are older and there are several more years of experience in that group?

Isabelle: So, I do think that might be part of it. However, I believe that if we had an orchestra in high school, it would make, like, after a performance, I'd feel the same amount of way.

The dialogue highlights how this student has found autonomy, authenticity, and identity through music and being a part of an ensemble. This student expounded on how performing in the community orchestra gives her a stronger sense of gratification and maturity compared to the high school band. The fulfillment and satisfaction that she feels is part of feeling secure in the identity she has founded through this musical community.

In other cases, participants shared ways in which they were still seeking authenticity and

autonomy. Many students shared how they found these qualities within their music programs and felt there was room for more opportunities that could provide the same for other students. Students expressed their desire for autonomy in multiple ways. Some students communicated how graduation requirements prohibited them from taking the types of courses they wanted to take.

> *Noah: "I just don't understand why we need four English credits. Because if we didn't, I could at least take, I could try jazz band once and that would be really nice. . . I would just have more free time to explore different things because if there were no credits to be allowed--I could just take whatever I wanted. There would probably be at least four music courses in my schedule, just because that's something I really find is important to me. But I have to fill up my requirements so I can't just do that."*

In all the interviews, students were asked to share ways in which they wished to see their music program change or grow. Two of the participants expressed their desire for the opportunity to be a part of the music selection process in some way. Similar findings have been reported (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020).

> *Noah: "I wish we got to choose what we wanted to play. I wish there was just, it could be a Google form of, at the beginning of the year, it was like, 'Hey, what type of songs would you like to hear played in the band?' I wish it was a vote of like, oh yeah, this is the one song that the students really want to play this year."*
>
> *Mia: "Well, I would like to see one year to maybe have Mrs. X have students pick the songs that they sing, and she checks that it's like school appropriate and everything."*

The participant who provided the former quote also talked about how for a previous concert, it had been announced that they would be performing music from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*. He shared how excited he was for that concert and for coming to band each day to rehearse it. He

also mentioned how the high school jazz band had performed *Megalovania* from *Undertale* at the same concert and talked about how "it was a really big thing", even though he was not a member of the jazz band. Two years have elapsed since the performance of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Megalovania,* yet it is still a memory he holds dear. He also later indicated that if he was given the opportunity to select a piece of music now, he would pick something similar such as music from *Indiana Jones*.

These findings are congruent with existing research, and it is no surprise that these students wish to see the music they experience in their daily lives in their music classrooms. Students also want their voices to be heard as part of the music selection process (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020). Music in popular culture has a substantial impact on students who often show greater initial interest and enthusiasm for music they are familiar with and have some other connection with outside of music class. This level of relevance is an important aspect of making music classes meaningful to students.

Isabelle spoke on instances in which the student's autonomy could be enhanced with the presence of a teacher:

> *Isabelle: "There's just never any time or not enough leadership to really prepare a song. We tried staying after school a couple of times as a group to find songs that we could make covers of or do anything. So, if there was a teacher out there that could help organize us into an actual ensemble."*

Through performing in the high school band, the community orchestra, her church, and taking private lessons, Isabelle is highly active in music. I observed her growth as my student. She is also an incredibly skilled musician with a variety of experiences that have impacted her ability to fulfill leadership roles in musical ensembles. In this conversation, she is talking about a rhythm

section that had decided to get together after school to play songs together and admitting to lacking some of the skills necessary to develop an ensemble to their full potential. Her leadership skills and musical abilities make her more than qualified to lead a group of musicians. However, she recognizes the skills music teachers possess and how teachers are an invaluable resource. Therefore, this comment speaks volumes about how music teachers have the capacity to elevate student autonomy. This remark is in line with the principles of modern band, in which the teacher plays the role of a facilitator to learning, not necessarily the director (D'Amore & Smith, 2016; Powell & Burstein, 2017). My analysis of this comment and others she made reveals that she also respects what teachers are capable of accomplishing in the currently offered music courses.

Other conversations regarding authenticity, autonomy, and identity surrounded a particular instrument. Two students shared stories about how they had switched instruments after being a part of band for two or three years after coming to realize they were lacking the feelings of identity, belonging, and enjoyment. The desire to change the instrument they played in band stemmed from a sense of estrangement and, after learning a new instrument, they discovered a new sense of belonging which was closely tied to sense of self and identity. My relationship with Noah also informed my conclusion that he came from a place of feeling less than enthusiastic about participating in band on his first instrument. He exhibited a completely different personality in the choir room, revealing to me that he either truly enjoyed music-making with his voice which is inextricably tied to identity, preferred vocal music over instrumental music, or his participation in instrumental music was lacking in some area. Noah, after a couple of years of half-heartedly participating in band, finally decided to open up about his interest in learning the bassoon. The other two band directors and I were initially hesitant upon hearing this since we

knew that more frustration in learning a new instrument and being several years behind his peers could lead to him quitting, but ultimately, we decided to provide him the resources to begin learning bassoon with a private teacher. After I had left the district, I learned that he was now playing bassoon with the high school band as his primary instrument and was soon going to be performing a bassoon solo and a woodwind trio at the district level. He also displayed much more zealousness about playing in band than I had ever observed before.

Elisa: How's bassoon going?

Noah: It's going pretty good.

Elisa: Good! That's awesome.

Noah: Yeah, it's really fun and I like it a lot. Changing instruments was definitely a journey to really go from being a clarinet player to a bassoon player, but it's been fun.

Elisa: Do you think you really found something you're more passionate about?

Noah: Yeah, it definitely feels like I'm more crucial to the band.

Another participant, Elijah, had been playing clarinet in band for two and a half years when he came to me expressing their desire to learn bass guitar in the jazz band. I provided weekly private bass guitar lessons after school. Over a few months, Elijah began to walk into class with more excitement and joy. After several weeks of lessons, he had become quite proficient and began playing bass in band and jazz band full-time. I witnessed him go through an entire personality shift, going from a timid, discouraged student to an enthusiastic, inspired musician, who now wants to pursue music on the bass guitar professionally.

Intrinsic Motivation

My analysis of the data led me to a conclusion that summarizes the whole of my findings. Regardless of whether a student indicated a desire to participate in an orchestra based on the enjoyment of its sounds, felt in tune with themselves when they played an instrument they found exciting and fulfilling, or expressed interest in courses with electric guitars like rock/pop/commercial band or creating music digitally, each participant was communicating what was intrinsically motivating for them. Moreover, the perceptions of autonomy, feelings of authenticity, and alignment with identity are also indicators of intrinsic motivation. Some participants described how music would play a role in their lives after graduating high school. The way they described what they hoped to be doing musically was a glimpse into their inner motivation for music.

Summary

The students involved in this study shared an abundance of insight into their feelings, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes towards their school's music program, both in what it offers and what it may lack. Most of the students revealed feelings of equality towards a wide variety of music course offerings, explaining that each course is simply different from another, making it no greater or lesser than a traditional course. In fact, most students seemed very enthusiastic about the idea of offering courses that sounded exciting to them, such as music history, steel pan ensemble, rock/pop/commercial band, world music, and even a traditional offering their school lacked, orchestra. Furthermore, participants revealed insights into student motivation for music both inside and outside of school, such as engaging with music relating to their personal tastes, performing with an ensemble they found beauty in, fostering friendships, and having opportunities to interact with people beyond their local communities.

At the time the interviews were conducted, each participant was enrolled in at least one music course. Students were asked to share motivations for participating in music and to describe any aspects they negatively perceived. Participants of this study shared various reasons for joining their music ensemble. Most students said they wanted to do "something different." One had heard stories of what the choir had done years prior, and he wanted to be a part of that. Others communicated they were simply interested in music and wanted to learn the skill of singing or playing an instrument.

When asked what they enjoyed about the music classes, three participants described music classes as being a "break from the norm" and were grateful for the mental break they felt it offered them. Simultaneously, they believed the classes still posed intellectual and physical challenges. A few students said their favorite part of being in an ensemble was being around people with similar interests and making music with their friends. A handful of students had difficulty articulating their feelings about being a part of a musical ensemble as though everything about participating in it was wonderful to them and they could not articulate just one thing. These students also expressed feelings of finding their identity through their involvement in music which aligns with other research (Adderley et al. 2003; Morrison, 2001).

In my observation and analysis, most students were satisfied with the music courses offered and how they operated. However, a few complained about a degree of negativity spread by certain members of the ensembles. One felt that these poor attitudes had adverse effects on recruitment and retention as well as the overall classroom climate. A couple exhibited frustration and irritation with other students who lacked rehearsal etiquette. These grievances demonstrate the importance of fostering a positive classroom environment.

The students were also shown a list of 29 nontraditional course offerings and identified

which of the courses listed piqued their interest or would maybe be interesting to people they knew. Participants indicated an interest in a variety of classes from the list shown, indicating the wide range of musical preferences that can be present even in a small group. Students used phrases like "it sounds cool" or "that sounds fun" when talking about the course offerings they found exciting, suggesting that their ideal version of that course would be stimulating, relevant, and meaningful to them. Likewise, participants felt that expanding of music course offerings could draw in students from their school who were not currently enrolled in a music course.

They were also asked if they thought any courses on the list would be beneficial to students who were not interested in the music courses that were currently being offered. The answer to this question was a resounding yes, with several explanations given for why these courses would benefit "non-music" students, such as people with different interests, sensory issues, or those who want to engage with music in a different way.

In my analysis of the student's stories, common threads were a desire for authenticity, autonomy, and identity. Students discussed whether they wanted to be involved in music selection, to be a part of an ensemble that produced beautiful sounds, or to play instruments that felt right for them. They seemed to have a desire to be in consonance with their inner selves. In their quest for individuality, flexibility, authenticity, autonomy, and identity, students voiced their struggles and joys in making decisions with respect to their future. Students also spoke about the difficulties in determining which courses to enroll in and if their music class was on the chopping block. Moreover, they voiced their desire to enroll in even more music courses to further their knowledge in skill in the subject in which they could apply it to future musical endeavors. In either case, students are exercising their autonomy in deciding what is best for them and their future.

Perhaps the most important finding of this study was the insight into intrinsic motivation among various participants. In my analysis, several motivators were coded within the data ranging from instrument choice, musical preferences, perceptions of life post high school graduation, identity, sense of belonging, and more. The feelings of authenticity, autonomy, and sense of self all point toward intrinsic motivation. My analysis revealed a variety of motivations among a small pool of participants. Participants also revealed a great deal of depth into their personal lives and how music plays a role in them. Moreover, music in the lives of these students played a part in shaping their perception of autonomy and identity.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate student perceptions of music course offerings. Music education researchers have documented many barriers that impact student motivation for music education (Bull, 2022; Culp & Clauhs, 2020) and how they affect a majority of students (Elpus & Abril, 2011, 2019). Williams (2011) claimed that motivating students can be difficult because educating students through a large ensemble is no longer relevant for today's students. In this study, I analyzed student motivations for and barriers to music education. I examined how students experienced the current large ensemble model by collecting and analyzing their responses to interview questions. I also specifically examined how these students perceive the lack of popular music education within their schools and how that might affect them and other students. I found that these students were generally pleased with the way their school music program functions. They did, however, feel as though course offerings should be expanded to include courses students are interested in. These results are consistent with existing research that has examined the characteristics of students enrolled and not enrolled in traditional music ensembles (Bull, 2022; Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Williams, 2011).

Validity and Limitations

This study investigated the perception of music courses in a district in which I had previously taught. I was conscious about my personal observations, relationships and instruction with these students, former coworkers, and administrators. During the study, I gathered information surrounding developments within the district through an interview with the middle school principal. I acknowledge how my lens could impact the data collection and analysis, so I attempted to clarify student responses by asking them to expand on remarks that could have been

interpreted in a multitude of ways. However, my lens and background in relationship to the district provided important context for the interviews and my analysis. I believe that my personal connection in this study enhanced the nature of the interviews and enabled me to connect with the participants on a higher level than perhaps a stranger to them could. My identity as a musician has been formed through a variety of experiences which proved to be grounds for connection among these students. In my analysis, I took great care to get to the heart of the meaning in each student's remarks by factoring in body language and tone of voice. The established connections with 10 of the 11 participants gave me a certain advantage in synthesizing context and data, and allowing the participants to feel comfortable and speak openly to a person whom they know and trust. However, the data collected in this study were gathered, transcribed, and analyzed by a single researcher and was not independently coded by multiple researchers.

Although this study gleaned illuminating information from students with various musical backgrounds, each participant was involved in one or both of the largest music course offerings (band and choir) in their school. Though this commonality among participants would have been useful in comparing responses, the perspective of students not involved in school music was absent. However, participants were asked to speculate about their non-music peers' perceptions of different types of music classes. Therefore, participants could only assume what music courses a non-music student might find interesting, which is interesting information, but cannot be compared to what could be gained from hearing from students with those backgrounds themselves.

In this chapter, I discuss applications to music instruction and recommendations for future research arising from the study. Some of the applications to music teaching that arose

included ways to increase student motivation, develop lifelong musicianship, and best practices for authentic use of popular music in schools. Recommendations I have for future research based on what I found through this study include an examination of music teacher education, further exploration of student motivation, and investigating how students think about their lives post-high school graduation and how music might play a role in their adult lives. I also suggest future research investigate the effect of music student stereotyping on music course recruitment and retention, the perspectives of students who are not enrolled in music courses, and autonomy, authenticity, and identity in music. I also include my perspective and my takeaways from conducting this study with my former students and my personal applications for teaching.

Applications to Music Instruction

Intrinsic Motivation. One of the major findings from this study was that student participants expressed a wide variety of motivations. Student motivations (specifically intrinsic motivations) are important for teachers to be aware of to help foster a deeper passion for music and to encourage lifelong music-making. A level of intrinsic motivation can be fostered within students by allowing them to be a part of the music programming process and making it collaborative. When teachers show students that their voices are important in working on something that they selected, they can gain more meaning out of the rehearsal process. Meanwhile, teachers who find ways to make the music courses they are currently teaching relevant to students will help students to find more enjoyment, enthusiasm, and classroom morale through the music they make in class. This might include experimenting with student choice with music selection, exploring opportunities for increased creativity and expression, and

asking students for feedback about the class and what ideas they may have. The fostering of motivation will look different from classroom to classroom.

In a band classroom, this may simply be a matter of programming music that students are familiar with and enjoy, while balancing familiar works and those with which they are unfamiliar. Selection of literature in any ensemble is an integral part of curriculum. However, programming may differ based upon teaching beliefs about what is important for students to learn. Some research has found that students prefer to have a say in what music is programmed for their ensemble (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020).

In a contemporary pedagogical approach to teaching popular instruments, the authors of modern band suggest that repertoire reflect the music that students listen to (Powell & Burstein, 2017). Rotjan (2021) discusses the difficulty of involving students in selecting repertoire by exploring an array of considerations including various stakeholders, music difficulty, instrumentation, ensemble strengths and weaknesses, and other situational factors. He says that these issues make it feel nearly impossible to incorporate student voices. He also explains the importance of inclusivity and making space for dialogue between students and teacher. This application to music instruction is incredibly nuanced as no two music classes, music teachers, music students, or school communities are alike.

My analysis also revealed that the instruments that one plays can be closely tied to identity. It is important that educators cultivate a classroom environment that enables the healthy development of student's self-identity and group identity. Allowing students to explore the option of learning a different instrument that is more appealing to them may be an avenue toward this end. This, however, is a hotly debated idea, as some teachers may feel that a student would be throwing away several years of instruction to pursue another instrument they may dislike just as

much as they did the first (Nathan, 2009). This is a matter of knowing your students, listening to them, being compassionate, and working with them to find a solution. The best practice may simply be to listen to students and make efforts to understand where they are coming from.

Lifelong Music-Making. Some participants in my study conveyed professional music aspirations while others felt more in alignment with casual engagement or being a member of an amateur group. To my dismay, students who shared plans such as they "just" wanted to sing with in their church appeared to display some level of shame, as if they were preparing for their music teacher to be disappointed in them for not having music career ambitions. This is an area in which I recommend that music educators make space in their classrooms for students who want to have a more relaxed musical experience. I am not advocating for teachers to offer music courses that are less challenging; however, I am suggesting that the emphasis on competition and the "pedagogy of correction" (Bull, 2022) in some classrooms can be detrimental to the learning of some students. Kratus (2019) called for a "return to amateurism" within music education, arguing that "the education of amateur musicians would ideally foster students' personal and diverse goals in music listening, performing, or creating (or some combination of these) rather than promote a uniform set of semiprofessional standards of musicianship. In short, students could "pursue the kind of music they like in ways they enjoy," (p. 34). Not only would this be a more inviting environment for students who have doubts about their musical aptitude, it would likely increase the probability of students persisting in music as it would be more applicable to their daily lives. I am also not suggesting that competition has no place in music education. Many students are motivated by competition and enjoy participating in contests. However, educators should make space for the students for which the motivation from competition does not resonate.

Use of Popular Music. When considering the application of these findings to music instruction, it is also worthwhile to warn against inauthentic uses of popular music. Scholars advise using popular music authentically, meaning that "we must teach popular music in a way that is true to the processes of vernacular music making" (Woody, 2007, p. 32). Teachers should avoid using popular music as a "selling point" or "bait" to entice students to participate in an ensemble, if they are interested in sustaining motivation. There have been instances in which schools will incorporate popular music, such as pop tunes for pep bands, with the expectation that it would eventually lead them to study music that is worthwhile, that being classical music (Green, 2006). Though it may not be the intention of these teachers, this undermines the value of popular music and conveys the message that popular music is inferior to Wester art music. If educators mean to make music accessible for all, we should aim to demonstrate how all forms of music as having significance and value.

Recommendations for Future Research

Teacher Education. Throughout this study, several interesting comments made by participants pointed to areas in need of exploration. One participant expressed how resources may be an issue in offering the courses that students are interested in. "Resources" could be referring to many different elements in offering a course, and one of those resources could be teachers with the skillset necessary to teach particular music courses. It would be much easier for us to stick to the ways music education has looked for the past several decades, but many students in this study described how they yearned for more musical opportunities beyond the choir, band and music appreciation classes that were offered. Participants showed a great deal of interest in courses that had connections to the music they experience in their daily lives. Not only

did they feel the musical content in more contemporary courses would be interesting to them, they also expressed how other musical areas could interest other student body populations. They exhibited interest in courses they already knew a little bit about. For example, one participant mentioned how an Irish Fiddling class sounded exciting and followed up this comment with an aside about her mother owning a traditional Irish instrument, a tin whistle. Content aside, findings from this study are consistent with existing research that has revealed how music classes should reform pedagogically and recenter its focus on students (Allsup & Benedict, 2008; Folkestad, 2006; Pendergast & Robinson, 2020).

Preservice teacher training could provide more guidance to preservice teachers in popular music education and student-centered pedagogies (Springer & Gooding, 2013; Kruse, 2015; Wang & Humphreys, 2009). Many preservice teachers graduate in music education with little study outside of Western European art traditions and few or no opportunities to learn music, instruments and vocal styles that represent even a basic survey of contemporary music genres (e.g. rock, country, rap, rhythm and blues). Cognitive dissonance may trouble educators who believe music education aims to serve all students yet struggle to accept that traditional ensemble courses are not serving all students. A growing number of universities and programs are offering professional development and training in popular music education including Music Will, the Association for Popular Music Education, and Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) ("Association for Popular Music Education", n.d.; "Music Will", n.d.; Vasil et al., 2019). However, popular music pedagogy within teacher education programs is not yet standard nor is it even defined with much clarity (Springer & Gooding, 2013; Springer, 2016). Many aspects of teacher education and music education curricula are deeply rooted in beliefs that Western art music is the only music worth studying, and the traditional way is the preferred way (Bull, 2022;

Culp & Clauhs, 2020; Gurgel, 2019; Kruse, 2015; Springer & Gooding, 2013; Wang & Humphreys, 2009; Williams, 2011).

Motivation. The district in which I conducted my research offered two of the three most common traditional music ensembles, band and choir. Yet the second-most desired course offering for students in this study was orchestra. This could be due to engagement in the community orchestra and enjoying the repertoire and timbre (Lehman, 2021), the large presence of orchestral music in films and video games (Hambrick, 2015), or simply because it is common in neighboring schools yet is something they lack and envy somewhat. Regardless of what I might speculate, the results offer a question that is worth answering: how and why do students choose between music course offerings? A variety of motivators may be identified in asking this question including the motivations described in this study, but motivations may differ between students in different school settings. This study of only 11 students indicated an array of motivations for music education participation. Further study in this area could provide additional insight into motivation for particular music courses. Perhaps, future studies can look at the issues in different types of teaching environments: (e.g., courses, schools that offer a variety of nontraditional offerings, rural, suburban, and urban schools, large and small schools, etc.) and different times of the school year (e.g., prior to course selection, during course selection, after courses selection).

This study also identified courses that were interesting to these 11 participants. Perhaps future research should explore the perspectives of students who participate in the courses the students in this study found interesting. It is important to note that when students were asked about which courses they were interested in, they were thinking about those courses as their ideal version of that course. For example, students who expressed an interest in music history talked

about wanting to know more about where different genres of music come from. Many music history courses, however, cover material that most students would likely find incredible uninteresting to them (elements of medieval music, early composers of polyphonic music, etc.). Comparing these "ideal" concepts of courses students had imagined with the perspectives of students enrolled in existing courses may provide insight into what students are motivated to learn and what is actually being taught.

Career-Centered Education. Several students' responses focused on how motivation for music classes was related to career interests and choices. Some critiques on high school curricula indicate that focus on finding a career path in high school is overemphasized and suggest that high school be used for exploring a variety of interests, classes, and extra/co-curricular activities. Others argue that quality high school experiences provide a jumpstart on a career path for students who want to enter the workforce directly out of high school or who want to accelerate their degree or program. Others argue for a middle ground or gray area that still needs learning about. Participants in this study all referred to the future in some way. College and careers seemed to be on the student participants' minds as they discussed the ways in which they hoped to be musically active after graduation. Many educators, administrators, parents, community members, and students view high school as preparation for higher education or entering the workforce.

Some research in music education addresses how the skills built within their classrooms transcend secondary schooling. Evans et al. (2013) conducted a follow-up study to McPherson (2005) involving 157 instrumental students over a number of years to investigate the connection between their practice routines and their commitment to staying in band. When two years had elapsed since the students' high school graduation, only 7 of the original 157 students were still

actively playing their instruments. The study also explored differences in motivation between the students who sustained their involvement through graduation with the others students. The participants who made the decision to discontinue taking music lessons or quit practicing their instrument reported lower levels of competence, relatedness, and autonomy. This was corroborated by the replies to an open-ended question regarding why they stopped, which showed that participants specifically mentioned psychological requirements being met.

The students who participated in my study were very aware of the onset of life after high school, and most of the students also expressed some level of continuation in music. Both my project and the work of Evans et al. (2013) took place in isolated school settings. It would be too speculative to suggest that competence, relatedness, and autonomy are importance aspects of lifelong participation, though these may be important issues for both teachers and researchers to consider if the effects of music education are to have long-term practical effects.

Music educators should be concerned about the skillset students develop and take with them after graduating. Students may also be considering what it is they hope to gain from participating in music in school, especially as they age and must manage their time more intently. Additional research that focuses directly on students and their beliefs about what music will look like in their future might provide important insight into how students value the music education they received. As Mursell (1936) proposes, "If music educators do not actively promote music learning that applies outside of school or years later, then why teach students anything at all? Music education will be meaningful only if students make music an integral part of their lives,". How can music educators ensure that music is a fundamental part of each student's lives? Some studies have looked at music class persistence (Tucker & Winsler, 2023),

but little research has investigated how people continue to use the musical skillset that they developed after they finish high school.

The Effect of Stereotypes on Music Recruitment and Retention. Another significant finding of this study was the topic of music ensemble recruitment and retention in relation to social perceptions. The "band geek" stereotype, mentioned by a participant, carries negative connotations. This participant explained she felt that this stigma is only perpetuated by students within music ensembles who are perhaps trying to "fit in" with peers not enrolled in band or choir. She feels that the stereotype is detrimental to recruitment. Adderley et al. (2003) studied the perception of musical groups by their members and the school community. His findings indicated that some students wear the labels "band nerd" and "choir geek" with pride, and that the perception of involvement in musical ensembles changes over time from being mocked as a sixth grader to admiration as a high school senior. The participant in my study seems to suggest that the recruitment of beginners in intermediate or middle school would be greater if the stereotype either did not exist or was one that had positive overtones. Exploring the effects of this stigma could garner insight into how music educators approach recruitment, retention, and the social climate of their classrooms.

Perspectives of Students Not Enrolled in School Music. I had originally sought to study the perspectives of students who were not enrolled in a school music course. I wanted to hear the perspectives from students with a variety of musical backgrounds and levels of engagement. This meant I had anticipated interviewing students who were not active in singing or playing an instrument, but perhaps simply enjoyed listening to music on an electronic device in their daily lives. The perspectives of that student population were not gathered in this study, but I feel it would be incredibly enlightening and relevant to the issues of accessibility and

relevant participation. Students who are not enrolled in a music course at school are likely to have a much better understanding of why they have not enrolled in school music than students who are and is likely more nuanced than what is simply assumed.

Students who do not participate in school music greatly outnumber those students who do in middle and high schools. (Confredo & Brittin, 2014, Elpus & Abril, 2019; Knapp, 2020). Consequently, music education is inaccessible to many students within certain populations. However, music teachers can play an active role in learning about why students do not want to participate. Speaking to the actual students who find music education inaccessible is one of the best means to engage them and to make music more accessible and inclusive. Identifying the barriers from the perspective of "non-music" students (those who are not enrolled in school music) themselves can illuminate motivators to appeal to "the other 80 percent". I suggest that researchers and teachers explore the perspectives of those students who we might consider to be "non-musicians". As I found through conducting this study, this population of students is challenging for a music teacher to locate. This is likely to be an obstacle for any music educator or scholar, but it is not impossible. To clarify, I do not believe that there are students who are not musical by nature. However, some students have opted out of music programs at school, thereby forgoing the categorization of a school music participant. For clarity and simplicity, many researchers and teachers refer to this group as non-music students. Their perspectives are likely to be incredibly revealing regarding barriers to music education and which music courses they would find interesting, relevant, or would consider enrolling in. I might suggest a case study of one student who has chosen not to participate in music or to study adults who did not participate in music in secondary school and gather their perspectives and reflections.

Authenticity, Identity, and Autonomy. An important finding of this study was the underlying desire among students for identity, authenticity, and autonomy. Psychology of motivation studies supports the notion that these are important components of intrinsic (Vallerand et al., 1992). Self-determination theory (SDT) states that to create intrinsic motivation, a person must have a feeling of autonomy in their endeavors (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to Evans et al. (2013), SDT defines autonomy as the desire to feel that one is in control of and approves of one's own interests and actions. One study has indicated how teachers with autonomy-supportive behaviors have more positive effects on students' well-being than controlling behaviors (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2020). Although there hasn't been much study on SDT in music education (Evans, 2015), it has been widely used to examine learning motivation in other contexts (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Ntoumanis & Standage, 2009; Vallerand et al., 1992). It is my recommendation because of this study that future research explore the constructs of autonomy, authenticity, identity, and SDT in music education.

One participant's frustrations about graduation requirements impeding his ability to have a choice in what courses he took provides insight into his feelings of autonomy. He communicated that he did not understand the reasoning behind requiring such a high number of English credits but also shared that he figured it was because school authorities wish to produce well-rounded citizens. Missouri graduation requirements ensure that students take courses in a variety of subjects and "master essential knowledge, skills, and competencies", ("Missouri Department of Elementary & Secondary Education," n.d.). Other requirements are made by local authorities. Therefore, it may be beyond the capacity of high school students to comprehend the complexities of determining which courses are compulsory for all students in the state. However, the perception autonomy in adolescence is critical in development as it is closely connected to

individualization and identify formation (Fleming, 2005; see also Blos, 1967; Silverberg & Steinberg,1987; Ryan & Lynch, 1989; Steinberg et al., 1992; Smetana & Asquith, 1994). From an educational standpoint, it is important that students are given opportunities to be autonomous and the ability to make their own decisions, especially students who are soon to be faced with life altering decisions regarding choice of school or moving away from their childhood home and parents.

Identity was also recognized as being of high value to students, particularly their musical identity. For several of these participants, the instrument they played carried a great deal of meaning in connection to their identity. A person's or a group's musical practices and traditions, as well as their musical tastes, ideals, skills, and expertise, all contribute to their musical identities. These activities might include both production—such as playing an instrument or singing—and reception—such as listening to or dancing to music (Green, 2011). These musical identities may have a significant influence on a person's life and may be fleeting or long-lasting. Additionally, a person's musical identity is always being created and rebuilt, making it flexible throughout the course of a lifetime. As a result, musical identities are tied to both their characteristics as well as the precise means by which those qualities are learned or the unique ways in which those norms are established. Essentially, musical identities are fundamentally and inextricably linked to certain music-related learning techniques (Hargreaves et al., 2002, p. 11). Music learning takes place in diverse settings and methods (Green, 2011). Since identity is such a critical component of development and music education has the capability to shape a student's identity, I recommend that future research focus on how musical identity is shaped specifically in relation to a particular instrument.

Responding to Student Identity and Motivations in Teaching

In conducting this study, I have come to a few significant realizations about my own teaching and how I hope to grow as an educator in the future. The first realization I have come to (which is perhaps less of a realization and more of a reminder) is the importance of getting to know each one of my students individually as people, as musicians, and the culmination of what makes them who they are. In hearing the stories of each of these students, students whom I have known, I realized how central music is to their identities in the way that music is to mine. For perhaps the first time, I have fully acknowledged how my identity as a musician and what I feel makes me a musician is exactly what I have in common with each of these students. I feel this is true no matter the level of engagement each of us has with music. The commonality is in how each of us define ourselves through music. There is a level of humanity in this that I feel is incredibly powerful and beautiful. I hope that I can utilize this awareness to build upon ways to empower my students and to offer them a space where they can truly blossom. The implementation of this will look different in each teacher's classroom and will change depending on the students in the room. Not one student is alike. In my classroom, I see it as letting go of pre-determined instrumentation constraints. Students, with the guidance of a teacher, should feel free to explore the instrument that speaks to them. Of course, students might feel differently if they are not experiencing success on that instrument later, but being a compassionate and flexible teacher is what I would hope to be.

My second realization is that I have many similar motivations to these students. I have had a multitude of fulfilling musical experiences in a variety of settings with groups performing different genres. However, I have been fulfilled in different ways by each of these performances. Sometimes I felt fulfilled by performing with people I cared for, other times I felt more

enjoyment from the musical genre itself. In any case, these were the types of motivators expressed to me in this study by my students. It is sometimes surprising to me how we (teachers) are not all that different from students. In recognizing these motivators within myself in my multi-faceting musicianship, I am more aware of these in my students and how to provide more motivating experiences. I realize that not every one of my students will share the same musical preferences as me, however, I can still use my awareness to tap into student motivations through their interests. This might be done at the beginning of each week with a musical student interest survey in which they tell me about a specific artist they enjoy listening to. The information collected from the survey could be used in multiple ways. I might experiment with this information and see what seems to bring my students the most joy. Perhaps a three-minute sing-along to a student's favorite song at the beginning or end of class would be three minutes of joy for a student in which I validate their musical preferences and identity. Another way in which I may respond to student motivation is by making music selection a collaborative process. To reiterate, this will look different in each classroom. Ultimately, however, this will take some time to figure out for each teacher (me included) and is centered around knowing students individually.

Finally, in speaking with students about how they have defined themselves as musicians and what experiences they feel have contributed to their concept of identity, I now feel it is more important to share my range of musical experiences with students. I have engaged in music in many traditional ways and in ways that are more relevant to music in the lives of everyday people. I have performed in large concert halls for hundreds of people and in run-down bars for an audience of three. Both have played a part in my identity as a musician. As my students and I explore different avenues of musicianship, we can continue to build and share in those

experiences together. I have always been one to invite and encourage my students to come watch me in any type of musical performance, whether it was a concert band or my rock band. One way I hope to support my students' musical growth in the future is by making a better effort to support them as they pursue outside musical opportunities which may include a solo show at a local coffee shop where they perform their own original songs or performing with a garage band made up of other students or community or family members. This is something I often did in high school, and I am still thankful for the times my music teacher came to hear me perform.

Conclusion

This study revealed a variety of student perspectives regarding many aspects of involvement in school music from desired course offerings, motivating factors in participation, how their participation in music affects how they perceive plans for their future, and a yearning for authenticity, autonomy, and identity. Perhaps one of the most significant findings of this study was the connection to one's instrument and identity, as well as the attention many students gave to thoughts about musicality beyond high school music. Though some research has explored musical and social identity (Green, 2011), and identity and motivation (McPherson & Renwick, 2001; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Pitts, 2016), more investigation into the effects of Self-Determination Theory in music education on intrinsic motivation and autonomy may illuminate how educators can increase student motivation and perception of autonomy in the classroom (Butler, 2022; Evans 2015).

Another significant finding was the perception of students that music courses should be expanded to include a wider range of offerings which might evoke the interest of students not engaged in school music. The expansion of music course offerings was seen by participants as

having several advantages, such as allowing students to explore various aspects of music, catering to diverse interests, and facilitating alternative methods of learning. Students admitted that there was no superior genre of music; traditional and nontraditional music courses were merely diverse in their characteristics but shared the same advantages that all music students benefit from and appreciate. It is my hope that these results will encourage schools and teachers to be open to other music course opportunities and to take advantage of popular and nontraditional music professional development.

The central finding of this study hones in on student motivation for ensemble participation. The motivations shared in this study included the desire to play in an ensemble in which they thought was beautiful, to play an instrument that was congruent with their sense of self, to develop musical skills in hopes to pursue a musical career, and the desire for other musical opportunities that extended beyond their current course offerings. Exploring the relationship between intrinsic motivation and nontraditional course offerings could throw light on how more students musical needs might be met within public schooling. Motivation, identity, and accessibility in music education are all interconnected and are challenging to discuss independently. As this study shares a glimpse of the relationship between these major facets of music education, exploring these constructs in a variety of settings and with a diverse student population is what will enable educators to continue to make strides in how we aim to serve all students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Informed Consent & Parent Permission Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Student Perspectives of Music Courses in a Southwest Missouri School District: An Exploratory Case Study
Elisa Wren, Missouri State University Graduate Student
Email: Wren141@live.missouristate.edu

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to investigate student perspectives of school music programs and out-of-school music experiences. This study seeks to include the perspectives of students who are enrolled in music courses ***and*** those who are not.

How: I am conducting one-on-one face-to-face interviews with students interested in participating in this study. The interview will take between 10-15 minutes.

Benefits: This study will illuminate the perceptions of students to help current and future music educators, administrators, and music education advocates make informed decisions about music course offerings and pre-service teacher education and highlight the importance of considering the values and interests of students.

Voluntary Participation: You understand that your consent for your student to participate in this research is entirely voluntary. You have the right to volunteer or refuse to participate.

Risks Associated: There are minimal risks associated with this study. You may contact Dr. Daniel Hellman for questions regarding this study at danielhellman@missouristate.edu.

Withdrawal: If you consent for your student to participate in this study, you are free to stop your participation in the study at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

Privacy and Confidentiality: The identity of students who participate in this study will only be known to the researcher and selected school faculty and staff. No identifiable information collected in the study will be shared. Interviews with the researcher will be audio recorded which will be used to create a written transcript without any personally identifiable information. Participants and parents will have the opportunity to review their recorded interviews and written transcripts.

Printed Name of Student_____

Printed Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian_____

Date _____

Investigator's Signature_____

Appendix B. Human Subjects IRB Approval

IRB-FY2023-254 - Initial: Initial Approval

do-not-reply@cayuse.com <do-not-reply@cayuse.com>
Tue 1/31/2023 10:00 AM
To: Hellman, Daniel S <DanielHellman@MissouriState.edu>;Wren, Mary E <Wren141@live.missouristate.edu>

Missouri State
UNIVERSITY

To:
Daniel Hellman
Music

RE: Notice of IRB Approval
Submission Type: Initial
Study #: IRB-FY2023-254
Study Title: Student Perspectives of Music Courses in a Southwest Missouri Schools District: An Exploratory Case Study
Decision: Approved

Approval Date: January 31, 2023

This submission has been approved by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

Researchers Associated with this Project:
PI: Daniel Hellman
Co-PI:
Primary Contact: Mary Wren
Other Investigators:

Appendix C. Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE - STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF MUSIC COURSES IN A SOUTHWEST MISSOURI SCHOOL DISTRICT: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY

Opening

- Introduction: “My name is Elisa Wren and I am a graduate student at Missouri State University. Thank you for being willing to share your time and thoughts with me today. I’m going to be asking you questions about your musical experiences, your thoughts about music in school, and thoughts about music in general. I want you to know that there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. All I’m asking for is for you to be as open and honest as possible and be yourself. I’m hoping the information provided by you and other participants will help inform people tasked with making decisions about school music to make the best decisions possible for students like you.”

Musical Experiences

- “Tell me about some ways you engage in music.” Follow-up questions to be asked as needed.
- “Tell me about music that you enjoy playing, singing, or listening to.”
- If involved in school music:
    - “How did you arrive at the decision to join _____ (band, choir, piano, music technology, etc.)”
    - “What are some of your favorite parts about being in a music class at school?”
    - “What parts of being in a school music class do you not enjoy as much?”
    - “What is your favorite memory of being a part of _____ class?”
    - “Do you plan on enrolling in the same or different music class next year? Why or why not?”
    - If a high school senior: “If you’re attending a university or college next year, do you see yourself being a part of the music program there?”
    - “Do you engage with music outside of school? Tell me more.”
    - Follow-up questions may be asked as needed.
- If not enrolled in school music:
    - “Do you engage with music outside of school? Tell me about that.”
    - “Tell me why you chose to participate in a study about music."
    - “How did you arrive at the decision not to join a school music class?”
    - “Tell me more about the factors that influenced this decision.”
    - “What would have to change for you to want to join your school’s music program, if anything?”
    - Follow-up questions to be asked as needed.

Music Course Offerings

- “How would you like to see the music program at your school change?”
- “If you could choose any music class for your school to offer that it doesn’t currently, what would it be? Why?”
- “Some schools around the country have started to add music classes that focus on different musical genres or instruments. A few examples of newer classes you might see lately in some schools include modern band, a type of music ensemble that uses popular instruments like guitar, bass guitar, drums, keyboard, and vocals, Digital Music, which focuses on creating music with

certain music software or producing and editing recorded music, and some schools offer specific types of ensembles like Irish Fiddling, Steel Pan, Gospel, African Drum, and more. Here is a list of other courses that have been offered in some schools. I can describe any of the courses on this list if that would be helpful for you. Is this something you would like to see your school look into? Are there any classes on this list that interest you?"

- Follow-up questions to be asked as needed.

Value of Music

- "On a scale of 1 to 10, how important do you think it is that music classes are offered in schools?"
- "Earlier I showed you a list with 29 music courses that are not typically offered at most schools. Most schools offer some form of band, choir, or orchestra. Would you say that the courses on this list are less valuable, more valuable, or equally valuable than classes like band, choir, and orchestra? How did you arrive at your conclusion?"
- Follow-up questions to be asked as needed.

Final Questions & Closing

- "Is there anything else you'd like to share with me that you think might be useful or important?"
- "Out of everything you've shared with me today, what do you think is the number one thing music teachers need to hear?"
- "Thank you for your time and your willingness to share your thoughts with me today! It was a pleasure to hear from you."

Appendix D. Nontraditional Music Course List (Kelly & Veronee, 2019*)

Advanced Placement Music Theory
Musical Theater
Piano/Keyboard
Music Theory
Guitar Ensemble
Music History
Music Appreciation
IB Music
Music Composition and Arranging
Music Technology/Audio Recording and Engineering
Handbell Choir
Rock/Pop/Commercial Band
Steel Pan Ensemble
Blues Ensemble
Contemporary/Electronic/MIDI Ensemble
Gospel Ensemble
World Music Ensemble
Bluegrass Ensemble
Irish Fiddling Ensemble
Music Business
Music History Pop/Rock 'n' Roll
Mariachi Band
African Drum Ensemble
Praise and Worship Ensemble
World Music Drumming
Recorder Ensemble
Gamelan Ensemble
Old Time Ensemble
Salsa Ensemble

***(taken from Garrett, 2009; Juchniewicz, 2007; Lentsch, 2000; Sanderson, 2014)**