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STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN URBAN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM:
MUSICAL OFFERINGS AND PREPARATION FOR LIFELONG MUSIC-MAKING

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine various students' perceptions of the urban high school music programs in which they participate, and how these programs meet their respective students' needs for lifelong music-making. A multi-faceted approach was used to conduct this study. Research was conducted through interview in focus groups consisting of two to three current high school students. In these focus groups, students were asked questions relevant to their past musical experiences (curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular). Students were asked questions to develop a further understanding of and gain insight into their own personal musical interests and passions. Additionally, students were asked to inventory the various aspects of their high school music experience. Students were then prompted with several hypothetical situations and asked to describe any potential benefit or interest in these potential offerings. Finally, students reflected upon their high school music experience, detailing what lasting impression this program has made upon them and how it might influence their future with music. The data gathered in these interviews was summarized and analyzed by the researcher, looking for common themes, ideas, or patterns in responses. The results indicated the majority of students' perception of their music programs was most favorable when the students participated due to a genuine appreciation and interest in music and music-making, and that this favorable perception led to a greater likelihood of participation in music after graduation from high school.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Music education is at a tipping point. Unfortunately, this is not news to many music educators across the nation. Topics of change and reformation seem to constantly dominate conferences and conventions throughout the music education community. The music education community is undoubtedly aware of the seemingly imminent need to change practice (Williams, 1987). Nonetheless, for as much as the professional community knows that adaptation and evolution are necessary to the survival of the profession, what can be done to implement significant change? What needs to be altered, and how can this reformation be realized? Music educators have long advocated for the arts by stating that music is a fundamental human form of expression (Shuler, 2011). Yet, if music is a universal phenomenon and all cultures and societies engage in some sort of music making, then why is public school music education not successful for all students? Why are future leaders, legislators, school board members, and other members of society receiving less than rewarding experiences in music in the schools? The answers to these questions are quite difficult to determine.

American music education in its current state consists primarily of the time-tested practices of traditional ensembles and music-making. For the majority of programs, this means choir, band, and orchestra, although the inclusion of orchestra is becoming increasingly uncommon throughout the country (Williams, 2012). These ensembles provide students with excellent opportunities to make music and learn about the Western

Classical Art Music tradition, which has come to be the staple of music programs across

the country. That being said, there are acknowledged limits to the experiences an

education with only these types of ensembles can provide for students. While they may

provide enriching aesthetic experiences for certain students, not all will be taken away by

the timbres and textures of these ensembles. While some students may embrace the

shimmering timbre of a finely tuned orchestra, others will gravitate towards the pulsating

rhythms of modern dance music. Additionally, many argue that these ensembles merely

recreate the already expressed creative genius of another person, instead of encouraging

students to forge their own creative identity (Mantie, 2008; Williams, 2012). These

notions present challenges that music educators around the country struggle with each

and every day.

Furthermore, there are many styles of music not found in the Western Classical

tradition that are essential components of a quality music education. Many argue that by

only providing traditional music ensembles, students' musical exposure is limited to the

repertoire of the Western Classical tradition (Williams, 2008, 2012). Participation in

traditional ensembles presents many logistical challenges that many students may not be

able to overcome. One of these obstacles is obtaining an instrument, which, depending on

the fiscal situation, may be extremely difficult to achieve (Ester, n.d.). Additionally,

participation in these traditional ensembles requires teamwork and cooperation from

other members. While many consider these traits to be skills students should learn and

develop, performing in these settings is impossible without an appropriate number of

peers. It has become increasingly difficult for school districts with lesser music budgets

and lower student enrollment to provide a comprehensive music education for students

through traditional music ensembles only. For all of the aforementioned reasons, many

educators contest that traditional ensembles cannot be the only component of a complete

music education. They dispute that although band, choir, and orchestra are undoubtedly

an integral part of today's music education community, these ensembles cannot be the

sole focus of any music education (Williams, 2008, 2012; Mantie, 2008). If the goal of

music education is to provide students with the knowledge and tools they need to engage

in music for a lifetime, they insist music education must begin to branch outward in new

directions.

      The focus of these new directions in music education must be the students and

their needs. Students in today's modern classroom are very different from their

predecessors. Today's students come from diverse backgrounds with a multitude of

experiences that were not yet available in generations' past. Opinion of how to best

educate this new generation has caused a division among music educators. Many music

educators believe that in order to discover how these new students will engage with

music for the rest of their lives, today's students need a wide variety of styles and genres

of music as a part of their music education experiences (Vagi, 2010). Still, many

educators still believe that traditional ensembles such as band, choir, and orchestra

provide the most effective and comprehensive music education for all students (Snider &

Averitte, 1984).

      Professionals in the music education community have been outspoken regarding

their views and opinions on this subject. However, little has been discovered regarding

student thought and opinion on the matter. If the goal of music education is to provide

students with the tools they need to be lifelong participants and consumers of music, who

better to ask than the students themselves? By assessing student perception of music

education programs, this study aimed to provide insight into the successes and failures of

the modern music education program paradigm in one case study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate and examine student perception of the current status of music education programs in urban public high schools. Through analysis of this information, this study aimed to gain insight into what tools and experiences this new generation of music students feels they require to be lifelong music participants. Students were interviewed in three to five person focus groups using an interview protocol developed by the researcher. The answers were then assessed and analyzed by the researcher, looking for common themes, ideas, and patterns.

Challenges of the Study

The challenges of the study were as follows:

1. Devise an appropriate set of questions that would provide insight into student perception of their respective high school programs.

2. Implement this interview protocol with a variety of students via focus group interview and record the responses.

3. Assess and analyze the responses to the interview protocol and determine patterns and themes of student perception of public urban high school music programs.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

In this chapter, areas of literature and research pertaining to the current state of music education in our society and the factors contributing to participation are outlined. The research is categorized into four areas: the current state of music education, the importance of music education programs in urban communities, factors that influence student participation in these urban school music education programs, and models of successful urban music education programs. Each area will provide additional insight into the status of music education programs in our society and how music educators worldwide are attempting to improve this standing.

The State of Music Education

Music is a fundamental feature of our society. There are few, if any, cultures that do not embrace music as an essential part of life. Nonetheless, the current state of music education in America is not one that consistently celebrates the importance of music. The following research explores the current music education dilemma and provides insight into the dynamics that govern the role of music education in our society.

Shuler (2011)

In a recent article, Shuler addresses his concerns for the future of music education by outlining his "Five Guiding Principles for Music Education." In an attempt to refocus the music education community, Shuler states that following these principles will "help students find personal paths to lifelong involvement in and support for music" (p. 7). Shuler's "Five Principles" contest the following points:

1. An education in the arts is important for all students

2. Independence is necessary to lead a life enriched by music

3. Independence is the ability to carry out the three artistic processes in music

4. Students must begin to study early and continue throughout high school

5. High school electives must address a variety of interests and students (p. 9).

These principles outline Dr. Shuler's philosophy of music education, but they also bring

to light the need for reform within the music education community. As a former president

of the National Association for Music Education's Eastern Division, Dr. Shuler

recognizes the nation's need for educational reform and addresses these needs within his

five guiding principles.

Hoffman (2011)

Hoffman also discusses the current state of music education in her recent

research. In this article, Hoffman presents her thoughts regarding the growing concern of

miscommunication between music educators and their students. Hoffman claims that

"[educators] create larger gaps between ourselves and our students" (p. 33). These gaps

are created when communication breaks down between students and their teachers.

Hofmann states that this happens far too often in music education. "If [students] feel as

though they cannot communicate verbally or musically with their music teachers, they

may choose to disengage completely" Hofmann suggests (p. 34). This growing divide

between music educators and students portrays a growing trend in music education, as

participation in music programs continues to decrease. Hoffman insists that the future of

music education relies upon educators' ability to "find ways to inform students in ways

they might be understood" (p. 37).

Robinson (2004)

Robinson surveyed seven "experienced master teachers" in urban communities in order to discover who really is "at-risk" in the music classroom. Her research chronicles the testimony of seven individual teachers and their professional practice in urban music education programs. These teachers have diverse experiences and ways of life, but they all present similar themes that Robinson believes elucidate the current state of music education in our nation. The interviews of these master teachers reveal the true identity of "at-risk" students in the music classroom. Robinson believes that *all* students may be at-risk in the current music classroom. "We must remember that at-risk students are not only those in urban or inner-city schools, or low socioeconomic status, or from minority or ethnic groups," claims Robinson (p. 40). Her research illustrates that no student inherits the title of "at-risk", but instead, they become "at-risk" due to poor teaching or classroom management. Robinson states that "no child is inherently at-risk, but is placed into at-risk situations" (p. 41). This view of the music education dilemma is especially eye-opening. Robinson asserts that all students have potential and aptitude, and that it is the educators and school communities that place students in at-risk situations. Robinson calls for a change in educational philosophy, saying, "If these conditions were to be eliminated…the children in question would no longer be termed 'at-risk'" (p. 41).

Summary

Music education in our nation has undoubtedly reached a tipping point. The above research studies and articles present the views and opinions of several professionals in the music education community who consistently agree that reform is needed. As Hoffman (2011) suggests, the divide between the interests of music education professionals and

students continues to widen at an unsettling rate. Shuler (2011), a leader in the music

education community, recognizes that the time has come for educational reform to reach

the music education community. Robinson's (2004) assertions that *all* students may be at

risk in the music education classroom are truly alarming, and the call for change has

become clear. The aforementioned articles and research studies confirm that change is

needed within the music education community to ensure quality music education for

lifelong musicianship and the survival of music education programs across the country.

Importance of Music Education in Urban Communities

Despite the undoubted value of music in today's society, the importance of music

education continues to be questioned. The following research studies provide

understanding of the importance of music education programs in all communities, with a

concentrated focus on the importance of music education in urban communities. While

all communities need and deserve music education, there are additional benefits for

students who participate in music education programs in urban communities.

Snider and Averitte (1984)

In one of the first research studies to investigate the profiles of urban music

education programs, the work of Snider and Averitte detailed the course offerings of

various music education programs in urban settings. Their work aimed to determine the

ratio of music to classroom teachers, the types of music programs offered, the amount of

time allocated for music instruction, and the beginning grade level of musical instruction.

The findings of this study were enlightening, summarizing the breadth of music

education programs in urban communities across the United States. Snider and Averitte

concluded that "course offerings appear to be similar across the range of schools studied"

(p. 64). Despite cultural or individual differences between the programs, the vast majority

of these public music programs offered the same standard music courses and ensembles

across all schools and grade levels. The most frequently offered courses across the fifty-

five schools surveyed were band (concert, jazz, and marching) and choir.

Bernard (2010)

In a recent article, Bernard outlines the positive aspects of music education

programs in urban communities, stating that far too often similar studies only

acknowledge the negative views of these programs. Bernard's work sketched profiles of

music education programs in two Northeast cities. By interviewing music educators in

these districts, Bernard identified several attributes of successful music education

programs and the extra-musical benefits for their students. Bernard stated that successful

music education programs in urban communities are fueled by educators who "spoke

passionately about how capable their students are" (p. 54). Similarly, Bernard cites that

successful music education programs refuse to "shortchange" the music or

"underestimate their students' interests and potential" (p. 55). These characteristics were

found consistently across the successful music education programs interviewed in

Bernard's study. Bernard claims that there are significant benefits for students who

participate in music programs inspired by these educators. Bernard states that these

programs "provide students with opportunities to find themselves and become driven and

successful through their music" (p. 55). Bernard also cites participation in music

education programs allows students an opportunity to make extra-musical connections

with other students and build relationships that foster strong life skills. "All kids want to

be heard and respected, and valued, and listened to, and loved," (p. 56) cites Bernard, and

she contests that quality music education programs have the potential to fulfill these needs.

Kinney (2008)

The importance of music education has long been linked to extra-musical data, and Daryl Kinney hoped to strengthen this assumption with his research. In this study, Kinney evaluated the test scores of 6th through 8th grade students in a Midwestern urban school district. These test scores were then compared to other variables, such as demographics, music participation, transiency, and socioeconomic status. The results of this study were consistent with previous findings; students who participated in the school music program scored higher on all subtests of the 6th and 8th grade proficiency tests. While band students scored higher than those involved in chorus, students across the music program scored consistently higher than their "non-musical" peers. Although other non-musical factors, such as socioeconomic status, proved to also be significant in determining test scores, Kinney contests that there is "no doubting" the correlation between higher standardized test scores and participation in school music education programs.

Hinckley (1995)

June Hinckley outlines extra-musical benefits of participation in urban school music programs in her research. Hinckley profiled schools in large metropolitan areas across the country to assess what aspects of these music programs make them successful. Hinckley cited relevance, high expectations, and community outreach, as the main contributing factors to urban music program success. Similarly, these aspects of the music programs provided the most significant benefit for the students involved. Hinckley

contested that relevance, or students participating in making music they feel is directly applicable to their lives, provided students with a unique creative outlet that was aesthetically fulfilling. Music programs also expose students to an environment with high expectations, and Hinckley contests that these high expectations transfer into other aspects of student life, propelling them into success across other disciplines. Finally, Hinckley proposes that music programs with community outreach elements provide a "real world" scenario for their students to perform, boosting student confidence and providing insight into career possibilities for students. Hinckley contests that these benefits of urban music programs far outweigh the cost, and that it is the responsibility of all adults to provide this necessary experience for the next generation.

<u>Summary</u>

Music has always been a vital creative outlet of our society. However, the importance of music education is consistently questioned. The research conducted through the aforementioned studies confirms the value of music education, specifically in urban communities. Participation in music programs has a proven correlation with higher standardized test scores (Kinney, 2008). Furthermore, music education programs in urban communities provide students with opportunities to experience success, aesthetic expression, and real-world community service (Hinckley, 1995). The above-mentioned research confirms that, as a whole, music education programs in urban communities are currently providing the next generation of citizens with some of the experiences and skills they need to be successful members of society.

Factors of Student Participation

After examining the multiple benefits of participation in an urban music education program, one might conclude that all students and communities would strongly encourage these music programs. However, this is far from the truth. There are several factors which influence student participation in urban music school programs. This next section presents research studies that clarify several of these influences and how they manifest themselves in school music education programs.

Kinney (2010)

Kinney discovered trends in enrollment and persistence in urban middle school band programs. This study discusses variables such as socioeconomic status, family structure, mobility, ethnicity, and gender and their relationship with students' decisions to enroll in band. Using two distinct models to determine enrollment and retention, in 6th and 8th grade, Kinney's study made significant progress in discovering influential factors. The results of this study contest that higher academically achieving students and those students from two-parent families are more likely to enroll in a band program. Similarly, these two subsections along with students with higher socioeconomic status are more likely to persist in a band program after the first year of enrollment. These factors are increasingly important in a music program, as music classes are almost exclusively elective classes at the secondary education level, and recruitment/retention are essential to the endurance of a music education program

Ester and Turner (2008)

Don Ester and Kristin Turner's study illustrates another defining factor of student participation in urban school music programs. This study compared student attitude and achievement both at the beginning and the end of the school year. Socioeconomic status

and instrument status served as independent variables to students' achievement and

attitude. At the end of the school year, all students, both those with and without loaned

instruments, completed a survey of the year and their thoughts on their personal

performance. The results of this study indicate that lower-income students playing

school-owned instruments demonstrate equal achievement to their higher-income peers

playing their own personal instruments. Similarly, the attitudes of these students were

equally favorable of the band program as their peers. Although school-loaned instruments

did not create a difference between the two observed groups, Ester and Turner concluded

that the lower-income students with loaner instruments were more likely to continue

playing than low-income students without any access to instruments. This finding is

supportive of school instrument loaner programs, and suggests that these types of

programs may be a determining factor in student ability to participate in music.

Vagi (2010)

Robert Vagi discusses another important factor in student participation in urban

music programs, repertoire relevance. In his article, Vagi examines his decision to offer a

hip-hop class in his urban high school located in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. Vagi

contests the relevance of traditional ensembles, stating that "there are few opportunities

for our band and orchestra students to participate after graduation" (p. 28). Instead, Vagi

has turned his attention toward teaching a subject that he feels is "musically relevant" to

his students' lives. As a part of his hip-hop class, Vagi has his students participate in

activities such as writing and recording raps designed to effect a change in their world,

debating the influence of hip-hop on today's youth, and analyzing the musical aspects of

hip-hop culture. Vagi argues that students in his class take more away from this

experience because the music is relevant to their everyday lives. He claims that, "this is a music that my students grow up with, listen to every day, and value" (p. 30). Despite criticism that this music has "little substance" or is "outwardly vulgar" (p. 29), Vagi continues his class because of his belief that his students gain more from experiencing music that is relevant in their everyday existence. Vagi states that relevance of repertoire undoubtedly influences students' decision to participate in urban school music programs, "whether teachers are willing to recognize it or not" (p. 31).

<u>Summary</u>

There are seemingly endless factors that contribute to students' decisions to enroll and persist in a school music education program. The above studies outline the factors which contribute to students' decisions to participate in a music program. These factors include socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, home environment, instrument accessibility, and relevance of repertoire (Kinney, 2010; Vagi, 2010). These factors undoubtedly play a vital role in students' ability and decision to participate in a music education program. It is essential to recognize these factors, as the survival of a music program and the success of its students depends upon recruitment and retention of participants.

Models of Urban Music Program Success

Despite the current state of music education and the seemingly profound challenges of teaching in an urban community, there are many thriving and successful music education programs in urban communities. One of the most effective methods of learning stems from reflection. In this section, research will be presented that provides examples of successful music education programs in urban communities. The purpose of

presenting information regarding these programs is to offer them as models from which other urban communities may draw inspiration. Through a thorough examination and discussion of the strengths and successes of these programs, conclusions may be made concerning the most effective practices for musical instruction in urban communities.

Darrow, Novak, and Swedberg (2009)

Participation in extra-curricular musical activities often provides positive extra-musical benefits for the students involved. This is the case in a study conducted by Australia-based research team Alice-Ann Darrow, Julie Novak, and Olivia Swedberg. Their study created an after-school mentoring program for students involved in the music education program. In this program, each "at-risk" student was assigned one upperclassmen mentor to assist them with various aspects of high school life. The students cooperated together before, during, and after school. They worked together on musical and extra-musical concepts, but all students were involved in the school music program at some level. The results of this study were staggering. The music mentorship program proved to be extremely successful, as mentorship participants' scores on the self-esteem test increased significantly more than the control group's test scores. Additionally, students who completed the mentorship were more likely to attend college and viewed teaching more favorably as a possible career path. According to Darrow, Novak, and Swedberg, this mentoring program provides a quintessential example of a thriving music education program that provides not only for its students, but for the community as well.

Shields (2001)

Christina Shields detailed another exemplary example of an urban music education program in her study which described a music mentorship program that aimed to provide at-risk students with musical training and mentorship. High school students were paired with a mentor and required to meet regularly both in and outside of school. Students in the mentorship program were surveyed at the beginning and the end of the study as to their own perception of their musical abilities and this data was collected and analyzed. At the end of the mentorship program, students' perceptions of music in their lives significantly altered. As a whole, student self-perception of musical competence rose significantly by the end of the mentorship program. Similarly, students' ranking music as important in their lives rose from 76 percent to 82 percent. Shields explains this phenomenon, saying, "Students' beliefs about their musical prowess came closer in line with the importance they attached to their musical participation" (p. 283). Finally, an overwhelming 87 percent of students felt that the mentoring process was rewarding. Shields summarizes the experience best by saying, "The positive change, increased musical skills, and expressed pleasure and self-satisfaction of the study participants provided a sense of intrinsic reward" (p. 284).

Mantie (2008)

The most striking and revolutionary example of a successful urban music education program comes out of the work of Roger Mantie. Through research conducted with the University of Toronto, Mantie was able to establish an inner-city education program entitled *the One World Youth Arts Project* for underprivileged students in the Toronto area. This program utilized music education to promote a sort of "social justice," the basis of which was equality through education. Mantie proposed that providing all

students with a high-quality music education would not only increase their musical

abilities, but would also foster in these students a greater sense of self-worth, dignity, and

social empowerment. This program enrolled at-risk students in the Toronto area in a

computer-based music program. The class was software-based to facilitate the creation

and recording of original, student-created music in popular or vernacular genres. After a

semester of instruction, Mantie interviewed several of the students for their opinions of

the project and their own perception of their musical abilities. The results indicate

significant growth through the course of this project. Students highlight the positives of

this experience, stating, "This experience was different. The music was already in me,

and they believed that. They said, 'Let's draw on your talent and your goals and your

dreams. Let's bring the music out of you'" (p. 478). This feeling of empowerment gave

students a greater sense of self-worth and feelings of creative license they had not

experienced before. Mantie expresses the success of the program by saying, "The power

of music for these students was not to be found in discovering the beauty of music, but in

discovering, through music, things about themselves" (p. 479). The success of this

program can be attributed to many factors, but Mantie cites the relevance of the music

and student accountability as the greatest contributing factors to its success. In

conclusion, Mantie applies his research to the music education community by suggesting,

"Traditional notions of musicianship and musical literacy need to be re-examined if we

are to accept and respond to the challenges of an increasingly diverse and interconnected

world" (p. 482).

Summary

Establishing and supporting an urban music education program is a daunting challenge. There are significant obstacles that must be overcome in order to provide a high-quality music education for these students. Yet, the previously-mentioned research provides classic examples of how this success can be accomplished. Darrow, Novak, and Swedberg initialized an after-school mentoring program that increased student self-esteem through musical involvement. Shields suggested that a similar mentoring program will also improve student self-perception and self-worth with regard to musical ability. Finally, Roger Mantie's work with the inner-city youth in Toronto proposes a model in which student-centered exploration of music allows for maximum personal and musical growth. These research studies all suggest that, while there are significant challenges involved, the task of establishing a music education program in an urban community is achievable. Not only is this mission possible, but research suggests that it is a most worthy endeavor, providing students with opportunities for musical and personal growth.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Descriptive Design

This study explored student perception of a music education program, its musical

offerings, and the students' perceived preparation for lifelong musical engagement. The

focus of this research was student experience in music education program via student

responses to an interview protocol. The participants were current students of an urban

high school music education program from one school district in the Mid-Atlantic.

Participants were selected based upon two primary factors: their experience in the

high school music program, and their ability to express their thoughts cohesively. Due to

a large response in voluntary participants, the researcher was able to be selective in

choosing participants. Students who had the most experience within the school music

education program would most likely be able to provide the most insightful answers, as

they had experienced the full range of the music program. For this reason, the majority of

the participants in this program were upperclassmen (seniors and juniors). Additionally,

students were only selected if they agreed with the statement that they were able to

coherently express their thoughts. This information was obtained through previous

contact with the participants and discussion with the cooperating teacher in the music

education program. Eight students with significant experience in the music program who

could thoughtfully express their thoughts were selected to participate.

The students selected to participate in the focus group discussion were divided

into three focus groups for discussion purposes. The division of participants was based

solely upon student availability and the flexibility of scheduling time for the focus group

discussions. Each focus group consisted of two to three students. The students in each focus group participated in a 30 to 45 minute group discussion following the established interview protocol. Student responses were recorded using audio-recording technology on a personally owned computer, and the responses were then locked and transcribed by the researcher.

The interview protocol was created independently by the researcher. Questions were created to gain comprehensive insight into the musical persona of each of the participants. The questions were divided into three sections: questions pertaining to individual musical background (biography), questions relating to their current musical involvement (current "state of the program"), and questions about their plans for future musical involvement. Participants were asked the questions in a predetermined order that remained consistent between all focus groups. Students were given no prior instruction except to answer the questions to the best of their ability. Student participants were allowed as much time as they felt necessary to answer a question, and when all participants felt content with their participation in a question, the discussion moved to the next question in sequence. Upon completion of the interview sequence, the participants were asked if there was anything else they wished to share about their musical experience. They were then promptly thanked for their time and told that the results of this study would be made available to them upon their request. The interview data was punctually transcribed by the researcher and then the audio recordings of the focus group discussions were permanently destroyed.

Pilot Study

In order to ensure an effective interview protocol, a pilot study was launched using the initial interview protocol. This interview protocol was launched the previous year utilizing students in another school district located in a different region of the state. No students who participated in the pilot study participated in the final study. Student responses were recorded, assessed, and destroyed. The researcher analyzed the participants' responses to assess the accuracy of the interview protocol. Several questions were altered as a result of this pilot study. The final interview protocol can be found in Appendix C.

Analysis of Interview Transcription Data

Upon completion of the focus group interview transcriptions, the interview audio recordings were destroyed. From this point, analysis of the transcriptions was of paramount importance. This analysis was accomplished through a quantification of qualitative responses from the participants as follows:

Each question was analyzed individually. For each question, the researcher examined the individual responses of each participant to look for themes, similar answers, etc. If similar answers were discovered, the responses were grouped together into one general statement that captured the essence of the participants' responses. For example, the responses "My favorite part was the parade" and "I enjoyed the parade the most" would be grouped together into a general response stating "Parade was favorite part". After a theme was established, the researcher looked for the number of times this response occurred in both the focus group and throughout the study. Both of these

frequencies were recorded in the table shown in Chapter 3: Methodology. This analysis

was conducted for each of the questions asked during interview protocol.

Example Table 1

Question #	Repeated Response Theme	Response / FG (3)	Response / Ind. (8)
2	Social Involvement	2	5

In this example a response theme was found for protocol question number 2. The theme

of the response was related to social involvement. This themed response appeared in two

out of three focus groups and was indicated by five of eight individuals in the study. This

method of data collection was analyzed for all answers unless the answer did not fit a

theme, in which case "no response theme, varied individual answers" was indicated.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore student perceptions of their own urban school music education program. Student participants were interviewed in focus groups of two to three students using a pre-established interview protocol. The interview responses were recorded via computer and then promptly transcribed by the researcher. After completion of transcription, the transcripts of the interviews were analyzed. In this examination, the researcher tallied common themes and responses among the various focus groups. These common themes and frequencies were recorded in the data tables outlined in Chapter 3: Methodology.

Results

After the interview transcripts were analyzed, the interview responses related to each question (see Appendix C for complete interview protocol) were examined based on focus group and individual answers as displayed in Table 1. The following themes appeared in participant responses:

Table 1

Emergent Themes and Frequencies from Focus Group Interviews

Question #	Repeated Response Theme	Response/FG (3)	Response/ Ind. (8)
1	No response theme, varied individual answers		
2	No response theme, varied individual answers		
3	Yes, parents or siblings also played an instrument	3	7
4	A family member suggested that I play	3	5
5	Mostly informational, not a lot of making music	2	4
6	No response theme, varied individual answers		
7	General music was fun, but not favorite part	3	4

Category 2: Current State of the Program

Question #	Repeated Response Themes	Response/FG (3)	Response/ Ind. (8)
1	Mostly in band, orchestra, choir (trad. music ens.)	3	8
2	Band, choir, and orchestra meet during the day	3	8
3	Piano lab, basic music theory	3	8
4	Jazz band, marching band, chorale, Serenaders	3	7
5	No response theme, varied individual answers		
6	Band and choir	3	6
7	Classical, some pop, broadway show tunes, jazz	3	5
8	Yes / For the most part	3/2	6/2
9	Provides social interaction	3	5
9	Be a part of something bigger than yourself	2	3
9	Quality musical experience	3	7
10	My parents make me	2	2
10	All of my friends are in band	2	3
10	I enjoy making quality music with friends	3	6
11	No response theme, varied individual answers		
12a	It wouldn't be too popular	2	4
12b	That would be cool/popular if it was possible	2	5
12c	Unsure of meaning, what it would entail	3	4
12d	I'm sure a lot of students would be interested	3	7

Chapter 3: Future Musical Engagement

Question #	Repeated Response Themes	Response/FG (3)	Response/ Ind. (8)
1	Yes, I enjoy making quality music	3	6
1	Yes, all of my friends are in band	3	5
1	I'm not sure, I love band but there are other obligations/activities I would like to try	2	3
2	Band, that is what I will play for the rest of my life	3	4
2	Choir, I plan on singing in church/gospel choir	3	6
3a	Traditional ensembles (band/choir)	3	5
3a	Rock/Vernacular/Pop ensembles	2	4
3b	Classical music	3	3
3b	Popular music (pop, broadway, gospel, rock, jazz)	3	6
3c	Traditional music	3	3
3c	Vernacular music	3	6
4	I've considered it and plan on studying it	2	3
4	I've considered it, but I'm not sure what I want yet	2	2
4	No, I don't see myself making a career of music	2	3
5	I've considered it and plan on studying it	2	3
5	I've considered it, but I'm not sure what I want yet	2	2
5	No, I don't see myself making a career of music	2	3
6	Yes, band prepares me for many extra-musical aspects of life as well as musical training	3	3
6	No, I don't feel that these classes have prepared me for what I want to do with music	2	3
6	I'm not sure, I've enjoyed my time, time will tell	2	2
7	Yes, I feel that I will be able to participate	3	3
7	I'm not sure, time will tell	2	3
7	Not really, but I do feel prepared in some areas	2	2

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to further examine student perception of urban music education programs and their preparation for lifelong music engagement. The results of this study have provided new awareness, but what conclusions can be drawn from this information? How does this study differ from studies of the past? What affect may the conclusions of this study have on the practice of music educators? This chapter will discuss these possibilities.

After analyzing the focus group interview transcription results, several conclusions can be drawn about this specific urban music education program. The vast majority of students in this study began participation in the school music program because of a family member's influence. Several students cited parental or sibling influence as a key factor in their decision to participate in the school music program. The role of the community in a music education program cannot be understated, and this data further supports this point.

The course offerings in this specific urban music education program were not entirely diverse, as the school offered traditional ensembles, class piano, and music theory electives. However, most of the students in this study fully participated in the traditional ensembles, with band and choir being the most frequent responses. There were several after-school ensembles offered, and many of the participants in this study indicated that they participated in these after-school ensembles as well. In summary, the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular offerings of this urban public school are somewhat standard in relation to most other schools in the same geographical region.

A great deal of information can be learned based upon the student responses explaining why they participate in school music programs. The majority of students cited a quality musical experience as one of the reasons they participate in school music programs. This was somewhat unexpected. Other factors, such as social involvement and parental pressures, were also mentioned by more than one student, but not at the frequency of the first response. In this music program, the students seem to be truly "hooked on" the music. Concerning participant continuation in the music program, the musical experience continued to be the most prevalent answer. Social interaction was slightly higher in this category, but, again, was not as frequent as the musical experience response. The student participants in this specific music program may have begun their participation for other extra-musical reasons, but their continuation in the program is strongly linked to the quality of instruction in the district's music program.

In the third section of the focus group discussion, participants revealed their future plans for musical involvement. The vast majority of students stated that they planned on continuing to make music for the rest of their lives. When asked by what means they would continue to make music, the majority of students answered in some sort of choral ensemble (with a strong focus on church or gospel choir). This is particularly interesting due to the fact that most of the participants stated that at the current time, they considered band to be their primary means of making music. When asked if the participants planned on making a career of music or studying music at the collegiate level, the response was primarily negative. Most of the participants indicated that they would most likely not study music in college or pursue a career in one of the many music industries. The few students that did indicate a desire to study music were

the same students that responded that they would participate in a band setting in the future. Finally, the students perceptions of their preparation for lifelong musical engagement was somewhat mixed. Three of the students indicated that they felt prepared to engage in music for the rest of their lives. Interestingly enough, two of these students also indicated that they would consider studying music at the collegiate level. Three students were unsure of their confidence in preparation for lifelong music-making. Two students stated that they felt unprepared for their desired path of lifelong musical engagement, citing a lack of preparation in popular/vernacular music as the main reason for this perception.

Relation to Previous Studies

Snider and Averitte (1984) outlined the musical course offerings in urban public schools in a collection of school districts. Unlike this study, they surveyed school administrators and music teachers to collect their data. The results of each study were strikingly similar. Both found urban music education programs offering the same "standard" set of course options: a standard mixture of traditional ensembles (band, choir, and orchestra) and basic theory electives. Despite the changes in popular culture, educational policy, and other extra-musical components, the core-curricular offerings in urban music education programs have remained essentially the same for the past twenty five years.

In her research, Hinckley (1995) outlined the value of music education programs in urban public schools. At the conclusion of this study, Hinckley suggested that urban music education programs are most effective when there is a community outreach aspect of the program. Although the current study did not directly address community outreach,

parental involvement was found to be a determining factor in students' decisions to participate in the school music program. Both studies illustrate the dramatic influence of the community on an urban music education program; this cannot be underestimated if a music program is to thrive within a community.

Similar to several previous studies, this study concluded that positive experiences in music-making create a greater sense of self-worth and lead to continued participation in the school music program. Darrow, Novak, and Swedberg (2009) found that an after-school music mentoring program increased students' positive self-perception. Furthermore, this positive self-perception led to continued participation in the school music program. The current study found similar results, as students who felt they were prepared by their music program were significantly more likely to continue their study of music at the collegiate level. Additionally, Mantie's (2008) study illuminated the importance of musical relevance to students' willingness to participate. In this study, Mantie concluded that musical relevance was an important factor in the overall quality of a student's musical experience, and this greatly influenced the student's decision to persist in the music program. In the current study, the students who stated they would most likely not continue in their musical pursuits cited a lack of preparation in school as one of the main reasons. These students also claimed that this lack of preparation was due to a shortage of instruction in popular/vernacular music styles, styles that are relevant to these students' current lives.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study presented several issues that should be taken into account when considering further research. First, the sample size of this study was too small for

generalization of the conclusions to be truly accurate. The size of this study was limited

due to the methodology and the decision to conduct in-person focus group discussions.

This limitation proved to eventually limit the extent to which findings from this study

could provide insight for music education as a whole. Additionally, the development of

the interview protocol presented some challenges. The researcher created questions that

would elicit specific types of answers without asking leading questions, or questions that

would only elicit one certain response. Similarly, it was apparent that at times the

participants' responses were not entirely accurate. Based upon the tone of voice and

facial expression while conducting the focus group discussions, it was apparent that some

of the participants were concerned about speaking negatively of their school music

program. Also, it appeared that some students were concerned with the opinions of the

rest of the focus group. If this type of research is to be conducted in the future, one-on-

one interviews may provide a more accurate portrayal of the school music program.

     Further research into student perception of music education programs would be

extremely beneficial. This study merely scratches the surface of this topic. If music

education is truly about the students, as so many educators claim, then more research

must be conducted concerning student opinion and perception. Much insight has been

gained regarding student views and opinions of urban music education programs, but

there is still significant room for more research to be conducted. Additional topics of

research include student preference of music elective courses, student perception of

traditional ensemble offerings, and student perception of after-school or extra-curricular

music offerings.

Application to Music Education

As previously stated, music education is undoubtedly at a tipping point. The divide between teachers and their students is continually widening, and music education programs are only reaching twenty-percent of the total population on average (Williams, 2012). There is great concern among the music education profession about the future of the profession and the need for change. The research presented in this study confirms the need for change, yet the question still remains: Where to begin?

This study suggests that change in music education must begin by addressing the needs of the students. For as long as public music education has existed in America, teachers and educators have insisted that a quality music education is essential for *all* students. If this is true, we as music educators must ensure that each and every child receives this quality education. But how can we separate a quality education from the rest? The answer again lies with the students.

Current students were interviewed to examine their perception of a music education program and its ability to prepare them for lifelong musical engagement. As the results show, students enroll in the music program due mainly to family support and encouragement. Students continued because of quality musical experiences in their school music program. Students who feel prepared for a life filled with music are more likely to continue to enjoy the wonders of music for a lifetime. These facts are simple, yet their meaning to the music education community is not.

If the goal of music education is to provide all students with the necessary tools to become lifelong creators, performers, and consumers of music, then the following changes must be considered. First, urban school music programs must become

community-oriented entities. Students are more likely to enroll in a music program when they are supported by their family. If urban music programs become more visible in the community and reach out to families in their districts, it can only be assumed that these programs will begin to reach a higher population of students.

Finally, urban music programs, and *all* music programs, must focus their instruction on providing quality musical experiences for their students. While family and social factors may influence a student's decision to enroll, the primary factor in retaining students in an urban music program is the quality of musical experiences the students encounter. Competitions, trophies, adjudications, and trips are and will be a significant part of school music programs. That being said, in order for a music program to provide for its students, the focus of a music program must be offering significant musical experiences for all of its constituents. These significant musical experiences will lead to a more effective and influential musical experience for everyone involved, and, as this study shows, will lead to students feeling more prepared for lifelong musical engagement. There are certainly challenges in making these experiences a priority in any music program, and there will most likely be resistance to this type of prioritization. However, the rewards of this effort are worth the struggle. From the beginning of this study, the focus was placed solely on the students. This is where our focus must remain if urban music education programs are to accomplish the goal of all music education: preparing students for lifelong musical engagement.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter

Date:	March 22, 2013
From:	The Office for Research Protections - FWA#: FWA00001534
	Joyel D. Moeller, Compliance Coordinator
To:	Daniel R. Bulgarelli
Re:	Determination of Exemption

IRB Protocol ID:	39929
Follow-up Date:	March 21, 2018
Title of Protocol:	STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN URBAN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM: MUSICAL OFFERINGS AND PREPARATION FOR LIFELONG MUSIC-MAKING

The Office for Research Protections (ORP) has received and reviewed the above referenced eSubmission application. It has been determined that your research is exempt from IRB initial and ongoing review, as currently described in the application. You may begin your research. The category within the federal regulations under which your research is exempt is:

45 CFR 46.101(b)(1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Given that the IRB is not involved in the initial and ongoing review of this research, it is the investigator's responsibility to review IRB Policy III "Exempt Review Process and Determination" which outlines:
- What it means to be exempt and how determinations are made
- What changes to the research protocol are and are not required to be reported to the ORP
- Ongoing actions post-exemption determination including addressing problems and complaints, reporting closed research to the ORP and research audits
- What occurs at the time of follow-up

Please do not hesitate to contact the Office for Research Protections (ORP) if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you for your continued efforts in protecting human participants in research.

This correspondence should be maintained with your research records.

Appendix B

Participant Consent Letter

IRB Participant Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study concerning how high school students in diverse communities view the music program in which they participate, and how this program prepares them for lifelong music making. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: The purpose of this study is to gain greater insight into how students in d communities and school districts perceive the purpose and effectiveness of their respective music programs, with the goal of using this information to improve instruction and effectively advocate for programs in these communities.

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, we will conduct an interview with you. The interview will include questions about your musical involvement, school district, class enrollment, family musical history, musical interests, and musical involvement outside of school. The interview will take between 15 to 30 minutes to complete. With your permission, we would also like to tape-record the interview.

Risks and benefits: There is the risk that you may find some of the questions about your school district, community, or music program conditions to be sensitive. There are no direct benefits to you. We hope to gain valuable information that will aid in the instruction in and advocating for music programs in urban communities.

 Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. If we tape-record the interview, we will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within two months of its taping.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with your school district. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researchers conducting this study are Ryan Bulgarelli and Dr. Darrin Thornton. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ryan Bulgarelli at drb5235@psu.edu or at 1-717-683-3260.If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) by accessing their website at http://www.research.psu.edu/orp/humans. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (if under 18) _____ Date _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____Date _____

Printed name of person obtaining consent _____Date _____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol: Guiding Questions

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF AN URBAN MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM:
MUSICAL OFFERINGS AND PREPARATION FOR LIFELONG MUSIC-MAKING

Interview Questions/Protocol:

Questions for the focus group interview will be asked as follows:

Category 1: Biographical (musical past)

1. What is your first musical memory?

2. What is your favorite musical memory?

3. Did/does anyone else in your family make music in any way?

4. Why did you start playing/singing?

    a. Is this still the reason why you make music?

5. What was your general music class experience like?

6. What was your elementary music experience like?

7. How did these experiences shape your opinion of music in your school?

Category 2: Current State of the Program

1. How have you experienced music in school?

2. What ensembles are offered during the school day?

3. What other music classes are offered during the school day?

4. What ensembles are offered before or after school?

5. What music clubs or groups meet outside of school time?

6. Of the ensembles/classes previously mentioned, which ones do you participate

    in?

7. What styles of music do you play in these various groups?

8. Do you enjoy the music you play in these groups?

9. How do you feel about your participation in _____ ? OR

    What does being in _____ do for you?

10. Why do you still make music/play/sing?

11. If you could request any music class to add, what would you like to see?

12. What would you think about adding….

    a. Rock ensemble?

    b. Mariachi band?

    c. World drumming club?

    d. Hip-Hop/Songwriting class?

Category 3: Future Musical Engagement

1. Do you think you will (play _____, sing, make music) in the future?

    a. Why or why not?

2. Of the music classes you have taken, which of them, if any, do you feel is most

3. relevant to your life outside of school?

4. Do you see yourself making music in the future?

    a. What types of ensembles?

    b. What styles of music?

    c. Traditional or "vernacular" music?

5. Have you ever considered making a career out of music?

6. Have you ever considered studying music in college (after school)?

7. Are the classes you're taking now preparing you for your musical future?

    a. If so, how?

    b. If not, why not?

8. In general, has your schooling prepared you for the rest of your musical life?

Appendix D

Participant Recruitment Documents

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF A MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM:
MUSICAL OFFERINGS AND PREPARATION FOR LIFELONG MUSIC-MAKING

Recruitment Tool

Announcement Script to Recruit Potential Participants
To be read aloud at the beginning or end of classes in which potential participants are enrolled
This memorandum will also be made available in print for students to take home if they desire

ANNOUNCEMENT

Research Study: D. Ryan Bulgarelli, the Pennsylvania State University School of Music

"There is an immediate need for student participants in a research study regarding student perceptions of a music education program; its musical offerings and preparation for life-long music making.

Participants must be currently enrolled in the East Stroudsburg Area School District High School music program and be able to clearly articulate their thoughts about the aforementioned program.

Participants will take part in a brief focus group discussion regarding their high school music program experience. Participants will be asked to answer questions regarding their personal musical history, their current musical participation, and their plans for future musical involvement.

Each participant will be required to attend one interview session. Interviews will be conducted in the East Stroudsburg High School North Band Room and will last no longer than forty five minutes.

There will be no compensation for participation in this study.

For more information regarding this study, or to volunteer to participate in the study, please contact lead researcher Ryan Bulgarelli at 717-683-3260 or drbulgarelli@gmail.com.

Thank you."

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ACADEMIC VITA

D. Ryan Bulgarelli

drb5235@psu.edu

_____

Education

Bachelor's of Music Education, 2013, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Honors and Awards

The Pennsylvania State University School of Music Graduation Marshal

Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Recognition Award for Excellence in Scholarship

Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honor Society

Technology Institute for Music Educators Scholarship, National Leadership Academy Participant

Philip and Eleanor Prutzman Blue Band Scholarship

Kermit and Hassel Hurwitz Blue Band Scholarship

Association Memberships/Activities

Member of:

      National Association for Music Education

      Pennsylvania Music Educators' Association

      Texas Music Educators' Association

      Technology Institute for Music Education

      International Tuba and Euphonium Association

      Pennsylvania State Educators' Association

Professional Teaching Experience

East Stroudsburg Area School District

      East Stroudsburg High School North, High School Band

      JT Lambert Intermediate School, Middle School General Music/Choir

Performance Experience

Senior Euphonium Recital, University Park, PA

International Tuba Euphonium Conference, Linz, Austria

Northeast Regional Tuba Euphonium Conference, New York, NY

International Tuba Euphonium Conference, Tucson, AZ

BBQuartet Chamber Music Recital, University Park, PA

Related Activities

Principal Euphonium, Penn State Symphonic Band, Dennis Glocke, director

Member, Penn State Tuba Euphonium Ensemble, Velvet Brown, director

Member, BBQuartet (tuba/euphonium quartet)

Member, Penn State Marching Blue Band (baritone), Richard Bundy, director

Member, Pride of the Lions Pep Band