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HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC THEORY: PERCEPTIONS OF THE AP MUSIC THEORY EXAM'S
INFLUENCE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

ABIGAIL MARIAN KOEHLER
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Reviewed and approved* by the following:

Eric McKee
Professor of Music Theory
Thesis Supervisor

Linda Thornton
Associate Professor of Music Education
Honors Adviser

* Signatures are on file in the Schreyer Honors College.

ABSTRACT

This research investigates students' experiences with high school music theory courses. Literature on this topic suggests that a large percentage of high school music theory courses focus primarily on drilling students with contrived exercises (Buonviri & Paney, 2014). Teachers often choose activities like sight singing and melodic/harmonic dictation because they are quantifiable assessment opportunities (e.g. Buonviri & Paney, 2014, 2015). In addition, many students take Advanced Placement (AP) Music Theory, a course can focus largely on drilling exercises in order to prepare for the AP Music Theory exam (Klonoski, 2006). This thesis argues that drilling exercises built from contrived musical examples may limit students' growth as musicians.

To collect data for this research, first and second year undergraduate music majors responded to a survey about their experiences in high school music theory classes. The questionnaire consisted of thirty-two questions that addressed the following topics: general teaching strategies, how students prepared for the AP Music Theory Exam (if applicable), and how students prepared to enter college music theory courses. The questionnaire also asked participants how well they thought high school music theory prepared them for college as music majors. Results indicated that high school music theory is taught and experienced in many ways.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In the spring of 2015, 2,483,452 students took Advanced Placement exams (College Board, 2015). Of this total, 18,642 students took the AP music theory exam (College Board, 2015). Many students choose to take these AP courses and AP exams with the hopes of receiving college credits that would lessen the load of their degree requirements (Mattern, Shaw, & Xiong, 2009). While Advanced Placement courses provide opportunities for students to engage in challenging coursework with the potential of receiving college credits, does an AP curriculum really enhance students' learning? Do AP courses provide a worthwhile goal to strive toward? Or do AP courses inhibit student learning by focusing on the content of the exam?

The College Board has not developed a standard AP course curriculum because it wants teachers to build their curriculum around the needs of their students (College Board, 2016a). As a result, AP course curricula need not center around scoring well on the exam. Yet many AP courses may focus on "teaching to the exam." In some subjects, like calculus, this issue is less prevalent because courses must follow a specific sequence in order for students to understand the increasing complexity of the material. However, a music theory course holds different meanings for each instructor depending on his or her past experiences. Therefore, instructors have no clear consensus on what a music theory course should include. As a result, AP music theory courses are more susceptible to focusing on the requirements of the AP exam rather than on content that

would serve the students throughout their entire musical careers, whether or not they choose music as their profession.

In some cases, instructors may find it easier to teach to the AP music theory exam because the test focuses on a select group of activities and skills, and it provides assessment rubrics that are easy to quantify. However, activities and skills that are more difficult to assess (creativity, musicianship, expression, and improvisation) often get overlooked. But scores on the quantifiable activities and skills do not, in many cases, give an accurate representation of a student's musical understanding. For example, a score on a dictation exam only communicates whether or not the student has mastered the skill of taking a dictation exam under prescribed conditions, such as a set number of playings, the keyboard as the only performing medium, the inability to hum, etc. Additionally, the student draws on many musical skills in order to complete a dictation task, such as musical memory, audiation, and pattern recognition that are not individually assessed by dictation activities. In addition to these musical skills, students may be taught to follow a prescribed formula to guide them through dictation exercises that do not employ musical skills that this exercise is supposedly assessing. For instance, instructors teach students that a melodic dictation melody often ends on tonic, so a student can use his knowledge of key signatures to figure out the tonic pitch (or at least narrow the tonic pitch down to the tonic pitches of both the major and minor mode for that key) before even hearing the melody once. Therefore, contrived activities such as dictation involve the use of a wide range of skills, some musical and some non-musical, that are not individually assessed by the AP exam.

Though these skills are important to master, they are not the essence of music theory. Music theory is using a person's knowledge of musical repertoire (i.e., genres, styles, historical periods, etc.), musical elements (i.e., intervals, chords, scales, cadences, etc.), and musical syntax

(principles and preferences governing music) to understand a piece of music as a whole within its aesthetic and cultural context. However, the literature suggests that AP Music Theory courses rarely teach students to synthesize their knowledge of repertoire, elements, and syntax for understanding musical meaning. Instead, these courses tend to focus on drilling students with ear training, sight singing, and dictation examples in preparation for the AP exam (Domeck 1997; Buonviri & Paney 2014, 2015).

Rationale

An underlying tenet of this thesis is that students would be better served if high school theory courses focus on teaching students to understand the music that they encounter in broader and more authentic contexts. Students, whether future music majors or not, will encounter music in a multitude of settings throughout their entire lives. A music theory course should give students the skills to analyze and understand the music that they hear in all settings. Most applicable to a student's musical life is the ability to hear and identify a particular musical element and understand what it means in the given musical setting.

For instance, in a traditional large ensemble performance setting (i.e., concert band, orchestra, or choir), students may hear a perfect authentic cadence, and discern which chord member they are playing and whether or not they must adjust their intonation to fit in with the rest of the chord members. The students can also reflect on the formal function of that cadence within the context of the piece and within a broader repertoire of similar works. In other words,

how does the cadence conform to convention, and how does it represent the unique style of the composer?

Furthermore, students need to develop sight singing and dictation skills for settings beyond the traditional performance settings. In other musical contexts music is often taught by rote, but AP music theory courses often focus on teaching the students to read and understand music notation. In band, orchestra, and choir settings, written notation is extremely important because students use it to learn the music. However, at some point in a musician's life, he may encounter a situation where he does not have written music notation. For example, many pop songs are not notated for band and orchestra instruments, so students must either learn them by rote or by transcribing the music into a form of written notation. In addition, traditional folk music may be passed down through the generations orally/aurally rather than written down. When students develop their sight singing and dictation skills in real musical contexts, they are also preparing to learn music in a variety of settings with and without the use of Western notation.

The literature suggests that AP music theory courses often focus on developing students' aural skills through sight singing and dictation activities (Lucia 1993; Domeck 1997; Buonviri & Paney 2014, 2015; Klonoski 2006). While these activities are in themselves useful activities, they often substitute contrived examples in place of real, musical contexts. In order for students to develop their ability to analyze and understand music, they need to be taught within the context of real music. Within this context, students will develop their aural skills while also gaining a greater understanding of the aesthetic and cultural values of music.

Rather than teaching to a test, this thesis argues that AP music theory should strive to develop the skills necessary to understand a piece of music in any situation. Courses should

focus on developing students' aural skills within the context of real musical examples. The use of real music fosters a personal and emotional connection to the music. This kind of engagement encourages a lifelong curiosity and passion for music. In addition, the use of real musical contexts allows students to identify the genre, elements, and syntax of the music in a practical setting. This practice applies more directly to their musical lives than the contrived settings of a dictation exam. The ultimate mission of music theory is to give students a place to develop their understanding of musical genres, elements, and syntax that will allow them to be cognizant musicians, consumers, and patrons of music for the rest of their lives.

The following chapter presents a literature review of the most relevant literature to the topic. Chapter Three discusses the AP exam content and National Association for Music Education (NAfME) national standards in music theory/composition. Chapter Four summarizes an interview with an AP exam grader, and Chapter Five describes the methodology used to complete this study. Finally, Chapters Six and Seven discuss the results and conclusions respectively.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There is very limited literature on high school music theory pedagogy or AP music theory. The existing literature is rather divided. Some authors advocate for drilling and practicing musical skills and favor standardizing the processes that teachers use to teach various skills (such as melodic dictation). Alternatively, some authors believe that the excessive drilling prevents students from developing their musicianship in practical ways that will benefit them in real musical contexts beyond the AP music theory exam.

Lucia 1993

Raymond Lucia advocates for high schools to incorporate an AP music theory course into their offerings because it provides many opportunities to enhance students' musical development. Lucia points out that there is no written AP music theory curriculum because the College Board does not want teachers to teach to the test. However, Lucia's first suggestion is for instructors to look at previous years' AP exams in order to develop their own AP music theory curriculum. This use of AP exams as a reference can result in theory curricula based on the AP exam.

Lucia's article gives some insight into how AP music theory curricula have taken shape over the years. Though every curriculum is unique, Lucia outlines the main activities that AP music theory courses generally focus on: sight singing, rhythmic dictation, melodic dictation,

harmonic dictation, mistake identification, and part writing. Lucia includes these activities because they are the ones tested on the AP music theory exam. In doing so, he takes an atomistic approach: students complete these activities by looking at the parts in order to create a whole. For instance, Lucia builds a melodic dictation example that focuses on major thirds in order to train students' ears to the sound of a major third. Lucia describes a specific example from a previous AP exam:

Students might be presented with an excerpt from a Beethoven string quartet and asked: "What is the harmonic progression of the first four measures? What type of phrase period is formed by the first two phrases? What type of modality is present in this excerpt?" (Lucia, 1993, pg. 39)

Though this example requires students to apply their listening skills to a real piece of music, Lucia continues to use contrived listening examples in his classroom.

Domeck 1997

Richard Domeck recognizes the issue of inconsistency among the music theory skills of first year college students. He stresses the importance of developing aural skills as early as possible in order to prepare both music majors and non-music majors for the musical tasks that they will engage in throughout their lives. As a result, Domeck develops a series of drills to aid students in developing these aural skills. This teaching method clearly exemplifies a pedagogical approach to teaching music theory that has become common practice in high schools: Teachers choose isolated skills and repeatedly drill the students in order to acquire mastery of that skill. Like Lucia (1993) these drills are taken out of a real musical context. All of the drills are short so that teachers can easily grade the students and use them in minimal windows of time. The

drills require the students to either sing, notate what they hear, or identify errors that they hear.

For example, in the first drill Domeck provides, the teacher writes a scale on the board. After the students' ears have been oriented to the key of the scale, the teacher points to each note in the scale while the students sing it back. The teacher can point to the notes in any order he wishes, which can give the drill increasing difficulty as the students' aural skills improve. Another drill has the teacher write a rhythm pattern of one-beat units (a quarter note, two eighth notes, an eighth note triplet, etc.) on the board. Then the teacher plays different rhythm patterns using the same one-beat units of rhythm from the original pattern, and the students must notate the new patterns.

Though Domeck does not make a specific reference to AP music theory in his article, these drills (sight singing, dictation, and error detection) are the same categories of drills that are used in AP music theory courses in order to develop students' aural skills and prepare them for the AP exam.

Buonviri and Paney 2014

Nathan Buonviri and Andrew Paney interviewed 12 in-service AP music theory teachers in order to learn about teaching methods they use for melodic dictation. As a result, they found many strategies that, according to the teachers interviewed, are effective in successfully completing melodic dictation examples. However, this study also found that teachers intentionally design their courses in order to teach to the AP music theory test. One participant said "We live in a testing world, and it's sad because it thwarts creativity" (Buonviri & Paney, 2014, pg. 12). Yet every participant, including the one quoted, indicated that "Preparation for the AP Exam was the strongest influence on [his/her] course design" (Buonviri & Paney, 2014, pg. 11).

Buonviri and Paney 2015

Buonviri and Paney followed up on their 2014 study by surveying in-service AP music theory teachers about the specific teaching tools and techniques they used to teach melodic dictation. This study identified many effective strategies for teaching melodic dictation, but like the previous study, it continued to focus on teaching to the AP exam. The investigators found that many AP music theory teachers develop their own classroom materials, resulting in a variety of methods. In order to decrease the number of methods, this study argues that a more standardized melodic dictation pedagogy will better prepare students for the AP music theory exam and for college aural skills training. According to Buonviri and Paney standardization is achieved by identifying best practices for teaching melodic dictation and disseminating these strategies to teachers. Though standardization may allow for the dissemination of best practices in teaching melodic dictation, it may also remove opportunities for creative learning and teaching; and it keeps the focus of aural skills development on successful completion of the AP exam.

Klonoski 2006

In contrast to the previous researchers, Edward Klonoski states that the goal of aural skills development is “to teach students to integrate the various musical components of real compositions into a meaningful, informed listening experience” (Klonoski, 2006, pg. 56). Klonoski points out that the common practices in teaching melodic dictation focus on the parts (intervals, rhythms, etc.) rather than the whole (a section or entire piece of music). Furthermore, Klonoski believes that melodic dictation does not pinpoint the exact skill in which a student is

lacking. Dictation requires the synthesis of multiple listening skills, and a mistake(s) on a dictation assessment, while easy to grade, does little to indicate to the student or the teacher which of the listening skills he is lacking. Klonoski argues that AP music theory courses should focus on teaching students how to develop their critical-listening skills, ones that allow musicians to understand the music while they listen. These skills include subvocalization, meter identification, key context, harmony, tonal memory, and extractive listening.

Klonoski believes that the best way to develop these skills is in the context of real musical examples. Though real music often involves a complex synthesis of melody, harmony, dynamics, and phrasing, one skill should be focused on at a time. For example, Klonoski identifies a 13-step process for developing the skill of meter identification. He begins by having the students clap a steady beat, which he follows with various other clapping activities, like alternating between subdividing in a simple or compound meter. Next, he plays a recording, and has the students engage in the same clapping activities that they used prior to the recording. After the students have had the opportunity to experiment with different metrical accents and subdivisions, they can identify the meter. During this activity, students solely focus on meter identification, but they are able to do so in the context of a real musical piece. This musical context forces the students to consider multiple musical elements, like the meter of the melody, harmonic rhythm, and patterns of accentuation. Students are therefore able to develop their meter identification skills in a practical way. Klonoski advocates for this method because it develops students' listening skills for use in real musical situations rather than contrived situations that a student encounters on the AP exam.

Boyle and Lucas 1990

David Boyle and Keith Lucas conducted a study entitled “The Effects of Context on Sightsinging” (1990). Literature written prior to this study has many different suggestions on how to develop sight singing skills. A major theme emerges from this literature: “context may influence sight singing performance” (Boyle & Lucas, 1990, pg. 3). In this study, undergraduate music majors each sang eight unfamiliar melodies twice. One time with accompaniment and one time without accompaniment. Half of the participants sang the accompanied melody first and the other half sang the non-accompanied melody first. The study found that tonal harmony does improve sight singing performance. It also found that the better a student is at sight singing, the less that student must rely on the harmonic accompaniment. As a result, harmonic accompaniments can make a large difference in the performance of a student whose sight singing skills are not well developed.

Boyle and Lucas conducted this study with the practical application of choral singing in mind. The researchers discuss the importance of sight singing in a choral rehearsal to enhance the learning of choral music, and overall, to enhance the students’ experiences with choral music. A music theory class can also improve a student’s aural skills by using accompanied examples. Subsequently, this improvement can help students gain a greater connection to music. Further, instead of using a contrived melody and accompaniment, a music theory instructor can use melodies from standard repertoire as sight singing examples. The student will then have the opportunity to connect to the music while simultaneously developing his aural skills.

Colwell 1990

Richard Colwell focuses on the many advantages of an AP music theory course in his article “Advanced Placement - More Than a Test” (1990). The article focuses primarily on the extra-musical benefits of including an AP music theory course: it can assist a student as he chooses his future career path, it can prepare future music majors for college music theory, or it can help a non-music major receive arts credits for his general education requirements. These are very important purposes of an AP music theory course that an instructor must keep in mind while building the curriculum, but Colwell emphasizes that the real “educational objective is to enable students to apply what they have experienced in ensembles, to understand music at a deeper level, and to discover those inner secrets of music that excite you and me” (Colwell, 1990, pg. 2). In order to achieve those goals, instructors should teach beyond the parameters of the AP exam.

Colwell also mentions some of the skills that are tested on the AP exam:

Composition of a melody that has a specific scale basis, contour and phrase constructions, the analysis of music including the study of motive treatment and the rhythmic and melodic interaction between voices, harmonic analysis of the functional chord passage, and the realization of a figured bass. (Colwell, 1990, pg. 6)

Students should learn these skills for both the AP exam and for practical use in their musical lives, and all of these skills can be taught within the context of real musical examples. To further emphasize the point of teaching beyond the AP exam, Colwell believes that AP music theory “courses can be invaluable endeavors in which the students attain their personal goals without either taking the examination or obtaining a high grade on it” (Colwell, 1990, pg. 3). Though Colwell believes in the importance of extra-musical benefits of offering an AP music theory

course, he also emphasizes that one of these courses can provide much more for the students than a score on a single exam.

Summary

The literature presented is divided between those authors who support of an atomistic approach and those in support of a music theory education that is based upon real, musical examples. Lucia (1993) and Domeck (1997) have outlined some of the techniques that they used to help students develop their aural skills with an atomistic approach that uses contrived examples. Buonviri and Paney's (2014 & 2105) studies have shown that teachers still use this atomistic approach as they focus their curriculum around preparing for the AP exam. However, Klonoski (2006) presents another option: teaching students within the context of real musical examples so that they can develop practical, musical skills that will aid them in multiple musical settings. Boyle and Lucas (1990) and Colwell (1990) both present arguments in support of Klonoski's teaching method. Boyle and Lucas (1990) show the importance of a musical context when developing sight singing skills, and Colwell (1990) identifies reasons for teaching music theory beyond scoring highly on the AP exam. While an atomistic approach may be more popular, the experiences of Klonoski, Boyle and Lucas, and Colwell show that developing practical, musical skills and teaching students within a real musical context will give students a greater understanding of music, enhancing their overall engagement and connection to the music.

Contribution to the Literature

Researchers have studied different facets of aural skills development in both high school and college music theory classes. These studies typically focus on the methods that teachers

employ to teach different skills like sight singing, dictation, etc. Yet few researchers have studied the teaching methods used for written music theory, such as Roman numeral or form analysis. In addition, researchers have not studied the ways in which music theory helps students develop their creativity and broader understanding of music. Finally, researchers have not studied how a high school music theory course prepares its students for musical settings throughout their life. This thesis will provide insight into the teaching methods used to develop aural and written music theory skills by instructors who teach in a particular geographic region. Overall, the majority of these particular instructors use a more holistic approach that includes real musical examples in their teaching. This thesis also discusses students' perceptions of how their music theory class has developed their creativity and prepared them for musical settings beyond high school. The results indicate that teachers use a more holistic approach that involves the context of real musical examples and prepares students to be creative musicians and successful college music theory students.

Chapter 3

Review of Related Information

AP Exam Content

The AP music theory exam contains two sections: The multiple choice section (45%) and the free-response section (55%). The free-response section is split into two subsections: written exercises (45%) and sight singing (10%) (College Board, 2016b).

Multiple Choice Section

The multiple choice section has approximately 75 questions and has an 80-minute time limit. It is made up of two different types of questions: aural stimulus questions and non-aural stimulus questions. Many of the aural stimulus questions use musical examples drawn from classical repertoire. Some questions cover aural skills, such as melodic dictation and isolated pitch and rhythmic pattern identification. Others focus on score reading. The non-aural stimulus questions focus on elements of score reading. Questions include terminology, music notation, basic composition principles, harmonic analysis, melodic organization and developmental procedures, rhythmic/metric organization, and texture (College Board, 2016b).

Samples of the multiple choice section from previous exams are unavailable. However, the 2012 Music Theory Course Description provides 54 sample multiple choice questions. This sample is shorter than the multiple choice section of the actual exam (75 questions), so it is difficult to predict the exact percentages of questions in each category on the real exam. But

from the provided examples in the course description, one can see that aural stimulus questions make up 59% of the multiple choice section whereas 41% is made up of non-aural stimulus questions. Of the aural stimulus questions, 19% are contrived listening examples, and the remaining 81% are questions about classical repertoire. Of the non-aural stimulus questions, 53% are contrived musical examples, and 47% are questions about classical repertoire.

Free-Response Section

Of the free-response section, completion of the written exercises has a 70-minute time limit. There are seven questions: two for melodic dictation, two for harmonic dictation, one for part-writing from figured bass, one for part-writing from Roman numerals, and one for composing a bass line (College Board, 2016b). Each of the melodic dictation examples are played three times with a 30-second pause after the first playing and a one-minute pause after each subsequent playing. The directions also indicate which instrument will play the melody. The harmonic dictation examples are played four times each with a 30-second pause after the first playing and a one-minute pause after each subsequent playing. The students must notate only the soprano and bass voices, and they must provide the Roman numeral analysis (College Board, 2012). The two sight singing examples are expected to take about 10 minutes to complete. Each melody is primarily diatonic and is typically four to eight measures long. The student has 75 seconds to examine and practice each melody and then 30 seconds to perform it. The student can begin the melody using the given starting pitch or another pitch in a range that is more comfortable (College Board, 2016b).

The free-response section of the exam is made up of nine questions (seven written and two sight singing). 67% of those questions (dictation and sight singing) are contrived aural

examples, and 33% of those questions (part-writing/bass line composition) are contrived non-aural examples.

Summary

After examining both the AP music theory exam description (2016b) and the Music Theory Course Description (2012), it is apparent that the majority of the exam focuses on aural skills. The Music Theory Course Description briefly outlines basic goals for an AP music theory course, but it does not provide a full curriculum for the course. For example, the course description lists the development of the following skills as the main goal of the course: “aural skills, sight-singing skills, written skills, compositional skills, and analytical skills” (College Board, 2012). The course description also mentions concepts that should be covered: “pitches, intervals, scales and keys, chords, meter, and rhythm” (College Board, 2012). Finally, it lists suggested activities to aid the development and knowledge of the skills and concepts previously mentioned. For instance, the course description suggests using melodic and harmonic dictation to develop aural skills. The section of the course description that outlines these characteristics is about two pages long. The remainder of the document outlined the content of the AP exam and provides many practice questions for the exam.

The course description provided me with an example of an AP exam, and I was able to draw some conclusions about the content of the exam. Fifty-nine percent of the multiple choice examples in the 2012 course description are aural stimulus questions in addition to the 67% of the free-response that focuses on questions requiring aural skills. Therefore, over half of each section focuses on aural skills. In addition, many of the questions on the exam are contrived. The majority (53%) of the non-aural stimulus questions were contrived examples, and all (100%)

of the free-response questions were contrived. The only section that used primarily classical repertoire (81%) was the aural stimulus section of the multiple choice section. Though a large part of the aural stimulus section uses questions about classical repertoire, the free-response section is weighted more heavily on the exam. Therefore, aural skills development is very important for success on the exam. To succeed on the exam, a student needs practice with both questions about classical repertoire and contrived examples modeled after ones used in the exam.

NAfME Music Theory and Composition National Standards

The National Association for Music Education (NAfME) published a new set of national standards in 2014. These new standards apply to both music theory and composition courses. The four areas that make up the 2014 standards are creating, performing, responding, and connecting. Each area has subcategories that focus on one essential question, and each subcategory has a description for proficient, accomplished, and advanced work in that particular subcategory.

Creating

One of the subcategories under “Creating” is “Imagine,” and the corresponding essential question is “How do musicians generate creative ideas?” (NAfME, 2014). Another subcategory is Plan and Make and the essential question is “How do musicians make creative decisions?” (NAfME, 2014). There are two more subcategories under create: Evaluate & Refine and Present. The entire “Creating” section focuses on how musical sounds can be expressed, organized, evaluated, improved, and shared.

Performing

“Performing” has five subcategories: “Select,” “Analyze,” “Interpret,” “Rehearse, Evaluate & Refine,” and “Present.” For example, the essential question for “Rehearse, Evaluate & Refine” is “How do musicians improve the quality of their performance?” (NAfME, 2014). The standards in the Performing section encourage students to select music based on their personal experiences and tastes and to analyze music in order to inform their performance.

Responding

“Responding” has four subcategories: “Select,” “Analyze,” “Interpret,” and “Evaluate.” For example, the essential question for “Analyze” is “How does understanding the structure and context of music inform a response?” (NAfME, 2014).

Connecting

The “Connecting” section is split into two halves, each titled “Connect.” Its two essential questions are, “How do musicians make meaningful connections to creating, performing, and responding?” and “How do the other arts, other disciplines, contexts and daily life inform creating, performing, and responding to music?” (NAfME, 2014).

Summary

These standards present a framework for music theory teachers when developing a curriculum for their courses. The categories and subcategories both promote critical thinking and learning within a real musical context. The results of this study can be examined through the lens of the national standards in order to consider which areas of the standards are addressed

often and which are not. Examining the results in this way can provide suggestions for the improvement of music theory courses.

Chapter 4

Interview

Description

In order to gain insight into the opinions of someone who works closely with AP music theory, I interviewed Dr. Vincent Benitez, associate professor of music theory at Penn State University. Benitez has been on faculty at Penn State since 2005, and he has been an AP music theory exam grader for seven years. The interview took place in his office in the Penn State School of Music on September 9, 2016.

Summary

My interview questions focused on how the AP music theory curriculum prepares students for college music theory and for musical settings beyond high school. Benitez stressed the fact that he is not involved in AP music theory courses or their curriculum, but he still sees the results of what the students have learned in class.

Overall, Benitez believes that the AP exam reflects a good level of knowledge for a student entering a college music theory course. Even though a college level course will go far beyond the reach of an AP music theory course, a student will definitely be prepared to take college music theory after passing AP music theory. Further, Benitez believes that a good score on the AP music theory exam can predict that a student will do well in college music theory. He also raised the point that students should not be judged poorly based on a bad score on the AP exam. The AP exam is only a snapshot of the student's knowledge and it is not the sole indicator of whether or not a student will be successful in their future music theory courses.

Benitez believes that the overarching goals of the AP exam prepare students for musical settings after high school; however, he thinks that the AP curriculum/exam encourages a focus on drilling exercises. He mentioned that currently a discussion is ensuing within the field of higher music education about whether or not university music programs should move away from the traditional conservatory setting. Benitez thinks that a departure from the conservatory setting would free college and university music programs from an intense focus on drilling exercises (such as sight singing and dictation), and this change would trickle down to high school music theory. In addition, Benitez supports the use of real musical examples rather than contrived examples and that these real examples should be used to teach harmony. In other words, in order to avoid teaching to the test, teachers can use the musical literature itself to teach harmony.

Benitez strongly believes that the goal of music theory should be for the students to master the subject matter and for the teacher to impart his love of the subject matter to the students. If the teacher and students accomplish these goals, then the students should be prepared to pass the AP exam, take college music theory, or participate in musical settings throughout their lives. He also points out the lack of discussion of the aesthetics of music in music theory courses. The sole purpose of music theory is not to analyze musical structure; the purpose of analyzing music is “for the expression of beauty.” Students need to discuss this side of music in addition to the nuts and bolts of how its structured.

When asked how the AP music theory curriculum/exam promotes critical thinking, Benitez mentioned the creativity that he sees when grading the harmonic dictation and two-part counterpoint exercises. One draw-back with this section of the test is that it relies on contrived examples. However, the students often compose beautiful counterpoint against the given line within chromatic contexts. “There is creativity there.”

Benitez suggests that AP music theory teachers should avoid teaching to the test and focus on helping the students master the subject matter. Furthermore, he believes students should consistently listen to music if they are serious about studying it. Benitez states that he has seen a decline in the amount that his college students who listen to the music that they study, and he believes that it negatively affects their progress. In order for listening to be as helpful as possible, teachers must also teach the students to listen critically so that they understand the music that they hear. To sum up his response Benitez touched on the importance of intrinsic motivation, and he said, “teachers should teach their students that music is a way of life.”

Finally, I asked Benitez to share his own definition of music theory. He points out that, in most universities, music theory courses teach harmony, counterpoint, aural skills, etc. yet these topics are not the essence of music theory. They are a foundation of basic skills and knowledge that every musician should own. He sees “real” music theory as having both a practical and an abstract side. The practical side of music theory involves studying music to inform and improve performance. The abstract side involves studying music for its aesthetic value, and Benitez argues that knowledge for knowledge’s sake is also important in that it allows for thought and speculation.

My interview with Benitez greatly informed my opinion on the value of AP music theory courses. I had always viewed AP music theory courses as settings where students learned strategies for how to pass a test. Contrastingly, Benitez’s experiences show that AP music theory courses can certainly teach students practical skills and critical thinking that will benefit them throughout their musical lives as long as the course focuses on the music itself.

Chapter 5

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the ways that high school music theory courses prepare students beyond taking the AP exam. This study looked at the teaching methods employed by high school music theory instructors in both aural skills and written theory, it researched student preparedness for both the AP exam and for college music theory, and it asked students about the way that their high school theory courses prepared them for future musical settings.

The research questions were:

1. Is music theory offered to all students, and what types of music theory courses are offered?
2. Are students typically more prepared for written or aural music theory when they begin taking college music theory?
3. What is the most effective instructional environment for teaching music theory?
4. How do high school music theory instructors use real musical examples in their teaching?
5. How can a high school music theory course prepare students for college music theory?
6. Does the AP music theory exam enhance or inhibit the AP music theory curriculum?

Participants

I chose to survey a convenience sample of first and second year music theory students at Penn State University. These students were also encouraged to send the survey to their colleagues who took high school music theory but chose to attend a different college or university. I approached Penn State students because I was able to explain the survey and its purposes in person. I limited the survey participants to first and second year students because their experiences with high school music theory occurred more recently than those of the upperclassmen.

I attended the music theory classes of the participants and described the purposes and procedures of the survey. Students who were under the age of 18 at the time of the survey were unable to participate due to their inability to consent to the survey without a legal parent or guardian present. Students who took high school music theory outside of the United States of America were also unable to take the survey because I wanted to focus on the teaching methods employed in American schools that are intended to prepare students for American colleges and universities.

Survey Design

I designed the survey based upon the literature and the research questions. The survey contained four sections. The first section provided information about the study, to allow participants to consent to participating in the survey. The following three sections focused on information regarding the research questions.

The second section asked for background information about the participant's high school music theory class (whether it was AP music theory or non-AP music theory). This section

asked if the students are music majors, music minors, or neither. It also asked about what kind of music theory courses were offered in the school, which one(s) the participant took, and whether or not the participant took the AP exam. Section two inquired about the teaching techniques used in the class and which techniques the participants preferred.

Section three asked specifically about the AP music theory exam. Participants who did not take the exam wrote N/A for the majority of the answers, but they were still invited to answer a few questions about their opinion on the purpose of AP music theory courses. This section focused on how participants were prepared to take the exam and whether or not they believe that preparing for a culminating exam enhanced or hindered their learning.

The final section asked about participants' preparedness to enter a college music theory course and/or musical settings that they encounter after high school. Questions included how the participants' music theory classes prepared them for college and whether or not the AP curriculum/exam preparation enhanced their preparation. The survey also asked for ways that high school music theory courses can improve, and the last question prompted the students to define music theory. See Appendices A and B for the first and second versions of the survey.

Procedures

Pilot Study

I wrote a draft of the survey in the middle of the Spring 2016 semester and visited the first and second year music theory classes a few weeks before the end of the semester to describe the purpose and details of the survey. After explaining the survey and answering any questions, I sent an email to the participants reiterating the discussion we had in class with the link to the Google Forms survey attached. The majority of the questions were open ended, short answer

questions, and I estimated that it would take about thirty minutes to complete. The pilot was sent out to approximately 70 potential participants, and I received 54 responses.

Main Study

After reading the responses of the pilot survey, I realized that many of the questions were somewhat unclear, and the participants did not interpret them in the same way. As a result, I made some changes to the questions and the format of the pilot study to create the main study. The majority of the questions stayed the same; however, I removed a few questions and added a few more in their place. For example, I removed the questions “In what ways did your music theory class make you curious about music?” and “How did your music theory class help you discover answers for your questions/curiosities?” Questions like these were moved because many of the participants chose not to answer these questions, and the answers that I did receive to these questions were so diverse that I could not draw any conclusions from them. I also restructured many questions that were originally short answer questions so that they could be multiple choice questions, which would make the participant responses more consistent. Eleven questions remained short answer questions.

The following semester (Fall 2016), I visited the music theory class of the new class of first year music majors and explained the purpose and details of the survey. After the discussion, I answered questions, and sent the potential participants an email through their music theory course list-serv. This email also reiterated the discussion we had in class, and it provided the link to the Google Forms survey. I chose to use Google Forms because it allowed the participants to complete the survey when it was convenient for them. Google Forms also organized the collected data into a spread sheet which made analysis of the results convenient.

The main survey was sent to approximately 22 students, and I received 17 responses. I distributed the survey on September 9, 2016, and it remained open until October 14, 2016.

Data Analysis

Both the pilot survey and the main study asked questions that required an open-ended response in addition to questions that only required the participants to select options from a list. Some multiple choice questions only allowed for one response, whereas others allowed the participants to select all answers that applied to the question. Most multiple choice questions also had the option “Other” listed so that participants could write in their own response if it was not listed as one of the options.

For analysis of the multiple choice questions, I used the graphs that were automatically generated through Google Forms. These graphs show the total number of responses in addition to the percentage of participants out of the total number of participants who responded with the same answer for each question. Though Google Forms provided a total number of responses for each question, I often had to adjust the total due to participants indicating “N/A” or “not-applicable” for some the questions. I did not count any “N/A” responses in my percent calculations.

For the questions that allowed participants to choose more than one option, I counted the number of responses for each option. Then I took the percent of responses for that option from the total number of participants who responded to that question. Since participants were able to answer more than one, the percentage totals for these types of questions are over 100%.

For the open-ended questions, I looked for similar answers among the responses, and then I divided them into categories. I also had one of my peers categorize the answers to five of

the questions in order to prevent any interpretive bias on my part. For one of the questions, our categorization was 100% the same. For the other four questions, our categorization differed by 14%, 23%, 25%, and 28%. In order to resolve this problem, we discussed our answers and together decided on the ultimate category for each of the answers that we had not originally agreed upon. Once the responses were categorized, I took the percentage of responses for each category from the total number of responses.

Chapter 6

Results

Response Counts

For the pilot survey, I reached out to approximately 70 students. All were first and second year music majors. I received 53 responses out of seventy possible responses, which is a 75.7% response rate. For the main study, I was unable to reach out to the same students from the pilot study, so I only contacted twenty-one first year students. I received 17 responses out of 21 possible responses, which resulted in an 81% response rate. The students were encouraged to share the survey among their peers who had taken music theory in high school. As a result, some responses may have been from students who do not attend Penn State University. Almost all of the students who responded are majoring in some form of music degree; however, three non-music majors participated in the pilot survey.

Analysis of Responses to the Survey

Pilot Study

Background Information

The beginning of the survey asked for background information about the participant and the participant's high school music theory class. The pilot survey was available to both first and second year students. The first question asked about the participants' year in school and major. Out of 52 responses, 25 participants (48.1%) were first year students, 25 participants (48.1%)

were second year students, and two participants (3.8%) indicated other because they are third year students, but it was still their second year as a music major. Furthermore, out of 51 responses, 49 participants (96%) were music majors, one participant (2%) was not a music major, and one participant (2%) was a music minor.

Of the 51 responses, 31 participants (60.8%) took an AP music theory course, and twenty participants (39.2%) took a non-AP music theory course. The fourth question asked about the types of music theory courses offered at the participants' high schools, which can be seen in the graph below (see Figure 1). Participants were able to select more than one option, resulting in percentages totaling more than 100%.

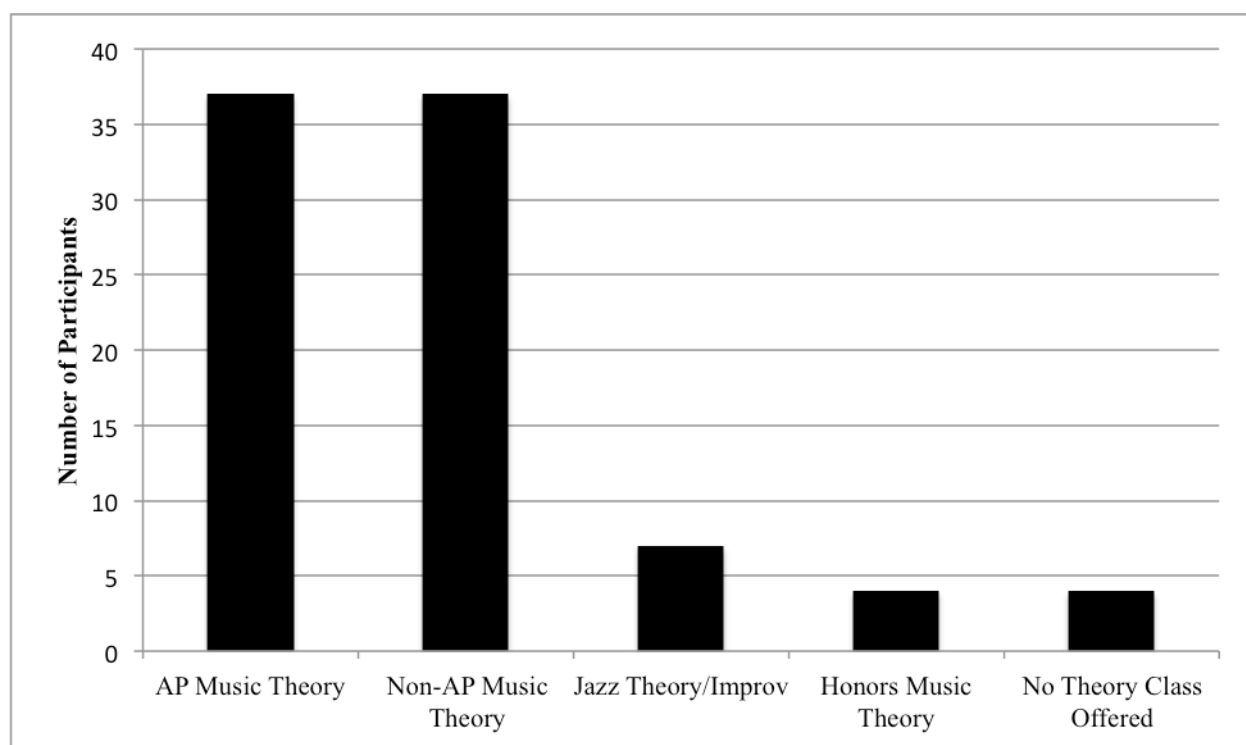


Figure 1. Music Theory Course Offerings

The majority (33 participants; 63.5%) of the total participants (52) took music theory for one year. Eight participants (15.4%) took music theory for two years, three participants (5.8%)

took music theory for three years, and three participants (5.8%) took theory for four years. Five participants (9.6%) indicated “other” and gave a variety of responses: One participant took music theory for three months, one took theory for eight weeks at a summer camp, one took AP music theory for one year in addition to two years of jazz improvisation, one took theory for one and half years, and one took AP music theory twice because he/she failed the course the first time.

The participants were asked which of the following areas were stressed in their theory courses, and they were able to select more than one option: aural skills, written theory, AP exam preparation, composition, and other (see Figure 2).

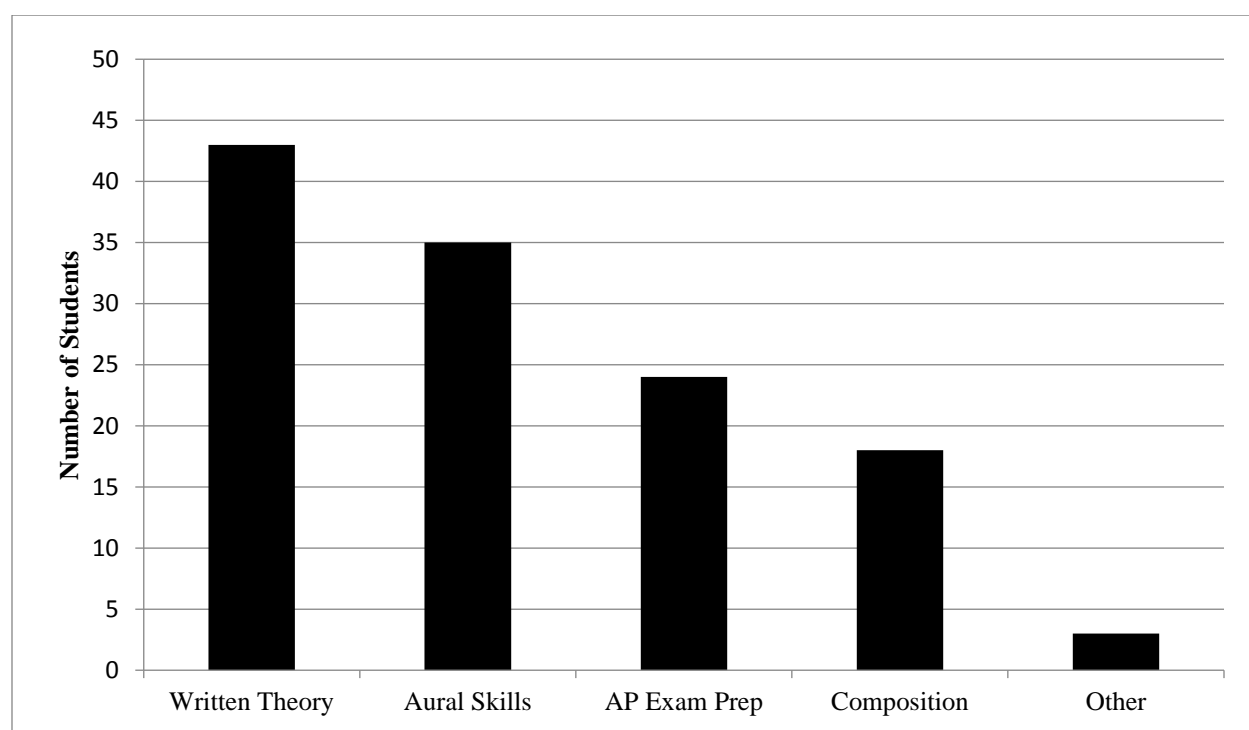


Figure 2. Course Topics

Of the participants who selected other, one participant filled in “learning jazz standards and performing them,” another wrote “composition plus a general overview,” and the last

participant wrote “Aural skills, Written theory, and Music History.” Out of the 51 responses, ten participants (19.6%) selected only one option for this question. Five of these ten participants (50%) selected AP exam preparation alone, four participants (40%) selected written theory, and one (1%) selected aural skills.

Next, the participants were asked about the instructional techniques that were used in their theory class, and they were able to select more than one answer: 42 participants (81%) indicated that a lecture format was used in their class, 38 participants (73.1%) indicated that individual work was used, 35 participants (67.3%) indicated that small group work was used, and five participants (9.6%) indicated “other.” Of the “other” responses, one participant indicated that his/her course used cyber work, and one participant indicated that his/her course required the students to give presentations in addition to using the three instructional environments listed above. Three participants wrote that their classes were based around class discussion due to the small number of students in the class. Of the 52 responses, 39 participants (75%) indicated the use of two or more instructional environments, and 26 participants (50%) indicated the use of three or more instructional environments. The participants were also asked to select one instructional environment that was most effective (see Figure 3).

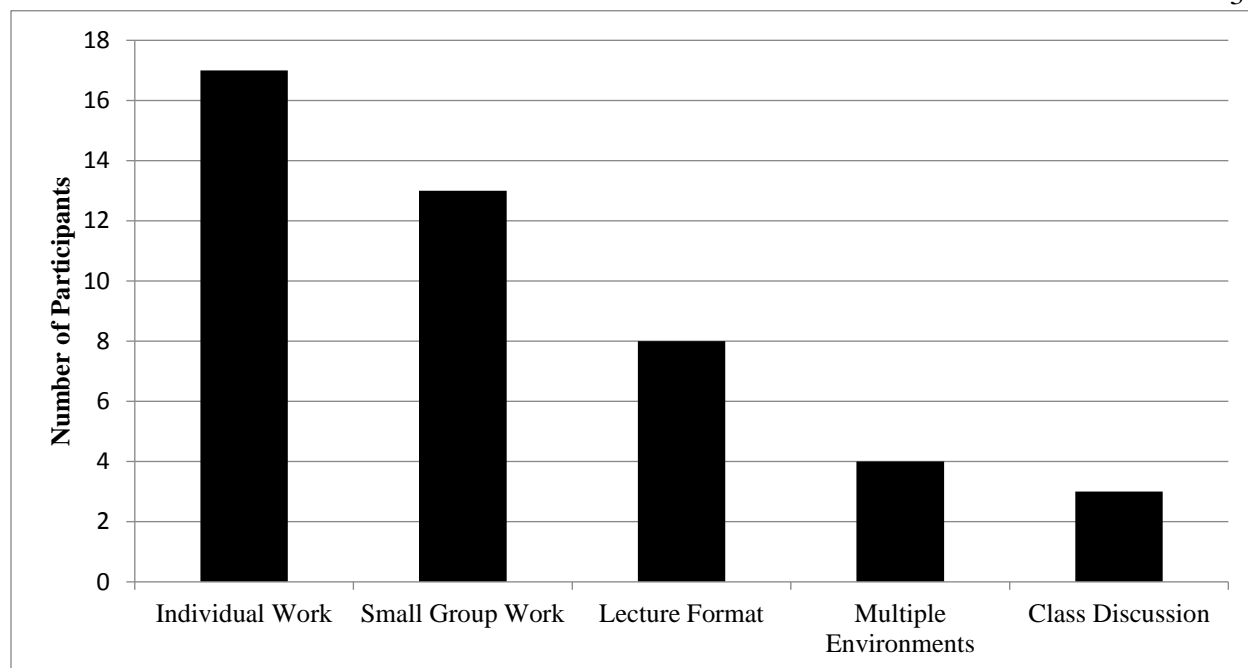


Figure 3. Most Effective Learning Environment

AP Music Theory

Of the 31 participants who took an AP music theory course, 21 (67.7%) responded about their degree of preparation prior to taking the AP exam. Twelve participants (57.1%) said that they felt prepared before taking the exam, six participants (28.6%) said that they did not feel prepared, and three participants (14.3%) said that they felt prepared in some areas. The participants were asked about the preparation technique that prepared them the most for the AP exam (two participants provided two answers). Six participants (28.6%) completed practice exams to prepare, and six participants practiced aural skills. Three participants took courses that were designed specifically to prepare the students for the AP exam, so their entire course prepared them. Three participants practice materials developed by the College Board. Two participants said that written theory was the most helpful way that they prepared, and two students said that composition was most helpful. One participant sighted the end-of-year review

of the course material as most effective, while one other participant said that his/her independent practice was most helpful. One participant said online resources as most helpful, and another said group work was most effective.

Next, the participants were asked if they felt that their AP exam score correctly reflected their knowledge of music theory at the time of the exam. Out of 26 responses, 17 participants (65.4%) said yes, they felt that their score correctly reflected their knowledge of music theory at the time of the exam. Nine participants (34.6%) said that their score on the AP exam did not correctly reflect their knowledge of music theory at the time of the exam.

The final question in the AP music theory section said “Do you think that the end goal of earning a high score on the AP exam enhances or inhibits the AP music theory class?” (see Figure 4).

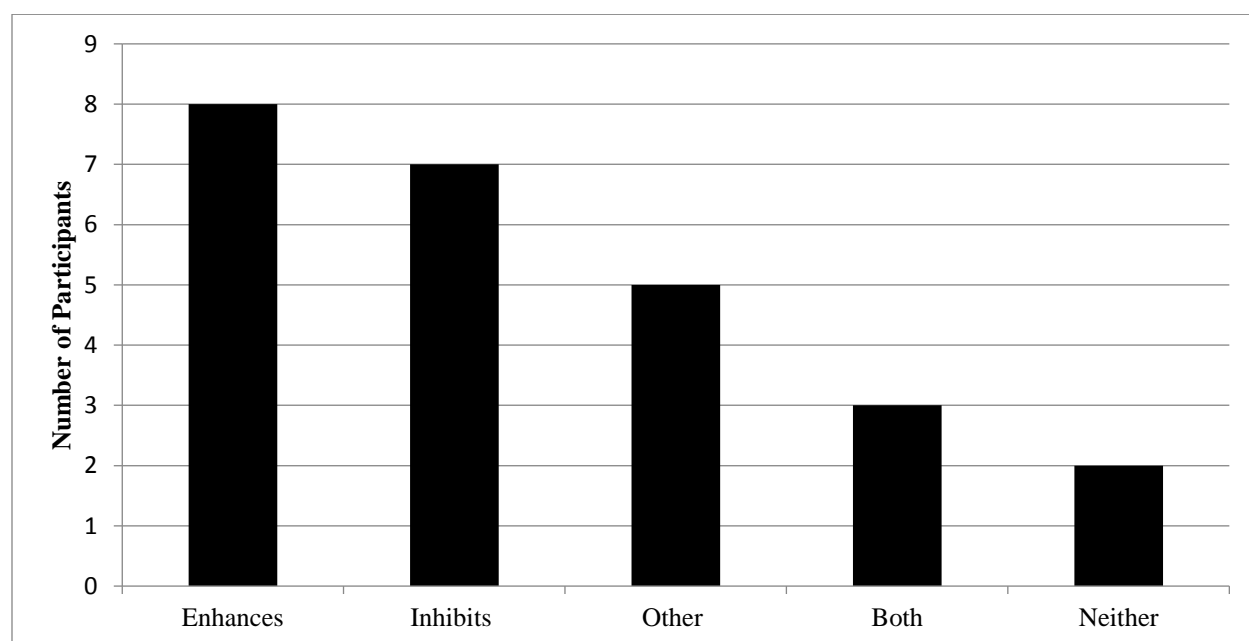


Figure 4. Does the AP Exam Enhance or Inhibit the AP Course Curriculum?

College Preparation

Finally, the participants were asked a series of questions that inquired about the ways in which their high school music theory course prepared them for college music theory. Out of 52 responses, 36 participants (69.2%) believe that their high school music theory course prepared them well for college music theory courses. Eleven participants (21.2%) said that their class did not prepare them well, and three participants (5.8%) said that their high school music theory course prepared them in some ways. Two participants (3.8%) did not give an indication of whether or not they felt prepared for their college music theory course. The participants were asked for the area in which their high school music theory course most prepared them for college. Out of 47 responses, 28 participants (59.6%) indicated written theory, nine (19.1%) indicated both aural and written theory, eight (17%) indicated other, and two (4.3%) aural skills.

The participants were asked about the specific topics that were covered in their high school course that prepared them for college. Forty-six participants responded, and they were able to list as many topics as desired. The most mentioned topic was form, which was mentioned by 13 participants (28.3%). Next, voice leading was mentioned by eight participants (17.4%), and three topics were mentioned a total of six times (13%): four-part writing, modulation, and key signatures.

Out of the 31 topics that were mentioned, 17 topics (54.8%) were topics that are typically discussed and practiced as written skills rather than aural skills. One of the topics (3.2%) mentioned completely focuses on aural skills. Finally, there were 11 topics (35.5%) listed that could be taught as both written and aural skills (see Table 1).

Table 1

Topics Covered in Music Theory Courses

Written Theory	Aural Skills	Written Theory & Aural Skills
12 Tone Rows	Aural Skills	Augmented 6 th Chords
Cadences		Dictation
Circle of Fifths		Fundamentals
Composing/Arranging		Intervals
Counterpoint		Jazz Improv/Theory
Figured Bass		Meter
Form		Rhythm
Four-Part Analysis		Scales/Modes
Four-Part Writing		Secondary Dominance
Jazz History		Seventh Chords
Key Signatures		Sight Singing
Modulation		
Non-Chord Tones		
Note Reading		
Orchestration		
Pitch Class		
Transposition		
Triads/Chord & Progressions		
Voice Leading		

The participants listed a total of 25 topics when asked what area(s) of music theory could have been focused on more in order to better prepare the participants for their college music theory courses. Eleven of the topics (44%) were topics typically taught as written skills. Six of the topics (24%) were topics primarily taught as aural skills. Eight of the topics (32%) were typically taught as both written and aural skills (see Table 2).

Table 2

Topics In Need of More Attention

Written Theory	Aural Skills	Written Theory & Aural Skills
Analysis	Dictation	Chord Functions
Chord Spelling	Do-based Minor	Chord Progressions
Circle of Fifths	Ear Training	Creative Projects
Counterpoint	Improvisation	Fluency of Fundamentals
Form	Sight Singing	Modes
Less Common Clefs	Solfege	Rhythm
Music History		Secondary Dominance
Part-Writing		Sequences
Roman Numeral Analysis		
Scale Degrees		
Score Analysis		

Since the area in need of improvement depends considerably on the specifics of the instructor and course that each participant experienced, it is important to note which of these topics were mentioned more than once. Secondary dominants, part-writing, and sight-singing were each mentioned by four participants (10.5%). Counterpoint, analysis, and ear training were each mentioned by three participants (7.9%). Fluency of fundamentals, form, modes, score analysis, and improvisation were each mentioned by two participants (5.3%).

When asked if preparing for the AP music theory exam enhanced the participants' preparation for college music theory, 22 participants responded. Eight participants (36.4%) believe that preparing for the AP exam aided their preparation for college while nine participants (41%) believe that it did not aid their preparation for college. Five participants (23%) gave an answer that did not specifically indicate yes or no to the question.

Finally, 22 participants responded to a questions asking if preparing for the AP exam ever inhibited preparation for college music theory. Six participants (27.3%) said yes, 15 participants said no (68.2%), and one participant (4.5%) gave an answer that did not indicate yes or no.

Main Study

Many of the questions asked in the main study were the same as those asked in the pilot study; however, many of the questions that were short-answer questions in the pilot survey were instead presented as multiple choice, or check-all-that-apply questions in the main study. Even though there were prescribed options for answers to the questions, there was often an option to select "other" and write in a personalized answer to the question. This change allowed for more

consistency among the participants' answers. The questions that were added were chosen in order to improve upon the original survey. For example, the questions "My music theory course focused primarily on..." was on both surveys. On the first survey, the students were given a box to write their answer. On the second survey, the students were given the following answer choices: aural skills, written theory, AP exam preparation, composition, and other. As a result, the answers on the second survey were more consistent with one another, and the students maintained the option to write in their own answer (in the "other" option) if none of the given options were sufficient.

Background Information

Out of the 17 participants in the study, 100% were music majors. Only three participants (17.6%) took AP music theory. Eleven participants (64.7%) took non-AP music theory, and two participants (11.8%) did not take a course solely specified as a music theory course. Two of the seventeen participants (11.8%) took the AP music theory exam. The participants responded to a question asking about the types of music theory courses offered at their high schools, and they were able to list multiple types of courses if their schools offered more than one. Out of seventeen responses, seven participants (41.2%) were offered an AP music theory course (see Figure 5).

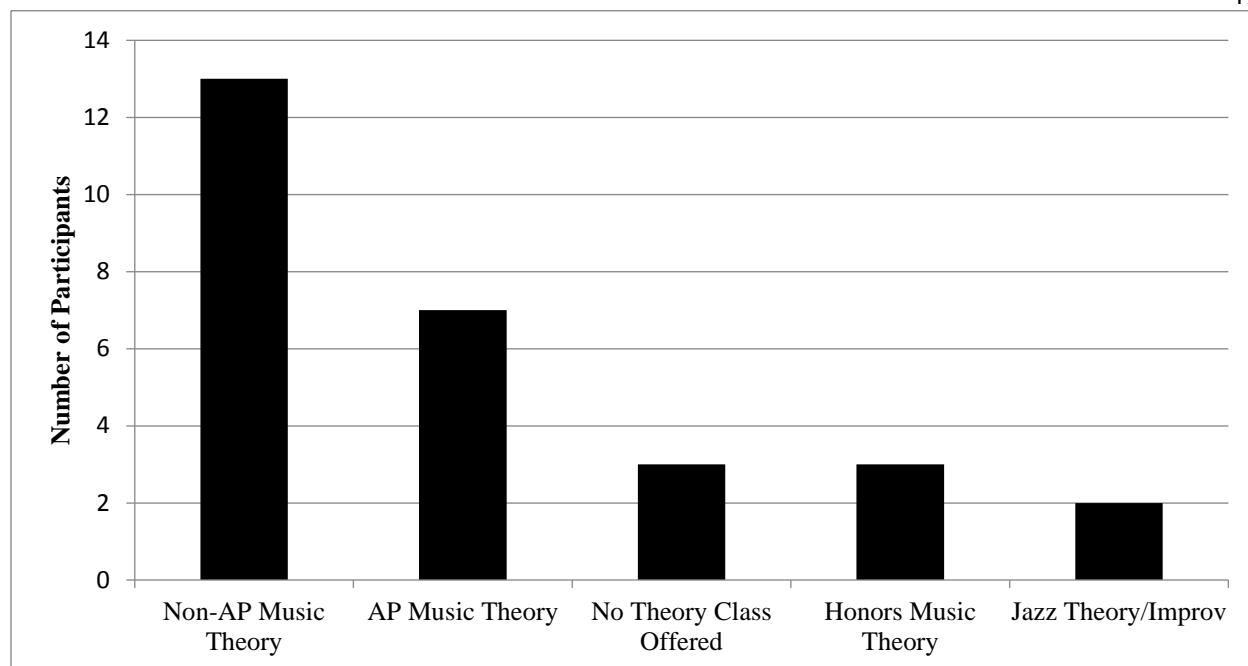


Figure 5. Music Theory Course Offerings

Out of 17 responses, eight participants (41.7%) took music theory for one year, and six participants (35.3%) took music theory for two years. One participant (5.9%) took music theory for four years, and two participants (11.8%) took music theory for zero years since they were not offered a designated course for music theory.

Participants were asked which areas of music theory their course focused on, and they were able to select more than one option. Out of 15 responses, 15 participants (100%) indicated that their theory course focused on written music theory. Seven participants (46.7%) responded that composition was focused on, five participants (33.3%) indicated that aural skills were focused on, and one participant (6.7%) indicated that AP exam preparation was a focus.

Since participants from the pilot survey indicated a stronger emphasis on written theory in their music theory courses, the main study asked a question about the ways in which music

theory courses develop the students' aural skills. Fifteen participants responded to this question, and they were able to select more than one answer (see Figure 6).

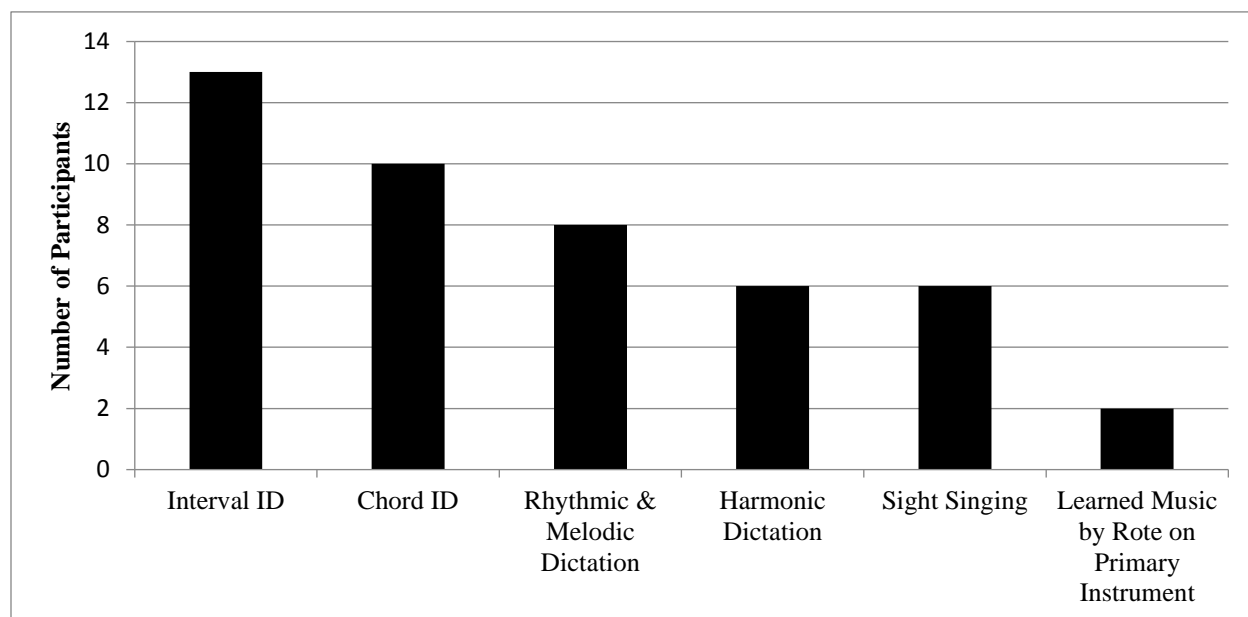


Figure 6. Aural Skills Development

The results of the pilot survey also made me wonder about the use of real musical examples rather than contrived musical examples in the music theory classroom. The question read “How were excerpts from repertoire of any genre/style used in your theory curriculum?” and students were able to check all of the answers that applied to their music theory course in addition to an option to write in their own answer (see Figure 7).

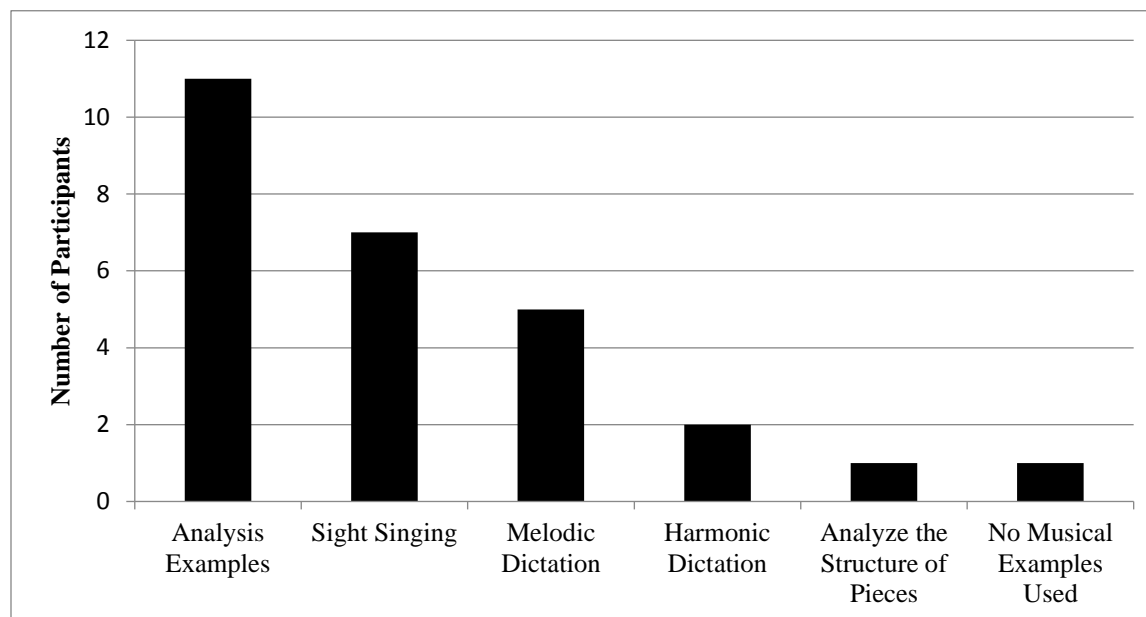


Figure 7. Use of Musical Excerpts

Out of the 14 participants who responded to this question, six participants (42.9%) only listed one area in which musical excerpts were used in their music theory course. Three participants (21.4%) listed two areas, two participants (14.3%) used musical excerpts in three areas, and two participants (14.3%) used them in four areas. One participant (7.1%) was not counted since musical examples were not used in his/her music theory course.

The participants were asked about the instructional techniques used in their music theory courses, and they were able to select more than one option. Out of 15 responses, 14 participants (93.3%) used individual work, 11 participants (73.3%) used class discussion, nine participants (60%) used lecture format, and nine participants (60%) used small group work. One participant (6.7%) learned music theory through an independent study. The participants also responded to a question about which instructional environment was most effective (see Figure 8).

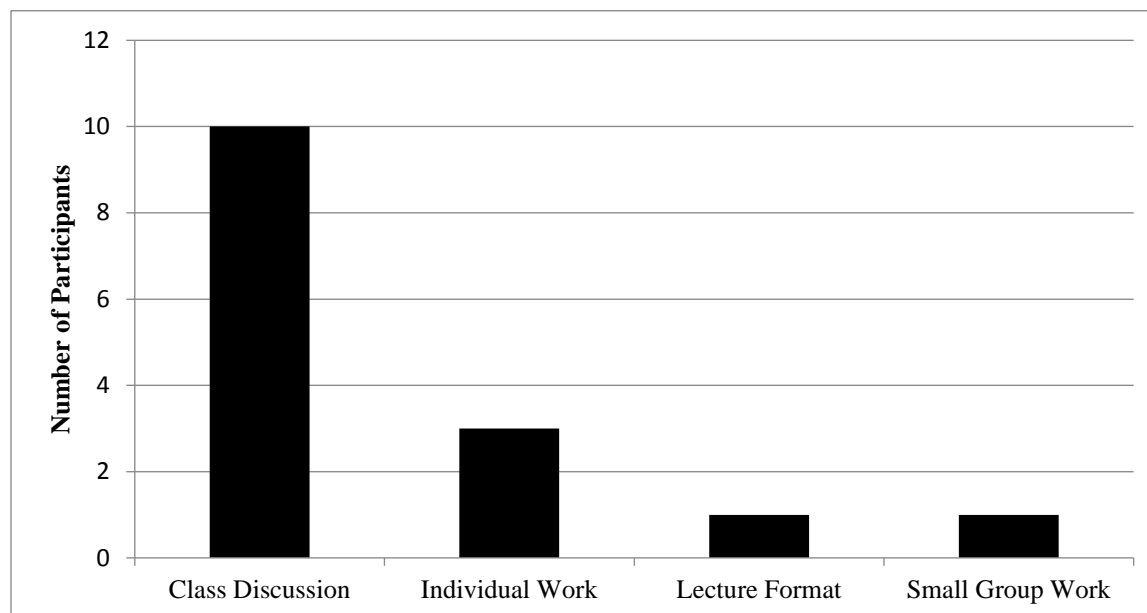


Figure 8. Most Effective Learning Environment

AP Music Theory

First, the participants were asked how much time they spent preparing for the AP music theory exam throughout the entire school year. Out of four responses, two participants (50%) responded by saying that about 85% of their course was focused on preparing for the AP exam. One participant (25%) said that 10% of class was focused on preparing for the AP exam, and one participant said that 0% of class time was spent preparing. Prior to the AP exam, one participant out of three (33.3%) felt prepared to take the exam, and two participants (66.7%) felt prepared in some areas.

Even though seven participants were offered an AP music theory course, only three of them actually took that course. One of these participants chose not to take the AP music theory exam because he/she “did not believe it would be beneficial.”

Another question in this section asked if the participants believed that working toward the goal of achieving highly on the AP exam enhanced or inhibited the AP music theory curriculum (see Figure 9).

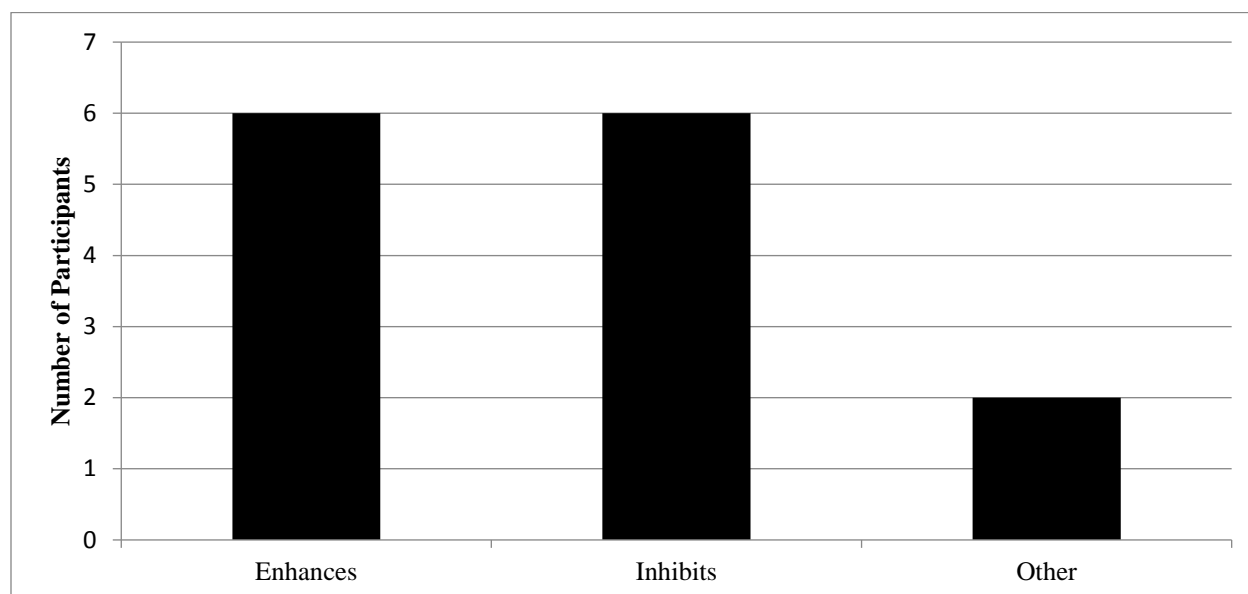


Figure 9. Participant responses to: “Does the AP Exam Enhance or Inhibit the AP Course Curriculum?”

The participants explained their reasoning for the question from figure 9, and their answers were relatively similar to those who chose the same answer to the question. Out of the six participants that responded “enhances” to the question above, two participants (33%) believe that the curriculum is enhanced because it helps the students become well-rounded musicians. Three participants (50%) feel that the AP exam motivated them to learn and improve in the course, which resulted in an enhanced course. One participant (16.7%) did not answer. Of the six participants that responded “inhibits” to the question above, five participants (83%) said that the AP exam promotes teaching to the test, one participant (16.7%) said that it inhibits the pacing of the course, and one participant (16.7%) said that preparing for the AP exam prevents

creativity. (One participant indicated two answers, resulting in a total percentage of more than 100%).

The final set of questions in this section inquired about the participants' opinions on the ultimate goal of a high school music theory class (see Figure 10).

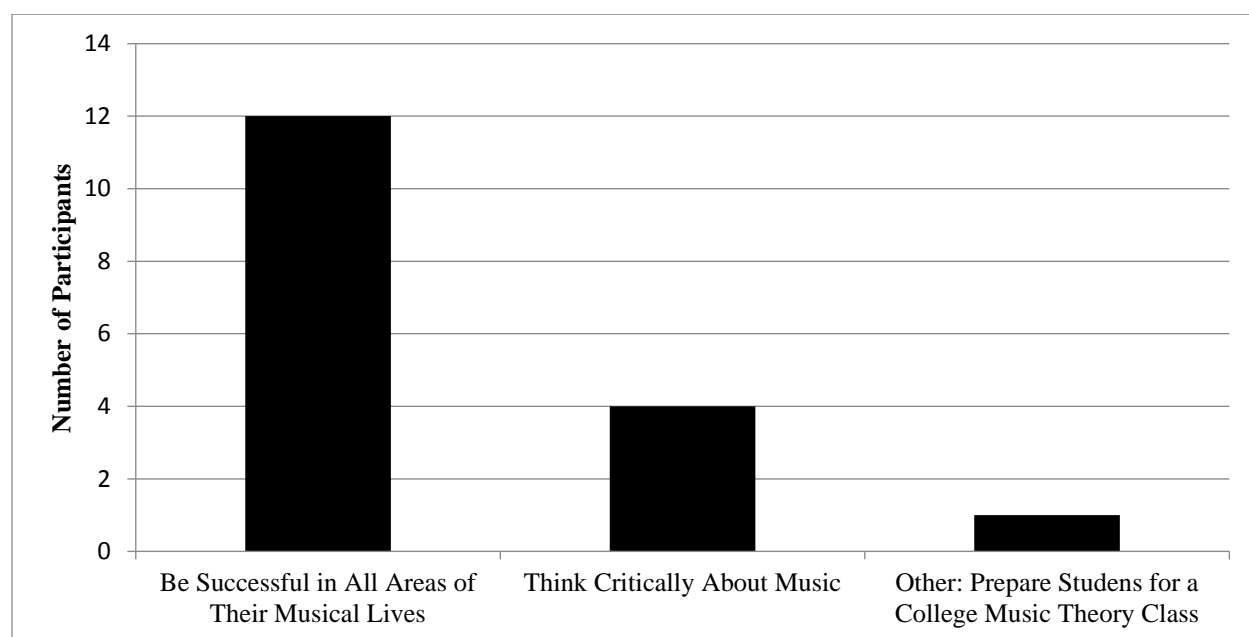


Figure 10. Participant Responses for: “The Primary Goal of a High School Music Theory Course Should Prepare Students To”

The participants explained their reasoning for their answer to the question above, and the participant who indicated that the goal of high school music theory is to prepare students for future music theory courses simply reiterated the same answer. Of the four participants who indicated that the goal of high school music theory is to teach students to think critically, one (25%) reiterated the same answer, one participant (25%) explained that thinking critically allows musicians to transfer their knowledge of music theory to practical, real world situations, and two (50%) indicated that thinking critically improves one's overall understanding of music. Finally, of the 12 students who indicated that the goal of high music theory should be to teach students to

be successful in all musical areas of their life, six participants (50%) reiterated their answers, and five participants (41.7%) indicated that this approach expands students' holistic understanding of music. Three participants (25%) believe that this approach would develop students' critical thinking skills that can be transferred to myriad musical situations, and two participants (16.7%) discussed that this approach would improve students' general musicianship. (Some participants gave multiple answers to the question resulting in a total percentage of more than 100%).

College Preparation

Out of 15 responses, 10 participants (66.7%) felt that their music theory course did prepare them for college music theory whereas two participants (13.3%) did not feel prepared for college music theory. Three participants (20%) indicated that they felt prepared in some ways but not others. Thirteen participants (86.7%) believed that their theory course prepared them to be the most successful with written theory while two participants (13.3%) said that they were most prepared with their aural skills development.

Two participants out of three (66.7%) believe that preparation for the AP music theory exam enhanced their preparation for college, and one participant (33.3%) indicated that preparation for the exam had no effect on his or her college preparation because it was not emphasized throughout the course.

Next, the participants were asked if their music theory class prepared them for all musical settings that they encounter in their lives. Nine participants (60%) answered yes, five participants (33%) answered no, and one participant (6.7%) said that he or she was prepared in some ways but not others. Finally, the following asked participants to recommend ways in which high school music theory courses can prepare students for all musical settings in their

lives regardless of whether or not they choose music as a career. Some participants indicated more than one answer for this question, so the total number of responses is more than the total number of participants (17) (see Figure 11).

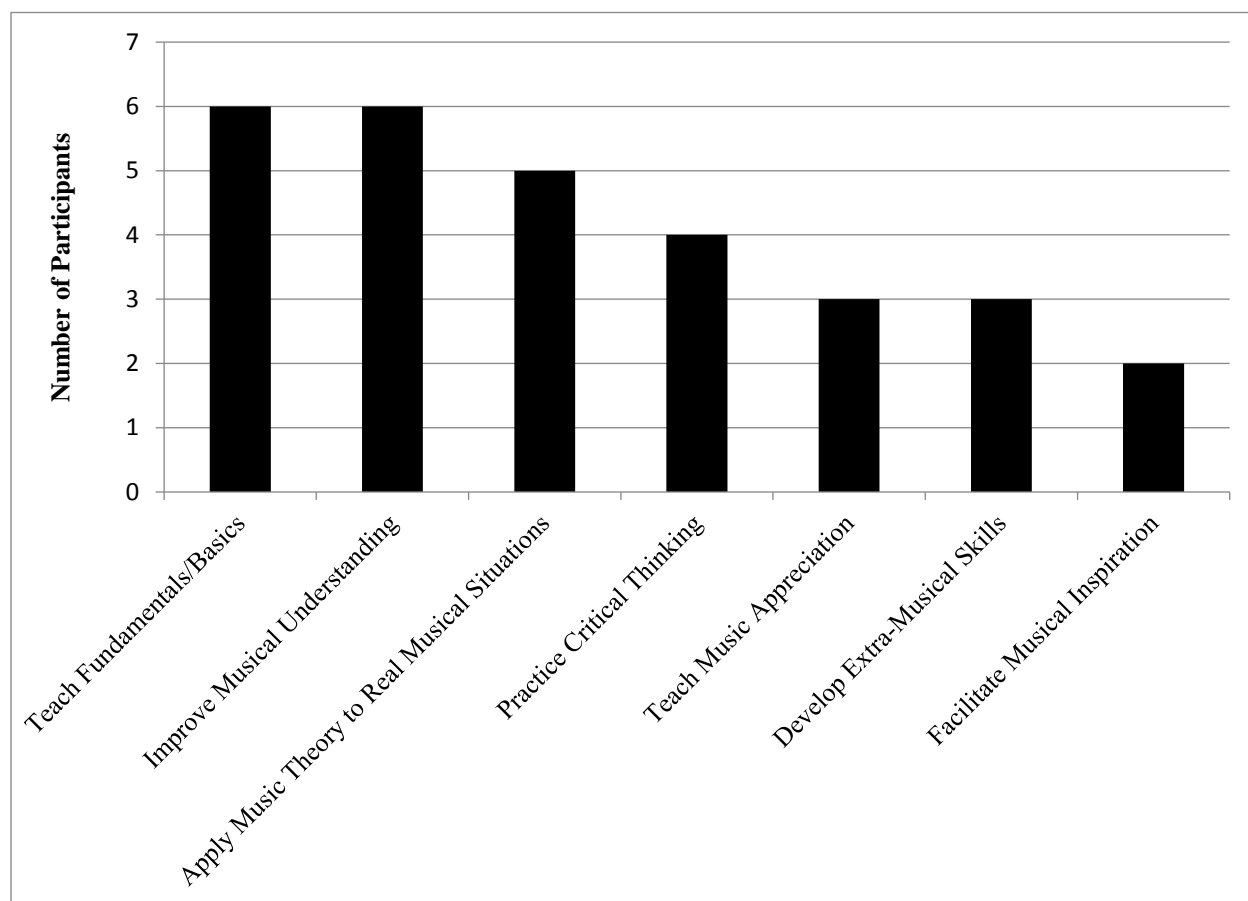


Figure 11. Participant Responses to “How Can High School Music Theory Courses Prepare Students for the Future?”

Research Questions

Question 1: Is music theory offered to all students, and what types of music theory courses are offered?

Not all students have access to a high school music theory course. In the pilot study, four participants (7.7%) were not offered a music theory course, and in the main study three participants (17.6%) were not offered a music theory course. In both sets of participants, two or more participants indicated that the following types of music theory courses were offered at their schools: AP music theory, non-AP music theory, honors music theory, and the music theory of jazz/jazz improvisation. Therefore, many students do have access to at least one type of music theory course, but there are still some students not receiving that opportunity. Furthermore, very few participants indicated that their school offers a music theory of jazz or jazz improvisation course. As a result, we can conclude that Western music theory course offerings are more prevalent than courses that teach about other styles of music like jazz or pop music.

Question 2: Are students typically more prepared for written or aural music theory when they begin taking college music theory?

In both the pilot study and the main study, the data shows that students are prepared much more for written theory than they are for aural theory. In the pilot survey, out of 47 responses 28 participants (59.6%) indicated that they were more prepared for written theory, nine participants (19.1%) indicated that they were more prepared for both aural and written theory, eight students (17.0%) indicated other, and two students (4.3%) indicated that they were more prepared for aural skills. In the main study, out of 15 responses, 13 (86.7%) indicated that they were more prepared for written theory, and two participants (13.3%) indicated that they were more prepared for aural skills. I find it interesting that music theory courses seem to focus more on written music theory even though music is an aural art form. In addition, 55% of participants from the pilot study and 100% of the participants from the main study who took AP

music theory indicated that they were most prepared for written music theory when they entered college, yet the AP exam emphasizes aural skills over written skills (College Board, 2012).

Question 3: What is the most effective instructional environment for teaching music theory?

Neither the data in the pilot study nor the data in the main study indicated a clear preference for one instructional environment over the others. Each participant did indicate which environment was most effective for them; however, the many different responses indicate that the most effective environment is unique to each person and the specific characteristics of each class (see Figures 3 and 8).

Question 4: How do high school music theory instructors use real musical examples in their teaching?

The survey question about the use of real musical examples was only asked on the main study survey. The data showed that real musical examples were used in almost every one of the participants' music theory courses: only one participant indicated that none were used (see Figure 7). The examples were used in the following contexts: sight singing, melodic dictation, harmonic dictation, Roman numeral analysis, and structure analysis. Half (50%) of the participants used real musical examples in two to four different settings within their individual classroom while six participants (43%) used real musical examples in only one area.

Question 5: How can a high school music theory course prepare students for college music theory?

The data did not indicate a single answer for this research question. In the pilot study, a questions asked the participants to identify topics that needed more attention in their music theory courses (see Table 2). In the main study, the participants were asked specifically how a high school music theory course can prepare students for college music theory (see Figure 11). These questions elicited a diverse group of responses, and there was no one specific answer. The best way to prepare for college music theory will depend on the purpose of the course and the specific needs of the student.

Question 6: Does the AP exam enhance or inhibit the AP music theory curriculum?

The final research question did not receive one specific response. In both studies this question resulted in very even answers. In the pilot study, eight participants (32%) indicated that the AP exam enhances the AP music theory curriculum while seven participants (28%) indicated that the AP exam inhibits the curriculum. Furthermore, five participants (20%) indicated a response that did not clearly state their answer, three participants (12%) said that the AP exam can both enhance and inhibit the course, and two participants (8%) indicated that the AP exam neither enhances nor inhibits the course. With only a one participant difference and so many participants indicating both or neither, the data indicates that the effects of the AP exam on an AP music theory course are unique to the particular course, the particular student, and the instructor. In the main study, the number of responses for enhance and inhibit was the same: each elicited six responses (42.9% of the fourteen total responses). Two participants (14.3%) indicated that the AP exam can both enhance and inhibit the course. This balance in responses and the indication of both answers continues to support the result that the AP exam's effects on a

music theory course depend greatly on the specific characteristics of each course and each student.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

Summary and Discussion

This study surveyed first and second year college students about their experiences with high school music theory, and, in particular, on their experiences with AP music theory. The survey was administered through Google Forms. The participants were asked background questions about the course(s) that they took, their experiences in their course, the AP course/exam, and their preparedness for college music theory.

The overarching result of this study indicates that high school music theory is taught and experienced in diverse ways. High school students, even students from the same geographic region, experience many differences in their music theory courses. From the course offerings to the instructional environments used in the course to the specific instructional methods used by instructors, I have found that there is no real standardization among high school music theory courses despite whether or not the course is labeled as an AP course.

I was pleasantly surprised by how few students' schools do not offer a music theory course; however, the fact that there are still students without access to any music theory course indicates that all high school musicians do not receive the same opportunities. This lack of opportunity may affect a students' preparedness for college, which is important for college professors to remember when designing entrance exams and beginning level music theory courses. Many schools offer either an AP music theory or non-AP music theory course, but few offer a music theory of jazz or jazz improvisation course. The minimal focus on jazz indicates that classical music is emphasized over more recent musical styles such as jazz.

The majority of music theory courses focus on written music theory rather than aural skills. Participants indicated that more written music theory topics were covered than aural skills topics, and participants felt more prepared for college with their written music theory skills than with their aural music theory skills. This indicates that there could be a deficit with aural skills training, which was also emphasized in the interview with Dr. Benitez.

The close split and tie of the responses about whether or not the AP exam enhances or inhibits AP music theory surprised me because I thought that participants would feel strongly that the AP exam results in teaching to the test. However, I now see that achieving highly on the AP exam may be a worthwhile goal to strive for when taking AP music theory. The exam can also inform the curriculum in a way that prepares students for college as long as the instructor teaches the students within real musical contexts.

Furthermore, the participants indicated that they believe that the purpose of a high school music theory course is to prepare students for all musical areas and situations of their lives and to teach students to think critically. These goals are important to consider when developing a high school music theory curriculum. I believe that, whether or not the course is AP, these overarching goals will insure that instructors teach the students in real musical contexts that will not only accomplish those two goals but also prepare the students for college if they wish to continue their musical studies. Overall, this study presents many pieces of information that indicate the diversity of music theory courses offered and the characteristics within each course in addition to the students' desire to take a quality music theory course that will prepare them for their musical futures.

Comparisons to Previous Literature

Lucia 1993

The results of this study both support and negate the assumptions that could be made about AP music theory from his article. Many of the methods that Lucia uses in his teaching focus on a contrived, atomistic approach to music theory, but this study indicates that some high school music theory courses are in fact using real musical examples. Lucia also warns against teaching to the AP exam, yet he suggests looking at past AP exams when developing a music theory curriculum. Even though some participants indicated that teaching to the test was an issue, other participants did not mention that teaching to the test was an issue in their music theory course.

Domeck 1997

Domeck recognizes the need for a larger focus on aural skill development. This study supports that conclusion since few students felt that their aural skills were developed in order to be prepared for college. Domeck is also a proponent of various aural skills drills that fall under the same categories of the aural skills questions on the AP exam. Though some music theory courses certainly use these contrived drills to teach aural skills, multiple participants indicated the use of real music examples in their aural skills development.

Buonviri and Paney 2014

Buonviri and Paney's study indicates that music theory courses do focus largely around teaching in a contrived setting and teaching to the test. My study indicates that there are music theory courses like the ones that Buonviri and Paney describe, but there are also music theory

courses that do use real musical contexts in their curriculum. Furthermore, the participants specifically indicated that the purpose of a high school music theory course is not to teach to the AP test: instead, it is meant to prepare students for their future musical experiences, teach students to think critically, and prepare students for college music theory. The students clearly do not want to take a course that is designed only for test preparation, which unfortunately is the main influence on course design according to the participants of Buonviri and Paney's study.

Buonviri and Paney 2015

Buonviri and Paney's second study further indicates the contrived way in which instructors view music theory. Buonviri and Paney support the investigation of best practices in melodic dictation instruction, which could help standardize instruction but could also result in more teaching to the test. Since my study indicates that some instructors do use real musical examples in their aural skills teaching, I believe that the best practices in melodic dictation instruction could be the ones that use real musical examples. The main question derived from Buonviri and Paney's results is, what is the goal of these best practices? Depending on the specifics of the situation, the best practices for teaching melodic dictation in preparation for the AP exam may be very different from the best practices for teaching melodic dictation in preparation for a student's musical experiences throughout his life.

Klonoski 2006

Klonoski strongly believes that music theory courses are too atomistic when they should take a more holistic approach that teaches students in real musical contexts. While there are most likely music theory courses that do use this atomistic approach, my study indicates that

some may be using a more holistic approach as they use real musical examples in their instruction. Klonoski's approach to teaching music theory can be very helpful when examining the deficits that were made apparent through my study. For instance, the deficit of aural skills training has been made clear, and an instructor who is looking to improve that deficit can use Klonoski's methods as a model for structuring his or her aural skills development techniques.

Boyle and Lucas 1990

Boyle and Lucas's study indicates that importance of context in sight singing. My study indicates that some music theory instructors are using real musical context with their sight singing instruction, but some are not. Boyle and Lucas's study supports the idea that context should be used with sight singing examples, which should also be considered when considering how to improve students' aural skills.

Colwell 1990

Colwell emphasizes the benefits of an AP music theory course, but he also emphasizes that students do not have to take a music theory course with the goal of taking the AP exam in order to be learn and be successful. My study supports this claim since many participants did not take AP music theory or the AP exam, yet many of them felt prepared for college music theory. Colwell strongly believes that AP music theory courses should teach beyond the parameters of the exam, which is supported by my participants' belief that the goal of a music theory course is not to teach to a test, but to prepare students for future musical situations and teach them to think critically.

Applications for the Classroom

From a broad perspective, this study indicates that instructors should consider the long term effects of their teaching methods on their students' musical development. Some teaching methods may be useful solely for taking the AP exam while some may prepare students to be successful in music for the rest of their lives. Every music theory course, student, and instructor are different. Therefore, instructors must observe and learn what their students' strengths and weaknesses are and find the best way to address the weaknesses and build upon the strengths in their particular situation.

More specifically, this study indicates that students are lacking in their aural skills development but are typically prepared when it comes to written music theory. Therefore, aural skills may be an area of focus in music theory classrooms. In addition, the literature discusses the importance of real musical context in teaching, and this study's data indicates that while many instructors do use real musical examples, some do not. The incorporation of real musical examples into music theory courses can greatly enhance the students' skill development. Furthermore, this study indicates that students are aware of when a course is designed to teach to the test, and not a single participant indicated that they want their music theory course to prepare them solely to take the AP exam. Therefore, instructors should carefully examine whether or not their music theory curriculum focuses solely on preparation for the AP exam or if their course strives to expand student's musical skills and knowledge to make them well-rounded musicians who are prepared for all musical settings that they may encounter.

Recommendations for Further Research


Further research on this topic could investigate why students do and do not choose to take the AP exam. Very few students in my study took the AP exam despite the fact that most of them chose to major in music in college. This information could provide insight into the advantages or disadvantages of taking an AP music theory course versus taking a non-AP music theory course of the same rigor.

In addition, researchers could delve into the specific techniques or best practices that instructors use to teach students in a real musical context. With such an emphasis on testing in the education world, it may be difficult for instructors to come up with ways to teach their students in a creative and authentic situation. Investigating the methods of instructors who have mastered teaching in a real musical context and disseminating this information could aid many teachers if they are unsure of how to avoid teaching to the test.

Finally, a study on the opportunities that music theory courses provide for their students to be creative could inform many instructors of ways to make music theory courses engaging. Creative projects will not only be enjoyable, but they can also teach the students valuable lessons about music and develop musical skills that can benefit them in their lives as musicians. Knowledge of best practices for promoting creativity could help some instructors greatly improve their music theory courses.

Appendix A

Pilot Study Survey



AP Music Theory Survey

You are being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study because we believe you took an AP Music Theory class or non-AP music theory class in high school prior to attending college. This summary explains information about this research.

Purpose: The primary goal of this research is to make suggestions for AP Music Theory curriculum.

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will complete a survey (lasting about 30-40 minutes) regarding your experiences with your high school music theory course (whether it was or was not an AP course). You may skip any questions you prefer not to answer. You can end your participation in the survey at any time.

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening. The confidentiality of your electronic data created by you or by the researchers will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

If you have questions or concerns, you should contact Abigail Koehler at 724-944-2986 or amk5944@psu.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject or concerns regarding your privacy, you may contact the Office for Research Protections at 814-865-1775.

Your participation is voluntary and you may decide to stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research.

****Please do not mention specific schools or teachers in your responses****

1. Are you a first or second year student?

- ☐ First year
- ☐ Second year
- ☐ Other:

2. Are you a music major?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I'm a music minor

3. What type of music theory class did you take?

- ☐ AP Music Theory
- ☐ Non AP music theory

4. What types of music theory courses were offered at your high school? (check all that apply)

- ☐ AP Music Theory
- ☐ Non AP music theory
- ☐ Honors music theory
- ☐ No music theory course was
- ☐ Music theory of jazz/jazz improv
- ☐ Other: _____

5. Please describe your theory class: title, enrollment, number of meeting times per week, topics covered.

Your answer

6. For how many years did you take music theory?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ Other: _____

7. My music theory course focused primarily on... (Check all that apply. If other, please explain.)

- ☐ Aural skills
- ☐ Written theory
- ☐ AP exam preparation
- ☐ Composition
- ☐ Other: _____

8. What kinds of materials did you use in the classroom? (i.e. text books, workbooks, teacher- made worksheets, instruments). Please provide titles of text books/workbooks if applicable.

Your answer _____

9. What kinds of technology did you use in the classroom? (i.e. computer programs, iPad apps, smart boards, etc.) Please list names of programs if applicable (ex. Garageband).

Your answer _____

10. In what ways were the resources above used? (ex. Garageband was used for composition projects).

Your answer

11. What resources from the lists above were the most effective?

Your answer

12. What instructional environments were used in your class? (Check all that apply)

☐ Lecture format

☐ Small group work

☐ Individual work

☐ Other: _____

13. What environments from the list above did you find to be the most effective and why?

Your answer

14. In what ways did your music theory class allow you to develop your creativity? (Please describe any projects).

Your answer

15. In what ways did your music theory class make you curious about music?

Your answer

16. How did your music theory class help you discover answers for your questions/curiosities?

Your answer

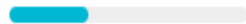
17. In what ways was your teacher the most effective in helping you learn?

Your answer

18. In what ways was your teacher the least effective in helping you learn?

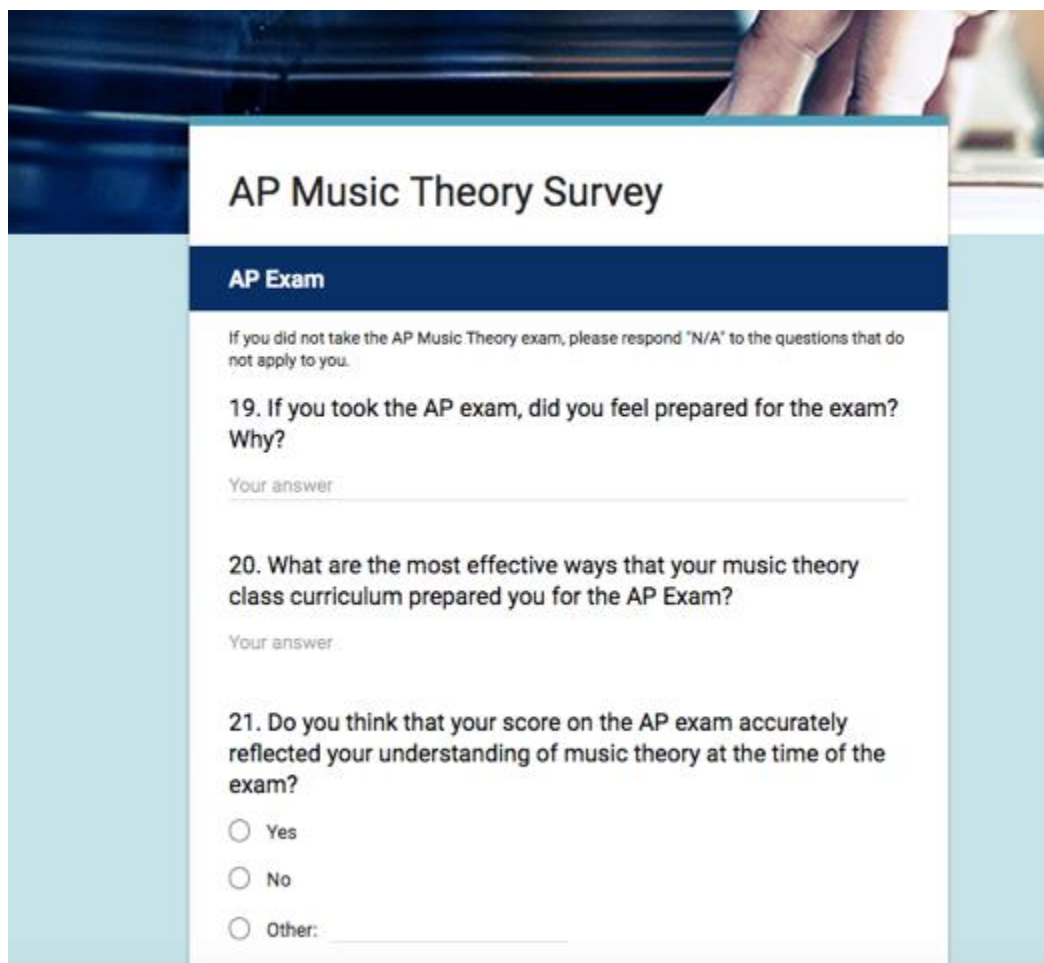
Your answer

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The image shows a digital survey form titled "AP Music Theory Survey". The form has a header with a blue background and white text. Below the header, there is a section titled "AP Exam" in white text on a dark blue background. The main body of the form is white and contains three questions. Question 19 asks if the respondent felt prepared for the AP exam and why, with a text input field. Question 20 asks for the most effective ways the music theory class curriculum prepared the respondent for the AP Exam, also with a text input field. Question 21 asks if the respondent's score on the AP exam accurately reflected their understanding of music theory, with radio button options for "Yes", "No", and "Other:" followed by a text input field. The form is set against a background image of a person's hands playing a piano.

AP Music Theory Survey

AP Exam

If you did not take the AP Music Theory exam, please respond "N/A" to the questions that do not apply to you.

19. If you took the AP exam, did you feel prepared for the exam? Why?

Your answer _____

20. What are the most effective ways that your music theory class curriculum prepared you for the AP Exam?

Your answer _____

21. Do you think that your score on the AP exam accurately reflected your understanding of music theory at the time of the exam?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

22. What benefits come from taking the AP Music Theory exam?

Your answer

23. What positive effects does preparing for the AP exam have on the curriculum of an AP Music Theory class?

Your answer

24. What negative effects does preparing for the AP exam have on the curriculum of an AP Music Theory class?

Your answer

25. Do you think that the end goal to earn a high score on the AP exam enhances the AP music theory class or inhibits it?

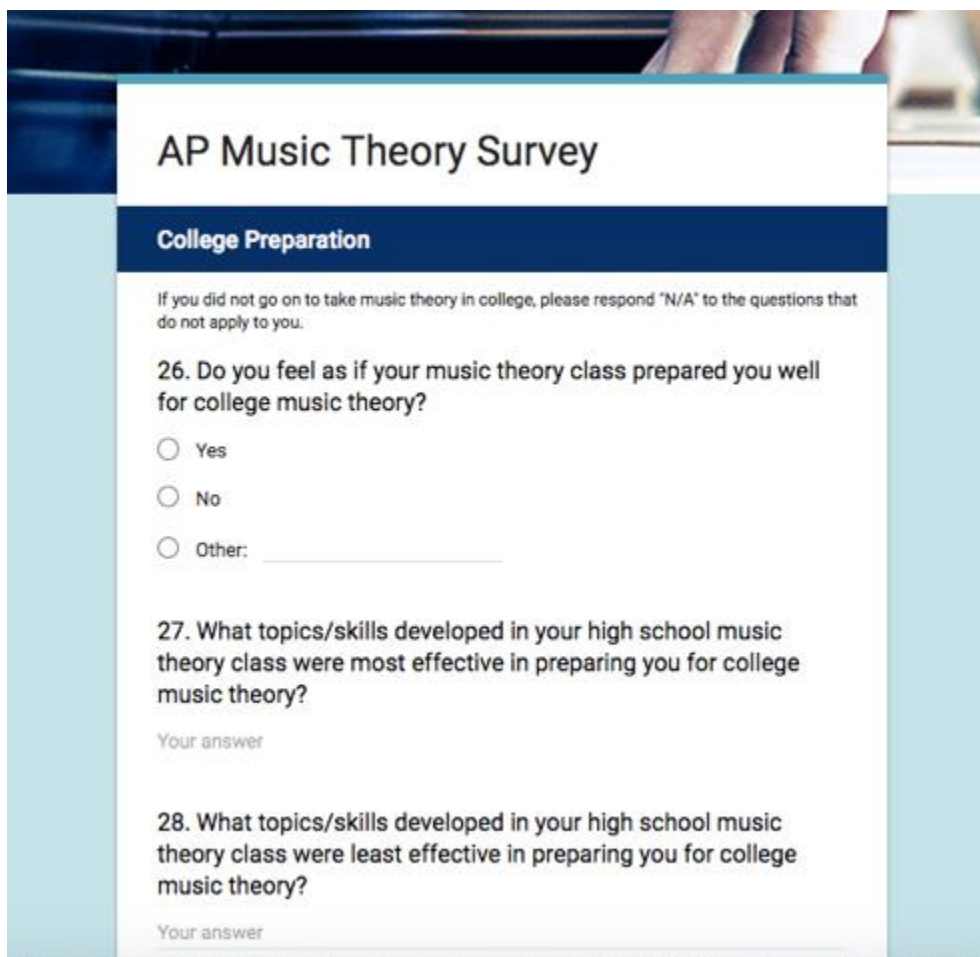
Your answer

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The image shows a digital survey form titled "AP Music Theory Survey". The form has a header section with the title, followed by a section titled "College Preparation". Below this, there is a note about responding "N/A" to questions that do not apply. The survey contains three questions: Question 26 is a multiple-choice question about college preparation; Question 27 is an open-ended question about the most effective topics/skills; and Question 28 is an open-ended question about the least effective topics/skills. Each open-ended question has a text input field labeled "Your answer".

AP Music Theory Survey

College Preparation

If you did not go on to take music theory in college, please respond "N/A" to the questions that do not apply to you.

26. Do you feel as if your music theory class prepared you well for college music theory?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Other: _____

27. What topics/skills developed in your high school music theory class were most effective in preparing you for college music theory?

Your answer

28. What topics/skills developed in your high school music theory class were least effective in preparing you for college music theory?

Your answer

29. What topics/skills were missing from your high school music theory curriculum that would have benefited you in college?

Your answer

30. If you took AP Music Theory, do you think that the goal to earn a high score on the AP exam helped prepare you for college music theory?

Your answer

31. Do you think that preparing for the AP exam ever inhibited your preparation for college music theory?

Your answer

32. Please define music theory.

Your answer

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Appendix B

Main Study Survey

AP Music Theory Survey 2

You are being invited to volunteer to participate in a research study because we believe you took an AP Music Theory class or non-AP music theory class in high school prior to attending college. This summary explains information about this research.

The primary goal of this research is to make suggestions for AP Music Theory curriculum.

If you agree to participate in this survey, you will complete a survey (lasting about 20 minutes) regarding your experiences with your high school music theory course (whether it was or was not an AP course). You may skip any questions you prefer not to answer. You can end your participation in the survey at any time.

There is a risk of loss of confidentiality if your information or your identity is obtained by someone other than the investigators, but precautions will be taken to prevent this from happening. The confidentiality of your electronic data created by you or by the researchers will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

If you have questions or concerns, you should contact Abigail Koehler at 724-944-2986 or amk5944@psu.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject or concerns regarding your privacy, you may contact the Office for Research Protections at 814-865-1775.

Your participation is voluntary and you may decide to stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

Your participation implies your voluntary consent to participate in the research.

****Please do not mention specific schools or teachers in your responses****

*** Required**

By checking this box, I consent to participate in this survey. *

☐ I agree

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AP Music Theory Survey 2

Background Information

1. Are you a music major?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am a music minor

2. What type of music theory class did you take in high school?

- ☐ AP Music Theory
- ☐ Non-AP music theory
- ☐ Other: _____

3. Did you take the AP Music Theory exam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

4. What types of music theory courses were offered at your high school? (check all that apply)

- ☐ AP Music Theory
- ☐ Non-AP Music Theory
- ☐ Honors Music Theory
- ☐ No music theory course was offered
- ☐ Music theory of jazz
- ☐ Jazz Improvisation
- ☐ Other: _____

5. For how many years did you take music theory?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ Other: _____

6. My music theory course focused primarily on: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Aural skills
- ☐ Written theory
- ☐ AP exam preparation
- ☐ Composition
- ☐ Other: _____

7. How did you work on developing aural skills in your theory class? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Sight singing
- ☐ Rhythmic dictation
- ☐ Melodic dictation
- ☐ Harmonic dictation
- ☐ Interval identification
- ☐ Chord identification
- ☐ Learning music by rote on primary instrument
- ☐ Other: _____

8. What materials were used to develop these skills? (ex. Sight Singing Complete, [teoria.com](https://www.teoria.com), smartmusic, etc.)

Your answer _____

9. How were excerpts from repertoire of any genre/style used in your theory curriculum? (check all that apply)

- ☐ As sight singing examples
- ☐ As melodic dictation examples
- ☐ As harmonic dictation examples
- ☐ As Roman numeral analysis examples
- ☐ My class did not use musical excerpts
- ☐ Other: _____

10. What instructional environments were used in your class? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Lecture format
- ☐ Class discussion
- ☐ Small group work
- ☐ Individual work
- ☐ Other: _____

11. Which environment from the list above was the most effective?

- ☐ Lecture format
- ☐ Class discussion
- ☐ Small group work
- ☐ Individual work
- ☐ Other: _____

12. Why was the environment from question 11 the most effective?

Your answer

13. What aspects of music theory were worked on in each environment? (ex. My class worked on aural skills individually but had class discussions when working on Roman numeral analysis.)

Your answer

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AP Music Theory Survey 2

AP Music Theory

Please answer all questions even if you did not take the AP exam.

14. Approximately what amount of class time throughout the entire school year was spent preparing for the AP exam?

- ☐ My school DID NOT offer AP theory, therefore, 0%
- ☐ My school DID offer AP theory, but we did not prepare for the exam in class, therefore, 0%
- ☐ 10%
- ☐ 25%
- ☐ 50%
- ☐ 75%
- ☐ 85%
- ☐ 100%
- ☐ Other: _____

15. Prior to taking the AP exam, did you feel prepared to be successful on the exam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ In some areas
- ☐ No
- ☐ I did not take the AP exam
- ☐ Other: _____

16. Why did or why didn't you feel prepared for the AP exam? (Type N/A if you did not take the AP exam)

Your answer _____

17. What was most helpful in preparing you for the exam? (ex. aural skills practice, Roman numeral analysis, etc.) (Type N/A if you did not take the AP exam)

Your answer _____

18. What score did you get on the AP exam?

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ I did not take the exam

19. Do you think that your score on the AP exam accurately reflected your knowledge of music theory at the time that you took the exam?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I did not take the AP exam
- ☐ Other: _____

20. If you did not take the AP exam, why?

- ☐ My school did not offer AP theory or the exam
- ☐ I did not feel prepared to succeed on the exam
- ☐ I could not receive credits for scoring highly on the exam
- ☐ Other: _____

21. Do you think that working towards the goal of achieving highly on the AP exam enhances or inhibits AP Music Theory curriculum?

- ☐ Enhances
- ☐ Inhibits
- ☐ Other: _____

22. Please explain your reasoning for your answer to the question above (#21).

Your answer _____

23. AP Music theory courses should focus on preparing students to:

- ☐ Take the AP exam
- ☐ Be successful in all areas of their musical lives
- ☐ Think critically about music
- ☐ Other: _____

24. Please explain your reasoning for your answer to the question above (#23).

Your answer

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AP Music Theory Survey 2

College Preparation

Please answer all questions even if you are not taking college music theory.

25. Do you feel that your music theory class has prepared you well for college music theory?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I am not taking college music theory
- ☐ Other: _____

26. How was your high school music theory course most effective in preparing you for college?

- ☐ Aural skills development
- ☐ Written theory instruction
- ☐ I am not taking college music theory
- ☐ Other: _____

27. Please describe the activities that prepared you for college music theory? (Ex. In my music theory class we focused on part writing and Roman numeral analysis which prepared me for learning about counterpoint in college.) (Type N/A if you are not taking college music theory)

Your answer _____

28. Did preparing for the AP exam enhance or inhibit your preparation for college?

- ☐ Enhance
- ☐ Inhibit
- ☐ I did not take AP theory/did not take the AP exam
- ☐ I am not taking college music theory
- ☐ Other: _____

29. Did your high school music theory class strive to prepare you for ALL musical settings in your life?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Other: _____

30. In what ways did your theory class prepare you for the musical settings you encounter? (ex. I was prepared for music theory in college due to instruction in Roman numeral analysis, and I was also prepared to solo in the community jazz band I play in because we covered chord symbols in my music theory class.)

Your answer

31. How can high school music theory courses prepare students for musical endeavors throughout their entire lives, whether a student chooses music as his/her profession or not?

Your answer

32. Please define music theory.

Your answer

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Appendix C

Participant Responses to “Please Define Music Theory.”

Pilot Study

1. The study of how and why music works as an art form from a fundamental standpoint.
2. The rules of music.
3. Music theory is the way that music is made, and the ins and outs of how it is put together and taken apart. Music theory is the explanation for music and why certain things work and why others don't.
4. Music theory is the guidelines for writing music, as determined by composers and musicians beginning hundreds of years ago.
5. The study of how music further develops as a language of the heart.
6. The tendencies of music as a cataloged understanding of what/how composers in the past typically used tonal harmony to convey particular intensions.
7. Music theory is the set of guidelines and rules that, with some flexibility, form a knowledge of the inner workings of music and provide structure for the composition of music.
8. The study of the structure of music.
9. The study of theoretical aspects of music, including chord progressions, counterpoint, pitches, and rhythm.
10. The written method used to codify the purely auditory art of music.
11. Music theory is anything encompassing the idea of writing, composing, and hearing the nuances of the musical literature.
12. The analytical, conceptual study of music (especially Western music).
13. The theory of how and why music works.
14. The science behind popular trends in music.
15. The study and understanding of the way music works- the break down and understanding.
16. The study of the patterns used in composing music.
17. Music Theory is the study of written and/or aural analysis and understanding of how music is organized or created including pitch, rhythm, harmonies, and structure.
18. Music theory is how humans have to represent and analyze the musical movement of sound through time and discuss it with one another. It is a universal system that we use to communicate what music is doing but not necessarily how it works. It is just "theory" because it changes as our understanding of music changes.
19. An understanding of the way music works. Knowing how keys, chords, scales, notes, phrases structure, and compositional techniques are used to create music out of sound.
20. The study of how music is formed and created.
21. The study of the interactions of harmony and melody in the context written music, guidelines for composing (not rules).
22. The study of the theoretical elements of music including sound, pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, and notation.
23. I think that music theory applies to all music.

24. Studying how things composers write sound the way they sound and identifying patterns in "famous" musical literature that resonate with a listener and make for good music.
25. The knowledge of the back bone of music. The study of basic music principles that composers branch off from.
26. The study of music rules and analysis of musical works.
27. The study of musical structure and function.
28. Music theory is how music is put together and the definition of written music.
29. The widely accepted rules and precepts in western music derived from musical examples.
30. Music theory is the foundation from which music itself is built, and gives people an understanding of how it functions.
31. Learning the basics of how music works and chords.
32. The techniques and rules used when writing music, and ways to analyze music in order to be able to inhibit the emotional effects the music can have.
33. The definition of music theory itself is elusive. Only those with passion will ever truly understand the workings behind music.
34. Music theory is the study of how music is composed and how individual notes come together and shape music.
35. Music theory is the understanding of ideas brought forth through music, in a more detailed manner.
36. The study of the way that music "works," that is to say accomplishes what it does. Different styles do so in different ways, therefore I wouldn't say that music theory is necessarily analysis of chord structures, scales, modes, etc.
37. Developing solid skills in keys, chords (7ths and triads), spelling chords and intervals (also being able to do all this quickly). And then applying all that knowledge into learning how music is written and analyzing, composing and singing it. The foundations of how music is put together.
38. Analyzing/creating music with rules.
39. The technical and mathematical side of music. The way music is notated. The reasoning behind compositional choices.
40. The ideas and concepts that shape music. This can go from notes and rhythms, to time and key signatures, to chords, and to overall forms of pieces.
41. The possibilities in music.
42. Music theory is essentially the explanations to events that occur in music.
43. Analysis of music.
44. The study of the practices used in musical composition and performance.
45. A shortcut to music.

Main Study

1. The analyzing of music in order to gain a better understanding of the music we play and hear and to gain a deeper understanding of music in general.
2. The study of how music works and why it sounds the way it does.
3. The study of musical ideas and how to express those ideas.
4. It's really how music works. And what makes it work. But, that's really subjective because some of the things we learn aren't used in composition anymore.

5. Music theory is the study of the fundamental concepts that make up pieces of music as well as the skills to analyze said music.
6. The study of music and its application in the real world.
7. Understanding the reason music is written the way it is, and why it makes us feel certain ways.
8. The study of the theoretical elements of music including sound and pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, and notation.
9. Elements of music including sound and pitch, rhythm, melody, harmony, and notation.
10. Music theory is the study of music through analysis and application of investigative methods.
11. The reasoning behind music and the way that music works.
12. The construction and basic elements of melody pitch, duration, rhythm and tempo usually drawn from pitch systems such as scales or modes.
13. The study and understanding of music composition and skills.
14. The technical part of music.
15. Foundation of music.
16. The study of the practice of music.

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ACADEMIC VITA

Academic Vita of Abigail Koehler

akoehler04@gmail.com

2301 Chalet Ct. Wexford, PA 15090

Education

The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA

Bachelor of Music Education May 2017

Trombone primary

Schreyer Honors College

Certification:

PA Instructional I Certification, Music K-12

Teaching Experience

Student Teacher

January-May, 2017

Hollidaysburg Area School District

Hollidaysburg, PA

Camp Counselor

Summers 2015, 2016, 2017

Chatham University

Pittsburgh, PA

Band Camp Volunteer

Summers 2014, 2015, 2016

Pine Richland High School

Gibsonia, PA

Work with Students with Special Needs

May 4, 2016

Bucknell University

Lewisburg, PA

Children's Ministries Volunteer

2006-2013, Summer 2016

Allison Park Church

Allison Park, PA (2006-2013, Summer 2016)

Related Experience

Key of She Brass Workshop - College Student Coach July 16, 2016

Pittsburgh, PA

Arts and Architecture Gen Ed Committee Member

Spring 2016

Student Representative

Penn State University

NAfME Collegiate – Secretary
Penn State University

Spring 2015-Fall 2016

Penn State Dance Marathon (THON)
Encore Webmaster
Penn State University

Fall 2015

Professional Associations

Pennsylvania Music Educators Association (member, 2013-present)
National Association for Music Educators (member, 2013-present)
Pennsylvania Collegiate Music Educators Association (member, 2013-present)
National Association of Music Educators - Collegiate (member, 2013-present)
National Band Association (member, 2015-present)

Honors and Awards

President's Freshman Award
Dean's List (7 semesters)
North Allegheny Class of 2013 Pre-Tuition Scholarship
Schreyer Honors College Endowment for Academic Excellence Scholarship
School of Music, Music Activities Scholarship
Pi Kappa Lambda National Music Honors Society

Conference and Seminar Attendance

Midwest Clinic Band and Orchestra Conference (2015, 2016)
Pennsylvania Music Educators Association Spring Conference (2014-2-17)
Penn State Music Educators Workshop (2014-2016)
American Trombone Workshop (2015)
International Trombone Festival (2014)

2017 PMEA Conference – Presenter/Poster Session
2017 NAfME Eastern Division – Poster Session

Performance Experience

Ensembles at Penn State:

Symphonic Band (6 semesters)
Jazz band: Outer Dimensions (1 semester), Inner Dimensions (2 semester)
Marching Blue Band (2 semesters)
Women's Chorale (1 semester)
Oriana Singers (3 semesters)
Campus Orchestra (2 semesters)
Percussion Ensemble (1 semester)

Penn State Trombone Choir (7 semesters)
Premier of a new musical: 9th and 72nd: by Aleksey Porcelli
Community Dixieland Band (2015-2016)