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# Factors that lead students to study music education : a descriptive study.

Alexander T. Hamilton II

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FACTORS THAT LEAD STUDENTS TO STUDY MUSIC EDUCATION: A  
DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

By

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B.M.E., Virginia State University, 2011

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of the  
School of Music at the University of Louisville  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

Master of Music Education in Music Education

School of Music  
University of Louisville  
Louisville, Kentucky

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A Thesis Approved on

April 25, 2016

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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Alexander and Susan Hamilton. Their belief in my pursuit of education and efforts to support me through my endeavors is unmeasurable.

I thank them.

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I would like to express my many thanks to my advisor, Dr. Robert Amchin, for his wise words, continued dedication towards my success, and time spent accompanying me on this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Amy I. Acklin for her wealth of knowledge and inspirational attitude throughout my graduate experience. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Acklin for her guidance on this project. I would like to express my many thanks to Dr. Greg Byrne for his continued support, assistance with this project, and opportunities offered which allowed me to grow as a music educator. I would like to thank Dr. Mark W. Phillips and Mr. Harold J. Haughton, Sr. for their instruction and support. I would like to thank my parents for their constant words of encouragement. Lastly, I would like to thank those who participated in this study.

ABSTRACT

FACTORS THAT LEAD STUDENTS TO STUDY MUSIC EDUCATION: A  
DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

Alexander T. Hamilton, II

April 5, 2016

The purpose of this study was to survey music education students in their first year of undergraduate studies to learn what influences and/or musical experiences affected their choice in selecting music education as their major. Participants ( $N = 28$ ) were enrolled in an Introduction to Music Education course at a mid-sized metropolitan university. Subjects were asked to complete a survey and rate perceived degree of influences on the selection of the music education major. Participants were also asked to provide written responses on personal influences that led them to select music education as a major. Survey results indicated that 89.3% of the students were most influenced by their high school music instructor in their decision to pursue music education. Other results show from all participants that previous experiences in music ensembles also had an influence on their decisions.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Graduating high school students are faced with a variety of choices concerning their career and future. While some students will continue into higher education, other students may directly enter the work force. For a person entering college, a student may or may not have a logical reason for choosing a major. Some reasons may be personal while other reasons may be the result of external influencing factors, such as parents, peers, or teachers. Bright (2006) describes this decision-making process as complex and involving many factors.

This study seeks to identify why music education majors choose their degree path. There is often an attraction to becoming a music education major for those students who have participated in a high school ensemble. What are some specific influences of participating in a school music ensemble? What opportunities are students given that allow them to experience a teaching role? Do

these experiences have a role in student decision to pursue music education as a career path?

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to identify influences on students' choice to become a music education major. This study also seeks to identify if past musical experiences have an impact on the selection of the music education major and if these examples are common among students enrolled in music education. Such information could aid both current and future music education students as well as educators (Isbell, 2008). In addition, this investigation may assist in college recruiting and offer an example to secondary music educators of ways to encourage students to pursue careers in music education.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The central research questions addressed in this study are:

1. Do previous experiences in school music programs have any influence in the development of student selection of music education as their major area of study?

2. If so, are these experiences common among those students enrolled in music education?

#### LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

A limitation to the study is the small sample size of participants involved ( $N = 28$ ). A second limitation to the study is the change of enrollment totals of the surveyed class declined from 35 to 28 before the time of the present study. The study was conducted during students first year as an undergraduate music education major, however it was not the first semester. Other limitations to the study include the range of the ages (18-42) of the participants and the time elapsed from being engaged with their former high school instructors to the present. Finally, it is possible that the data collection instrument did not capture all of the variables in student selection of their major.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature explores research findings in students' self-identity in becoming a music educator, how interactions during previous musical ensembles influenced students' decisions to study music education, and the importance of previous teachers and their influence in students' decisions to pursue music education. Previous research literature indicates that influences on student development and selection of a major area of study are both internal and external (Bright, 2006; Gillespie & Hamann, 1999; McClellan, 2011; McClellan, 2007; Sichivitsa, 2007). Internal influences can be associated with self-identity, ability, and career goals. External influences can be linked with peers, relatives, teachers, and other experiences (Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Haston & Russell, 2012; Madsen & Kelly, 2002).

There are many social and musical factors that influence students' choices but the "causes" of why students want to become future music educators has not

received much attention (Madsen & Kelly, 2002). According to Madsen and Kelly (2002), the academic choices that young people make and the contexts in which they make these choices are worthy of investigation. Isbell (2008) suggests that education of future music teachers will be improved by learning more about those students who pursue music teaching careers and how they develop identifying themselves as music educators.

#### INTERNAL INFLUENCES

Hodges (2005) poses the question 'Why Study Music?' Among the many activities for students to select for curricular and extra-curricular purposes, how does music compare and still remain a practical choice in an academic setting? According to Hodges (2005), becoming a musician can expose a student to opportunities in leadership, build self-esteem, grow work ethic, and develop a dedication towards excellence. Joining other clubs or sports may offer similar qualities to students, but Hodges (2005) states that musical experiences are "unique and invaluable."

Hodges (2005) also describes intangible qualities that music offers which make it a worthwhile subject to explore. Hodges (2005) lists ten qualities musicians are able to develop and express through learning music, including: 1)

feelings, 2) aesthetic experiences, 3) ineffable or non-verbal, 4) expression of thoughts, 5) structure in patterns or order, 6) organization of time and space, 7) self-knowledge in learning experiences, 8) self-identity, 9) group identity, and 10) healing or wholeness as music relates to therapy. The research conclusions suggest that intangible qualities may impact a student's choice of a major in college.

Some objective qualities in music can be learned by observation or imitation, but Hodges (2005) places a value on the process of formal education of a topic to develop a mastery of one's talent and potential. One interpretation could be that a student who participates in a school ensemble may place a value on the received education. With this value, a student may develop a motivation to continue in music.

In a study by Madsen and Kelly (2002), participants were asked to describe their earliest memories of choosing to become a music educator. Participants were surveyed with open-response questions to allow for answers that would not "fit" into perceived classifications. In their study, the researchers asked participants to identify how they felt when deciding to become a music education major. Results



indicated that students wanted to teach and/or emulate their director. Other results suggest that students had a "love for music and music experiences" or wanted to teach due to negative previous experiences (Madsen & Kelly, 2002). The results give insight into the diversity of personal reasons of why students selected their major, with each participant having a "unique 'story'" (Madsen & Kelly, 2002).

Additional results of the Madsen and Kelly (2002) study found that of the total participants ( $N = 90$ ), that 56% responded that they decided to study music education in high school between the ages of 15-18. Fourteen percent responded that they became interested during middle school or the ages 11-14. Six percent of respondents indicated their interest of music education in elementary school between ages 5-10. Madsen and Kelly's (2002) data also concluded that a majority (75%) of participants decided to become a music teacher before entering a preparatory program. A smaller collection of students (22%) indicated that their decision to become a music teacher occurred while in college (Madsen & Kelly, 2002).

Research has also examined the influence of a developed "self-identity" on becoming a music teacher

(Bright 2006; Isbell, 2008; Hamann & Walker, 1993; Jones & Parkes, 2010; McClellan, 2007; McClellan, 2011; Parkes and Jones, 2012; Sichivitsa, 2007). Teacher self-identity, or seeing one's self as a teacher, is another factor when selecting a major. Despite differences in academic, socioeconomic, and musical backgrounds, research indicates that there are students who still continue to see themselves as future teachers (Jones & Parkes, 2010). Because of this self-identity, those students may pursue a career as a music educator (Jones & Parkes, 2010).

In a second study, Parkes and Jones (2012) suggests that students give several reasons for choosing a career in music, including: "they enjoyed music, believed that they were good at teaching, believed that a teaching career was useful, and viewed teaching as a part of their identity." In a related study conducted by Bertke (2008), a student displayed an example of their self-identity with teaching saying, "I knew I wanted to be a teacher but I didn't know what to teach. One day I realized that I love music and I love to teach."

Sichivitsa (2007) proposes two internal factors effecting student motivation. The first is a student's self-concept of ability. Students are often willing to

participate in an activity in which they have previously had success and think they are proficient at a task. Students are also willing to continue participation in activities despite elevated challenges (Sichivitsa, 2007). However, students may try to avoid activities in which they have had prior difficulties or failures (Sichivitsa, 2007). Schmidt, Zdzinski, and Ballard's (2006) research shows a relationship between students' motivational approaches towards success and attempt to avoid failures. Their findings suggest that self-concept of ability did not directly affect participant overall career goals (Parkes & Jones, 2012; Schmidt et al., 2006). Sichivitsa (2007) states "Students who believe that music performance is a reflection and function of their talent rather than their practice efforts tend to avoid challenging tasks that may uncover their lack of talent."

The second internal factor studied by Sichivitsa (2007) describes how a person places personal significance or importance on a task. A student may be more influenced to complete a task if they perceive it has importance. Results of Sichivitsa's (2007) investigation suggest that students do place a value on music. It could be determined that a value placed on learning music by a student may affect motivations in continuing to participate in future

musical activities. It might follow that this outlook extends to a person's desire to pursue a career in music.

In a similar study, according to Teachout and McKoy (2010), a student beginning to identify with an occupation is a part of the socialization process. This process can occur in two stages. The first stage is developed in childhood and affected by personal acquaintances with whom there is an emotional attachment (i.e. parents, relatives, teachers, etc.). The second stage occurs with the pursuit of specialized knowledge and skills associated with a career (Teachout & McKoy, 2010). It may be determined that a pursuit of specialized knowledge could include a student enrolling as a music education major.

Other results from Jones and Parkes (2010) suggest that some students want to become a role model to make a difference in their future students' lives. The desire to become a role model for a future student to study music may develop from a self-identity to become a music educator (Jones & Parkes, 2010). Jones and Parkes (2010) used survey and open-response questions to research the question 'What are some of the main reasons that students choose a career in music education?' The results were then divided into four themes: Enjoyment, Ability, Career Usefulness, and

Identity. Of the 143 participants, 55.9% answered with a response related to self-identify with a desire to be an influence in a future student's life. Those who desired to be an influence also indicate being impacted by a positive role model from their former music teacher (Jones & Parkes, 2010).

Lastly, research by Jones and Parkes (2010) investigated if the development of a student's self-identity led them to desire to become a music educator. From that study, it was concluded that:

The two main reasons that students choose a career in music education were (a) that it was part of their identity in that they would like to be a role model or to become like one of their former teachers who helped students, and/or (b) that they enjoyed music, teaching, and/or wanted to make music fun for students.

An attribute related to an individual's self-identity includes giving teaching music meaning (Jones & Parkes, 2010). The self-identity of becoming a music educator arises when individuals categorize themselves as wanting to be associated with the role of being a music teacher (Jones & Parkes, 2010). Hoffer (2009) also discusses how teaching music has an effect on the development of an individual's self-identity and states, "Teaching someone music (or any

other subject, for that matter) offers something that being a performer does not—the satisfaction of helping people learn a skill or information that they would not have acquired without your guidance.”

#### EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

To become a music education major may include similar external influences that students in all majors experience, such as relatives, peers and music teachers. Other considerations might include the enjoyment of teaching music to others, showing a disposition towards effective teaching or a belief that teaching music is useful to society (Doepke, 1977; Lautzenheiser, 2001; Purves, Marshall, Hargreaves, & Welch, 2005). Heimonen (2006) states “I will argue that music education has an important role not only for the individual, but also for society as a whole, since music could be regarded as an instrument in the teaching of virtues.”

External influences may also affect a student’s decision-making process in not choosing an area of study (Brand, 2002; Parkes & Jones, 2012; Sichivitsa, 2007). Brand (2002) suggests that society often presents education as a career in a negative light. In addition, Brand (2002)

also discusses how relatives, peers, media, and movies combine to present teaching as a "second-rate, unsatisfying, and unrewarding career." These and other undesirable perceptions could lead one to ask music teachers if they believe they make a significant contribution to communities and the lives of their students (Brand, 2002).

With such unfortunate perceptions illustrated, one could ask, is teaching music is a worthy profession? To counter these adverse impressions, researchers like Parkes and Jones (2012) found that students believe music teachers do provide an important service to society. Hoffer (2009) states "teachers should devote a small amount of time to educating others about the purposes and values of music in the schools." Brand (2002) also disputes a negative impression of teaching and at the same time embraces it by saying, "music teachers are valued and their contributions are recognized in their communities—and sometimes not."

Sichivitsa (2007) examines other external influences that students encounter ranging from parents, teachers, peers, and previous experiences. The study also identifies factors that may have a contribution to the interest of students' decision to study music. Research from the author

states that "external factors, such as support from parents, teachers, and peers strongly and positively influence students' persistence, and play an important role in shaping their self-concept of ability" (Sichivitsa, 2007).

**Peers.** The role of student's peers also have importance in motivation (Rickels, Councill, Frederickson, Hairston, Porter, & Schmidt, 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007; Teachout & McKoy, 2010). The collaborative environment of others around an individual can provide a level of comfort, and motivate students to remain active in performance and music making. Conversely, peer pressure can also adversely influence student behavior (Sichivitsa, 2007). Negative peer relationships can occur due to the lack of recognition of other's accomplishments. Peers can then create levels of discomfort and reduce motivation towards success (Sichivitsa, 2007). In a study by Madsen and Kelly (2002), subjects were asked to respond to the question "who was with you?" at the time of deciding to become a music education major. Results found that 51% of the participants ( $N = 90$ ) stated they were with their teacher and other students involved in the ensembles at the time of their decision. This result reflects a possible influence in decision-making based on peer influence.



**Parents.** Research has identified extrinsic motivation from parents as one important external factor that affects the decision-making of students (Sichivitsa, 2007; Teachout & McKoy, 2010; Rickels et al., 2010). According to Sichivitsa (2007), children need extrinsic motivation for approval or disapproval of behaviors. Brändström (2000/2001) suggests that interest from parents in music can help motivate students when practicing at home. Parent involvement helps to reinforce behaviors of their children (MacIntyre, Potter, & Burns, 2012; McClellan, 2011). Research by Sichivitsa (2007) also indicates how feedback received from parents is continuously evaluated by children while they perform various tasks. Parental assessment can have an effect on the behaviors and actions of children as they seek approval. Sichivitsa (2007) states that "children tend to base their evaluations on their own opinions and the feedback received from significant adults in their life."

**Teaching Attributes.** It would be useful to examine what attributes make for a good teacher. A breadth of research has focused on what makes teachers successful in the classroom and the methodologies that are deemed most effective for teaching music (Juchniewicz, 2010;

Juchniewicz, Kelly, & Acklin, 2014; Grant & Drafall, 1991; Button, 2010). While not the focus of the current study, potential teacher dispositions may be in place well before a person declares their major in education. While in high school, students may be exposed to various skills and behaviors that are essential to become a music educator (Teachout, 1997). From this, they might exhibit those same qualities themselves. The skills and behaviors observed from high school teachers may be those needed if a student desires to pursue a career as a music educator (Teachout, 1997). Effective teaching qualities, methods, and behaviors used by music instructors may lead and inspire some students towards a career in music education (Hoffer, 2009). Those inspired students who go on to college, reflect the identity and influence from people and experiences from the past (Isbell, 2008).

Associations with a director can also be an important element in fostering an identity to become a music teacher. Bergee and Demorest (2003) recognize the significant role that school music teachers have in influencing students becoming music education majors. Barr (1988) suggests an importance in the student and teacher relationship stating "a student who views the teacher as an accomplice in learning can make progress beyond all expectations." Music

teachers play an integral role as another external influence because teachers have opportunities to give meaning to learning music both in and outside of school (Sichivitsa, 2007).

Sichivitsa (2007) suggests that student motivation and participation increase when the teacher is viewed as supportive and cooperative, able to effectively explain materials, provide clear instructions, and able to give an immediate response to students in a positive manner. The ability for teachers to provide positive reinforcement and other support quickly to students is also important towards the motivation and success of students (Sichivitsa, 2007). With parent and teacher involvement, a student can have multiple sources of influence towards their degree choice. Hoffer (2009) states that "parents look to music teachers for guidance when their child is contemplating a career in music."

A separate study by Teachout (1997) compares responses between behavioral and content knowledge from teachers in two different sides of the teaching profession. In the study by Teachout (1997), Preservice ( $N = 35$ ) and experienced teachers ( $N = 35$ ) were asked to rank a list of 40 skills and behaviors in order from least to most

important to be an effective teacher in the classroom. From the top 10 ranked items received from each group, there were seven skills and behaviors common between the two: 1) be Mature and have self-control, 2) be able to motivate students, 3) possess strong leadership skills, 4) involve students in the learning process, 5) display confidence, 6) be organized, and 7) Employ a positive approach. Between both groups of those surveyed, "Be able to motivate students" was ranked second as the most important skill or behavior to possess (Teachout, 1997). Motivational behavior from teachers may encourage students to not only perform in school, but may also influence some students' decision to pursue music or music education in college.

Similar motivational behaviors are essential in the development of music education majors who seek to become role models. Effective teaching abilities may become a part of the characteristics of some music teachers. The teachers who demonstrate those behaviors to their students may become an influence on students who elect to become music education majors. The skill sets and behaviors displayed in the classroom by teachers is what students may consider by to be the attributes of a role model.

**Role Models.** Role models are also important to a graduating high school student's identity development. According to the research of McClellan (2007), a person's self-concept can be influenced by comparing one's self to a reference or standard. The standard as it would apply to the present study would be the role of an influential music teacher. This idea is reflected in the findings of Gillespie and Hamann (1999) which suggest that students identify their teachers as role models.

Research results suggest that perceived influence from role models appears to be important in choosing a major for college. Role models can present themselves during a student's middle and/or high school career (Isbell 2008; Jones & Kelly 2010; Kantorski, 2004; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Rickels et al., 2010; Teachout, 1997). However, students may observe a role model at any age and be inspired to become one in the future.

**Experiences.** For some students, participating in musical ensembles can lead to a passion to learn more about music and music education. Results from Bergee and Demorest (2003) suggest that the "most influential" experiences students encountered were those from their own schools. Sichivitsa (2007) lists positive previous experiences as an

extrinsic influence on student motivation. Positive previous experiences can motivate students to participate in similar future activities (Sichivitsa, 2007). This is important because it shows that students who have positive musical experiences are likely to continue enrollment in music programs, practice more, aspire to move up within their performance group, attain higher levels of performance, feel successful, and intend to play their instruments longer in the future (Sichivitsa, 2007). These findings suggest the influence to continue in music may be based on a person's previous experience in music ensembles.

Research by Bright (2006) suggests that students are influenced towards becoming music education majors through receiving the opportunity to be in leadership positions. In the study by Bergee and Demorest (2003) results suggest that students placed in those positions were perhaps influenced to become a music education major. Hoffer (2009) suggests that the "leader" role could be one of the aspects that attracts people to the profession. Hoffer (2009) also suggest that the students who received a chance to experience leadership positions may want be in the overall "leader" position of an ensemble as a director, and thus pursue a music education degree. Specific leadership roles

might include being a drum major, a section leader, or a student conductor. A student is quoted stating:

The single greatest influence in my choosing music education as a career was my being given many opportunities in high school to teach and direct my peers and younger students... If I had never been put in teaching roles, I would never have known that I had talent and desire for this field (Bright, 2006).

In a study by Bertke (2008), a student is asked the question "Were you given opportunities to instruct others in your secondary program?" The student responded,

Yes. Our choir department had its form of drum major if you will. It was the student conductor. The student conductor would pick a song and perform on each concert. They directed their own little ensemble and I did that my junior and senior years.

It is from these and other first-hand experiences that students are able to gain a more meaningful understanding of the teaching and learning process (Kantorski, 2004). However, for other students, the love of music is not enough to continue into a career in music education and will seek other professions upon graduation from high school (Brand, 2002).

Bergee and Demorest (2003) state, "By far, the most influential person in respondents' decision-making process

was the high school teacher in their area of study (band, chorus, or orchestra)." Barr (1988) asks "Why is the music teacher's opportunity to serve as a role model unique among educators?" Bergee and Demorest (2003) document that 41% of participants in their study indicate that their high school music teachers were the "most influential" in their selection of major. An additional 29% of participants recognize their high school music teachers as having the second most influence (Bergee & Demorest, 2003).

Taken together, it is clear that young musicians have many decisions and influences to consider when they begin to choose a degree after graduating high school. There is often little time for students to decipher this information and make a final decision. This study continues to search for a better understanding of the factors that impact a music student's decision to choose music education as a major.



## CHAPTER THREE

### OVERVIEW

A survey was developed by the researcher to determine what students felt most influenced their decision to be music education majors. The survey was designed to investigate student perceptions of the degree of influence from persons, experiences, personal reasons, and career choices. From those invited to participate, 28 out of 29 students enrolled in "Introduction to Music Education" completed the survey.

### PROCEDURE

The sample of subjects selected to participate in this study were first year music education majors enrolled in the Introduction to Music Education course ( $N = 28$ ) at a mid-sized metropolitan university. After consent forms were returned, the subjects who agreed to be part of the study were each given the survey. Participants were allowed 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

## DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

Using similar themes based on study of Bergee and Demorest (2003), the data collection instrument was designed with specific questions focusing on influential factors for choosing a major. The survey questions were divided into the following themes: Person, Experience, Personal Reasons, and Career Choice. The survey asks participants to rate their perceived amount of influence of each statement. To allow subjects to evaluate degree of influence, a Likert scale range of Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree was used. At the end of the survey, participants had the opportunity to describe influences in their own words. This gave subjects a chance to include a personal reflection of specific individuals or experiences that may not have been addressed by the first part of the survey.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

As stated above, *Person*, *Experience*, *Personal Reasons*, and *Career Choice* were the themes used in the survey. This allowed for each question to be evaluated according to its category. Ratings for each question were recorded and used to calculate a percentage. Percentages were established by calculating the number of responses for each rating column and dividing by the total number of participants. For example, 8 responses marked *Agree* would then be divided by the total number of participants ( $N = 28$ ), yielding 28.6%. The rating percentage results is summarized in Table 1.

### JUDGEMENT RESULTS

***Person***. Previous music directors, relatives, and peers are the focus of this theme. Results show that 64.3% ( $N = 28$ ) responded with *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to previous musical director(s) directly encouraging them to pursue music education. A majority of participants (89.3%) recorded *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* that previous musical

director(s) are/were a role model to pursue music education. These findings support previous research that suggests teachers are perceived as role models by students (Isbell, 2008; Jones & Kelly, 2010; Kantorski, 2004; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Rickels et al., 2010; Teachout, 1997).

In the questions associated to a relative's influence, 57.1% indicate *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* that a relative made an impact in the decision to major in music education. Another 25% reported they were *Neutral* to having been influenced by a relative.

TABLE 1

*Judgement Results*

| <b>Theme</b>                 | SD   | D    | N    | A    | SA   |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Sub-Category                 |      |      |      |      |      |
| <b>Person</b>                |      |      |      |      |      |
| Music Director(Direct)       | 3.6  | 17.9 | 14.3 | 35.7 | 29.6 |
| Music Director (Role Model)  | --   | 7.1  | 3.6  | 28.6 | 60.7 |
| Relatives                    | 3.6  | 17.9 | 25   | 32.1 | 25   |
| Peers                        | 14.3 | 28.6 | 21.4 | 28.6 | 7.1  |
| <b>Experience</b>            |      |      |      |      |      |
| Participation                | --   | --   | --   | 35.7 | 64.3 |
| Size of Ensemble             | 3.6  | 7.1  | 7.1  | 35.7 | 46.4 |
| District/ State Auditions    | 3.6  | 3.6  | 3.6  | 21.4 | 64.3 |
| Leadership Positions         | 3.6  | 10.7 | 3.6  | 7.1  | 75   |
| Privileges                   | 7.1  | 7.1  | 7.1  | 39.3 | 39.3 |
| Chair/ Ensemble Placements   | --   | 3.6  | 10.7 | 14.3 | 71.4 |
| <b>Personal Reasons</b>      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Passion for Music to Share   | --   | --   | 3.6  | 10.7 | 85.7 |
| Music Education Right for Me | --   | --   | 14.3 | 14.3 | 71.4 |
| <b>Career</b>                |      |      |      |      |      |
| Music Performance Uncertain  | --   | 7.1  | 25   | 35.7 | 32.1 |
| Desire to Be Role Model      | --   | --   | --   | 17.9 | 82.1 |
| Do not Wish to Teach         | 71.4 | 10.7 | 10.7 | 3.6  | 3.6  |

(N = 28)

\* SD - Strongly Disagree, D - Disagree, N - Neutral, A - Agree, SA - Strongly Agree

\*\*All numbers shown as percentages

Interestingly, questions answered based on respondents' peers influencing the decision to study music education found 28.6% selected either *Disagree* or *Agree*. Another 21.4% remained *Neutral* to an impact to their decision from peers. It is curious to take notice of the response groupings involving peers. The results suggest the possibility of peers having an effect on students' decision to continue participation in music as studied by Brand (2002), Bright (2006), Madsen & Kelly (2002), and Sichivitsa (2007).

**Experience.** Previous experiences referenced in this survey include participation in ensembles, size of ensemble, district/state auditions, leadership positions, privileges, and chair test/ensemble placements. Interestingly, all of participants ( $N = 28$ ) (35.7% *Agree*; 64.3% *Strongly Agree*) indicate that experiences in previous musical ensembles had an influence of their selection of becoming a music education major. Another 82.1% of subjects record that they participated a large music ensemble. Respondents indicated 85.7% to *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to auditioning for district or state ensembles. Another 71.4% selected *Strongly Agree* to placing in top positions on chair tests or ensemble placements. High chair/ensemble

placement and auditioning for district/state ensembles relates to students having a level of proficiency in playing abilities or technique on their instrument. These results suggest students continuing an activity based on previous successful experiences, similarly researched by Jones & Parkes (2010) and Sichivitsa (2007).

Several respondents (78.6%) selected *Agree or Strongly Agree* to being given privileges or responsibilities that were not offered to others by their music instructors. A majority of participants (75%) *Strongly Agreed* to being placed in a leadership position. Leadership positions were defined in this study as being a section leader, drum-major, or student conductor. As supported by the research by Bergee and Demorest (2003), Hoffer (2009), Bright (2006), and Kantorski (2004), some students who were given opportunities in leadership positions have continued towards being a music educator.

***Personal Reasons.*** Results show that 85.7% of participants *Strongly Agreed* to being impacted by their passion for music that they wished to share with others. Another 71.4% *Strongly Agreed* to select music education because it was right for them. The idea of music education

being "right for me" refers to self-identity as researched by Hodges (2005) and Jones & Parkes (2010).

**Career Choice.** A majority (67.8%) of participants selected *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* to a music performance career being uncertain and there is better job stability in teaching. Most subjects (82.1%) *Strongly Agreed* that they want to be a role model for a future music. These results support research by Jones & Parkes (2010), Bergee & Demorest (2003), and McClellan (2007). When asked if students no longer have a desire to teach or are considering a change of major, most respondents (82.1%) chose *Strongly Disagree* or *Disagree*.

#### PERSONAL REFLECTION RESULTS

The collected written responses were analyzed qualitatively. Once analyzed, data fit into previously defined themes: *Person*, *Experience*, *Personal Reasons*, *Career Choice*, and *Other*. Twenty-five out of twenty-eight students voluntarily completed the written portion of the survey yielding an 89.3% return. It was decided by the researcher that if multiple themes were included in participants' responses, each would be calculated separately. For example, a response that addresses a *Career Choice* and a *Personal Reason* would be calculated as one



response for each theme. The results from this section are summarized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

*Personal Reflection Results*

| <b>Category</b>  | <b>Percentages</b> |
|------------------|--------------------|
| Person           | 48                 |
| Experience       | 48                 |
| Personal Reasons | 56                 |
| Career Choice    | 24                 |
| Other            | 4                  |

(n = 25)

**Person.** The next category, person, was also an important element when trying to understand a student's decision to become a music education major. Forty-eight percent of the students ( $n = 25$ ) suggested that they chose their degree as a result of a specific person's influence. One student states, "My high school band director helped me realize how much one teacher can change your life." Another participant is quoted stating, "I consider my private tutoring to be a big influence on selecting music education as my area of study." A third student said, "My high school band director encouraged me to challenge myself in every aspect of my life, using music as a conduit to teach life." These results support research that certain impactful people are important to student's career choice (Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Thorton & Bergee, 2008; and Gillespie & Hamann, 1999).

**Experience.** Involvement in musical activities is another category that presented itself in the survey. Written results show that 48% of participants ( $n = 25$ ) said that previous experiences were an influence on their degree choice. One student recalls such an impressionable experience stating "He [high school choir director] worked with me before and after class to prepare me for auditions and made me a section leader as well as a student

conductor." Another student states "The biggest influence was being a drum major as it allowed me to teach, which is something I found enjoyable and it just kind of grew on me." These reflections are an example of the impact from students being placed in leadership opportunities. Bergee and Demorest (2003) and Bright (2006) found similar findings.

***Personal Reasons.*** At the end of the survey, respondents gave their personal reasons for becoming music education majors. Generally, these responses described student self-identity as a future teacher. This mirrors research by Jones and Parkes (2010), McClellan (2011), McClellan (2007), Isbell (2008), Bright (2006), Parkes and Jones (2012), Hamann and Walker (1993), and Sichivitsa (2007). The majority (56%) of participants' (n = 25) written responses reflect a personal reason to select music education. One student comments, "I would love to have a positive impact on so many students, also, to share my passion for music and demonstrate its value." A second describes their experience saying, "In large settings, I was overlooked and never encouraged to pursue music education. But one-on-one I was able to thrive and feel confident about my potential as an educator." A third student comments "I want to provide a space for students to

feel comfortable and confident in their ability to create music and to help them discover who they want to be.”

Another student says their personal influence is “A general love for music and the desire to share that with others. To give others a chance to create something beautiful.”

Clearly, there was a common thread between these individuals that reflected their self-identity as potential teachers.

**Career Choice.** Student’s concern for their career choice also has an impact on the selection of their major. Twenty-four percent of the 25 written responses indicate career choices in music education as an influence. This supports findings about motivations towards career opportunities by Bright (2006), Doepke (1977), Gillespie and Hamann (1999), Isbell (2008), Lautzenheiser (2001), McClellan (2011), and McClellan, (2007). One student states “I love music, I wish I could perform, but teaching is more realistic.” Another decided that music education would be the proper choice by saying “I would make a great professional oboe player, but I hate making reeds so [I] must teach music.” Another open response describes a decision in this way, “Music became a part of me faster than I ever anticipated. I figured I should make a career

out of something so integral in my life. Job availability also was a major influence.”

**Other.** Some students have included alternative reasons to pursue music education. As an outlier, one student responded with a very unusual answer than what could be categorized in previous themes. As an example for choosing music education, this student said “A lack of jazz knowledge in the United States school system.” This could mean that the individual wants to include more jazz in the public schools. Another interpretation could be the student wanting to make a revision in music education practices that balances traditional musical experiences with other options such as Jazz education.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

Do previous experiences in school music programs have any influence in the development of students' selection of their major area of study to be music education? Results of the present study show experiences have had an effect on the participant's decision to become a music education major. All respondents *Agreed or Strongly Agreed* that previous experiences in musical ensembles was an important reason they selected music education.

Results also show that participants have encountered internal and external influences similar to those interpretations by Sichivitsa (2007), Haston & Russell (2012), Madsen & Kelly (2002), Gillespie & Hamann (1999), Bright (2006), McClellan (2007), and McClellan (2011). These included self-identity, parents, peers, role models, previous experiences, and teachers.

Results suggest students can be strongly influenced by former music instructors. It specifically might indicate

that these instructors were also strong professional role models to these young musicians. In the current study a majority (89.3%) of respondents indicate previous music instructors had an impact in their decision to become a music education major. This result echoes similar studies that find that teachers are important role models who students wish to emulate (Hamann & Walker, 1993; Jones & Kelly, 2010; Kantorski, 2004; Madsen & Kelly, 2002; Rickels et al., 2010; Sichivitsa, 2007). Interestingly, a few respondents chose to become music education majors to counterbalance negative experiences with their high school music teacher. Those students enrolled into music education with hopes to be the positive role model that they did not have in their own training.

In addition, leadership opportunities also play into why students choose to enroll as music education majors. Results suggest that a majority (75%) of participants in this study have continued to pursue music education due to leadership opportunities they received in their high school careers.

Observing effective teaching as a student is another influence on future music teachers. Finding the dispositions of their teachers may help in the development

of one's self-image. This study supports this notion. Other positive experiences appeared to be due to the same qualities described by Kantorski (2004), McClellan (2011), McClellan (2007), and Teachout (1997). Teacher effectiveness, therefore, may have an impact on student motivation to continue in music.

There are motivational reasons and influences that students encounter while deciding their career path. This study attempted to further identify specific elements that led this set of students to study music education. Benefits of this research are obvious. Findings in this study could assist in recruitment from universities to identify the most qualified and engaging students to choose a career path in music education. It follows that, this study could aid in the counseling of high school students towards careers in any subject including music or music education. Similar research studies could transform across the multiple subjects with regards towards influences and other life experiences that guide students to select their major.



## FUTURE STUDY

Based on the current study, several areas for future study of the motivations and influences on future music educations are apparent. These are described below.

1. A future study might investigate a larger sample size to see if these results can be replicated.
2. A larger sample of students, from multiple institutions, would be worth considering in a future study. Such a study would consider if there are similarities between students enrolled in different colleges or different regions of the country?
3. A reframing of the questionnaire may yield different results. It is possible that changing the questions from the ones used in the current survey will help focus on other influences toward or away from choosing a college major.
4. Additional research could consider if gender makes a difference in career choices toward or away from a career in music education.
5. An investigation might focus on students' preconceptions of studying music education while still in high school.

6. Future research may identify specific effective teaching qualities that students identify as an influence.
7. Further research could identify if students from different ensembles (band, choir, or orchestra) have different motivations or impressions prior to applying to college. In other words, do band members differ from choir or orchestral high school students when making college choices?
8. A longitudinal study could investigate students' perception of the music education career in high school and again in college.
9. Another study might consider if socio-economic status has an effect on career choice.
10. A study could address specific motivational factors for retention and attrition within a music education program. What types of motivations attract or detract students from a degree in music education?

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