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## Hard-Pressed: Instrumental Music Teachers' Prioritization of Creativity, Repertoire, and Outcomes

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### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to document in-service instrumental music teachers' experiences using a researcher-designed model prioritizing development of individual musicianship in instrumental ensembles. Research questions were: (a) What are in-service instrumental music teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach improvisation and composition through singing, movement, and playing by ear? (b) Does this researcher-designed instructional model help in-service instrumental music teachers improve their own musicianship? and (c) What do in-service instrumental music teachers experience when they implement this model with their students? Six in-service instrumental music teachers met with us biweekly for three two-hour sessions. Throughout these sessions, participants were invited to share what they found appealing, challenging, or difficult as musicians or teachers. Consistent with extant literature, participants generally reported lacking confidence and experience as improvisers and composers, and instruction in how to teach improvisation and composition. Only one participant engaged with and sought to use our instructional model; others steered discussions toward repertoire selection and outcomes of instrumental music education. We therefore analyzed participants' conversations around these topics. This led us to problematize ongoing pragmatic and philosophical issues related to integrating generative musical creativity in instrumental music education.*

**Keywords:** musical creativity; professional development; instrumental music education

Our profession continues to debate outcomes of instrumental music education. This dialogue is not new; there is a long history of calls for music instruction in large ensembles, typically focused on music performance, to teach a broader range of musicianship skills including creating, analyzing, listening to, and responding to music (e.g., Choate, 1968; Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994; Music Educators National Conference, 1965; State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014; Thomas, 1970). Recent publications (e.g., Fonder, 2014; Heuser, 2015; Miksza, 2013; Peterson & Fonder, 2014; Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major, 2014) highlight complexity surrounding this issue, and confirm need for ongoing research and dialogue. In these conversations, one criticism of common practice instrumental music instruction has been its continued focus on “technically superlative” group performances (Heuser, 2015, p. 216) that “stand in the way of individual growth and independence” (Barrett, 2012, p. ix). This focus neglects other musical behaviors (e.g., singing, moving, tonal and rhythm pattern instruction, playing by ear, composing, and improvising) called for by music educators, researchers, and policymakers (Azzara, 2002; Commonwealth of Virginia, 2013; Duke, 2011; Elliott & Silverman, 2014; Gordon, 2012; Grunow, 2005; New York State Department of Education, 2010; Reimer, 2003; State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014).

In spite of these calls, specific to creativity, pre-service and in-service teachers have consistently reported least preparation for and least priority of creativity-related skills (Bell, 2003; Bernhard, 2012; Bernhard & Stringham, 2015; Diehl & Scheib, 2013; Louk, 2002; Riley, 2009). In comparison with other standards, teachers consider improvisation and composition less important (Byo, 1999; Kirkland, 1996; Louk, 2002) and more difficult to teach (Bell, 2003). Teaching improvisation and composition occupies a small percentage of class time (Louk, 2002;

Orman, 2002). Further, many teacher preparation programs inadequately prepare music educators to improvise and compose, or to teach improvisation and composition (Abrahams, 2000; Adderly, 1999; Louk, 2002). Abrahams (2000) stated, “Public school teachers are not teaching their charges to compose and improvise because they never learned to do it themselves in their own pre-service teacher training” (p. 219). This is problematic given Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage’s (2005) suggestion that teachers need to: (a) understand how children learn; (b) model content they are teaching; (c) understand how to teach that content; and (d) be able to monitor, evaluate, and assess student learning (p. 10).

In this context, professional development may provide a solution. Effective professional development for music teachers at all career stages requires sustained, ongoing, content-specific opportunities (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009) that address both administrative (Conway, 2003) and curricular (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005; Conway, 2006; Roulston, Legette, & Womack, 2005) concerns. Content-specific professional development materials include succinct resources for specific teaching contexts (e.g., embouchure, seating arrangements, content outside one’s specialization). While these assist teachers in efficiently carrying out day-to-day responsibilities associated with being a music teacher (e.g., directing a large ensemble), they are not necessarily helpful in modeling, teaching, and evaluating individual students’ achievement on processes at the heart of our profession’s *National Core Arts Standards* (State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014): creating, performing, responding, and connecting.

As former in-service instrumental music teachers and current music teacher educators, our interest was in instrumental music instruction that, consistent with policy and research, simultaneously improves individual musicianship, provides opportunities for students to engage

in generative creativity (i.e., improvising and composing), and enhances performance of existing repertoire. This inquiry considered researchers who have investigated pre-service teachers', in-service teachers', and music teacher educators' attitudes toward, level of student engagement with, and teacher skill in context of National Standards (e.g., Hewitt & Koner, 2013; Snell, 2013; Stringham, Thornton, & Shevock, 2016).

Informed by this literature, we developed an instructional model (Snell & Stringham, 2010) that prioritizes development of individual musicianship in instrumental ensembles. This model equips students to recognize and comprehend all parts that occur simultaneously during performance of repertoire. All students learn melodies, bass lines, and harmonies within a piece by ear, and then with notation. Once students know these musical elements, it is more likely they will comprehend relationships between their parts and those of other performers. This approach ideally empowers instrumental music educators to prioritize both individual student musicianship and group performance.

Our presentations of this model to pre-service and in-service music educators suggested that, consistent with extant literature, teachers feel inadequately prepared to engage in these activities as either practicing musicians or teachers. While researchers cited above specifically referred to composition and improvisation, we were also interested in roles that singing, movement, playing by ear, and aural analysis play in instrumental music instruction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to document in-service instrumental music teachers' experiences engaging their students in aurally-based music performance, creation, and analysis. Consistent with Patton's (2015) pragmatic utilitarianism, we sought "practical and useful insights" (p. 152) with which to better understand teachers' perceptions surrounding these musical behaviors. Research questions guiding this inquiry were: (a) What are in-service instrumental music

teachers' perceptions of their ability to teach improvisation and composition through singing, movement, and playing by ear? (b) Does this researcher-designed instructional model help in-service instrumental music teachers improve their own musicianship? and (c) What do in-service instrumental music teachers experience when they implement this model with their students?

### **Methodology**

We invited six in-service instrumental music teachers to meet with us four times biweekly, for two hours each session. Due to conflicting schedules, we ultimately met three times; twice at one researcher's home, the other at a location central to participants and us. To identify participants, we sought information-rich cases by employing a purposeful sampling strategy focused on typical cases (Patton, 2015). Our criteria for "typical and normal" (Patton, 2015, p. 284) cases were that participants would be public school instrumental (wind and percussion) music teachers who worked in our region and were open to conversations about including aural learning, individual student musicianship development, and generative creativity in their classrooms. To maximize variation within the sample, we sought both male and female participants who taught at elementary, middle, and high school levels and in distant rural, remote rural, distant town, and small suburban contexts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). We identified and invited participants through our work as music educators in the region; each teacher had attended a state music education association conference where we presented and demonstrated this model. Throughout these meetings, participants had opportunities to comment on what they found appealing, challenging, or difficult both for themselves musically and when teaching their students.

### **Participants**

Lucy was in her first year teaching instrumental music in a distant rural school district;

she was a long-term substitute during this study. Her primary instrument is flute. She had recently completed an undergraduate degree in music education from a suburban liberal arts college.

Janet, also a flutist, was in her third year teaching elementary general and beginning instrumental music in a distant town school district. She received an undergraduate degree in music education from a rural liberal arts college.

Paul, a saxophonist who completed his undergraduate degree in music education at an institution in his state's university system, was in his fourth year of teaching 4-12 instrumental music in a remote rural school district. He had recently completed a master's degree in music education from a regional state university. Paul also conducted a local community band, primarily made up of older adults.

Todd was in his fifth year of teaching middle school instrumental music in a distant rural school district. His primary instrument is flute. Between his second and third years of teaching, he took a one-year sabbatical to complete a master's degree from a state university, from which he also held an undergraduate degree in music education.

Alison was in her sixth year of teaching middle school instrumental music in a small suburban district. Also a flutist, she was unusually familiar with jazz music because her father is a jazz pianist and university music professor. Alison was also active in a community-based African drumming and dance ensemble. She held bachelor's and master's degrees from a regional private college.

Jack was in his third year teaching high school instrumental music in a distant rural community. A saxophonist with experience in jazz performance and improvisation, Jack was completing his master's degree from a nearby liberal arts college, where he had also received his

undergraduate degree.

### **Procedures**

At the first meeting, we engaged participants in improvising around “Long, Long Ago,” a ubiquitous tune in beginning instrumental music. In preparation for our second meeting, we asked participants to practice similar activities informed by another tune (“Simple Gifts”) and to bring scores for repertoire they were currently teaching. We reviewed “Simple Gifts” at the second meeting, and had hoped to demonstrate our instructional model with repertoire that we asked participants to bring. Only one participant brought scores, however, which led to participants instead discussing procedures for selecting repertoire to teach. For the third meeting, we invited participants to consider how they could implement our instructional model in their teaching contexts. At this meeting, similarly, only one participant—whose teaching already embodied procedures similar to those we demonstrated—shared a video of students learning repertoire by ear. This video catalyzed conversation about outcomes for instrumental music education. While we expected dialogue to center around themes related to what we were researching (i.e., generative creativity, student musicianship, aural learning), we ultimately facilitated conversation around topics participants appeared interested in discussing.

**Data analysis.** We video recorded each group meeting. Using strategies recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2006) and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), we initially transcribed, coded, and organized data based on themes related to our original research questions. Using a constant comparison process, we first independently reviewed transcripts and then compared our findings with each other. Because what participants discussed in our meetings deviated from our original research questions, we shifted to an emergent analysis process, re-coding and re-organizing data to develop themes related to topics our participants discussed (Creswell, 2014).

**Trustworthiness.** We sought to establish trustworthiness in our findings through Lincoln and Guba's (1985) notions of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Constant comparison analysis allowed us to establish credibility by triangulating data from transcriptions, video recordings, and researcher memos. Discussion of emerging findings at a variety of music education research conferences established transferability. To enhance dependability and confirmability, we invited an external auditor to review our transcripts, memos and analytic notes, and various thematic outlines to affirm our decision to move analysis away from our original research questions; this auditor affirmed that our analysis was consistent with data reviewed.

### **Findings**

We begin by presenting findings consistent with the original intent of our study: documentation of instrumental music teachers' perceptions of ability to teach improvisation and composition, their perceptions regarding implementing instruction prioritizing these skills, and perceived barriers to teaching improvisation and composition. Then, we summarize conversations our participants generated independent of our original intent: (a) discussion of selecting repertoire for performance and (b) outcomes of instrumental music education.

#### **Participants' Perception of Ability to Teach Improvisation and Composition**

Participants generally reported lacking confidence, experience, and previous instruction in how to teach improvisation and composition. While neither Lucy nor Paul volunteered information in group discussions, other participants reported limited experience engaging in and teaching these skills during our first group meeting. For example, Janet stated:

As far as improvising I never really learned anything about it . . . now that I'm a teacher...  
I wish somebody would introduce it when you first start learning 'cause then you're not



afraid. For composition, I don't think I really did anything with it until I took a theory class in high school, and we didn't really do too much until I got to college. Just learned the basics.

In contrast, Alison described specific experiences with movement and playing by ear in an aurally-based African drumming and dance ensemble that made her more comfortable teaching these skills in her classroom: “. . .they always talk about how the drumming is nothing without the dance, and the dance is nothing without the drumming, you know?” Similarly, her descriptions and video of teaching students aurally suggested she perceives having sufficient ability to engage students in these skills.

While Jack reported perceptions of ability to teach improvisation in particular, his experiences and pedagogy were not informed by singing, movement, or playing by ear:

My first experience was at jazz festival when I was in middle school and I remember some guy talking about the blues scale and I didn't know what it was when he first played it and I thought it was really neat and it sounded really cool. And I was sort of fiddling around with it a lot.

In high school, Jack received inspiration from his “director,” who “talk[ed] about chord changes and you know, feel the music more, kind of follow the flow. And I listened to a lot of improvising and it helped me a lot to understand phrasing, different styles and ideas.”

To teach improvisation, Jack reported, “I've tried to introduce the same sort of things that I experienced when I was younger to my kids.”

### **Implementing Instruction Prioritizing Improvisation and Composition**

We asked participants to consider how they could apply this model in their teaching

context. Janet, who expressed limited experiences with these skills herself, seemed interested in incorporating them in her classroom:

And I would like to start um... teaching my kids a little bit about improvising ... I do a couple general music classes too, and I actually talk more about improvising in that class just 'cause it's easier with percussion instruments and stuff. But I would eventually like to incorporate into fourth grade [instrumental music] somehow, just introduce it a little bit . . . the band method that we use in [my school district] incorporates composition into like every other lesson.

Alison reported trying to intentionally select repertoire that lends itself to teaching improvisation, and finds her initial aural approach improves students' experiences encountering notation:

I try to pick arrangements that are, like, of songs that the kids know, like a folk song or something like that, and I usually teach it by ear first with melody and then bass lines and then I have them improvise, and I have them do the inner voices as well, and then when I put the piece in front of them, it's not like they haven't seen it before and their rehearsal goes pretty easily.

Paul indicated that improvisation and composition may be useful to students not only in terms of performance, but also in understanding music theory: "What better way of teaching theory than by experiencing this kind of thing? At the end of it, they know [a piece of music]. They know the chords, they know the melody, they know how to embellish it...it's great."

In the following conversation, Todd expressed enthusiasm about trying to use this model in a music theory class:

Todd: In my theory class I could video tape them while I teach it.

Jack: Step by step, exactly how it's done?

Todd: Yeah, see how it works with the theory kids.

Researcher: Yeah, that's great.

Todd: 'Cause they're a good group of kids that might get inspired by this.

Similarly, in reaction to Todd's implication that these skills might be relevant to only a subset of his students, Jack reported that he would be "hard-pressed. . . to find enough kids to [improvise, sing, play by ear] . . . There's a small handful that have those types of skills and desires to do that."

### **Perceived Barriers to Implementation**

Participants identified barriers related to teaching context, appropriateness of non-jazz improvisation, and teacher musicianship. At Alison's middle school, she teaches students who subsequently study with a high school teacher whose priority is performing music from notation:

I got an email from [high school teacher]. He wants to know . . . give me the list of the eighth graders that are coming up to me next year and tell me, you know, how do they read and what's their behavior like . . . He doesn't want to know anything about . . . you know, how are their ears? Can they improvise? He doesn't care about any of that stuff.

Both Todd and Jack questioned the appropriateness of improvisation as defined in materials used in this study, specifically use of non-jazz repertoire. Todd questioned:

Who ever improvises to "Simple Gifts?" . . . I think even high schoolers will dig [learning and performing] "Simple Gifts." I think what they're not going to dig is improvising "Simple Gifts," because "Simple Gifts" is "Simple Gifts" and it's not the sort of tune you'd ever hear on the radio that would be improvised.

Similarly, Jack suggested that improvisation needs to be defined contextually:

I almost feel like we need to have two different types of improv. I mean ... there's Music Learning Theory improv, and then there's improv that I teach to my high school jazz saxophone players. I mean, like, we had Solofest, uh, on Saturday, uh, for [state MEA] jazz ... [Two students] got a 97 and a 94. Wonderful. But if they walked in and did improv (see Figure 1), you know, no, *bad, bad, bad* (gestures as a judge marking a score sheet). You know what I mean? Yeah, they went through the chords, but there's a whole style of improv in jazz that's different than what is happening here.



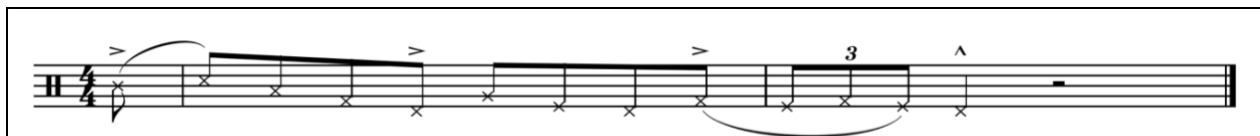
Figure 1. Jack's Example of "Music Learning Theory improv".

Jack then questioned which "type" of improvisation is our goal:

Is it to go (sings; see Figure 2), or is it (sings; see Figure 3)? You know what I mean, there's so many different styles. I mean, the improv of how I know it is *not* MLT improv. The chords, structures, everything, same idea, but the actual style, I mean, if we want, you know, gear toward the real jazz style, then I don't know if it should be changed at this early level, or, I mean, a lot of listening, I mean, I don't know, you guys can get where I'm at.



Figure 2. Jack's First "Type" of Improvisation.



*Figure 3.* Jack’s Second “Type” of Improvisation. Neither a jazz faculty colleague nor we could clearly determine pitches; we attempted to display melodic contour, rhythm, and phrasing.

In addition to perceived barriers expressed by participants, while reviewing recordings and transcripts of meetings, we noticed that engaging in playing by ear, singing, moving, and improvising during our second meeting posed a challenge to several group members’ musicianship. While we did not ask participants to discuss this because it would have been awkward, Paul talked openly about his musicianship as a barrier to him teaching skills related to creating music:

Paul: My own musicianship’s gonna hold my students back. That’s what it is—so I guess it’s just do more of this. . .

Researcher: So, in other words, developing your musicianship. . . beyond tonic, dominant, subdominant?

Paul: Oh yeah (laughs). So, that’s just me getting better.

While Alison did not refer to her own musicianship as a barrier, she suggested, in context of speaking about the high school colleague with whom her current students will later study, that instrumental music teachers’ musicianship may not include skill improvising, composing, teaching improvisation, or teaching composition:

So when big kids like my eighth graders go up to him and they’re in ninth grade, he does Breeze Easy Book 2. That’s what he does because he thinks they can’t read, when in actuality, Breeze Easy Book 2 is at his level, not at the kids’ level, you know what I mean? Like he doesn’t know how to teach improvisation, and he doesn’t know how to

teach composition . . . I'm not saying I'm great at it but he doesn't know what to do with the kids, so it's very frustrating.

### **Selecting Repertoire for Instrumental Music Education**

At our second meeting, while we asked participants to bring scores for repertoire they were teaching, only Alison brought music to share. As she shared scores for arrangements of "Joshua," "Black is the Color," and "Softly is the Morning Sunrise," Todd asked Alison how she selects repertoire. She responded that it is not always easy for her to select concert band repertoire, commenting that "there's a lot of music that's just written for, you know, the dollars ... it's like there's a lot of crap out there."

Todd responded:

So I actually don't frequently find any difficulty finding music at all, I just go to the J.W. Pepper catalog and I listen to the pieces in there, and [in] almost every one of them, I find something in it that would be worth doing, even if it's just for a couple times in rehearsal because it targets this particular skill, or it targets this particular chord progression, or this particular level of knowledge that my kids may or may not have depending on who they are and that particular year.

Paul described planning a typical concert program where the pieces he selects are "vehicle[s] for teaching musicianship":

So I, I just go with a march, you know, Sousa ... there's your technical right there. Articulations, and there's the march style ... there's a lot of stuff you could address in a march. ... Then I go to like a slower piece to kind of work on that kind of musicianship. Supporting the sound, to take a big breath, get phrasings to connect, the notes will go together, there's like peanut butter between the notes, they seamlessly connect to make

phrases. And then I try to go for [a] medley [or] movie theme ... something that's truly accessible. And then I have [a] work piece ... where I like to maybe focus on like a triple kind of division, say six eight or three four time. And like that's kind of like the concept piece.

Jack then spoke about his prioritization of students enjoying band:

Sometimes I don't even think about, 'Well, we need to work on this [musical concept], but [instead] if the kids are gonna enjoy themselves. . . .' And I think it might even be different in [small school district], where numbers are so important. You lose one kid, your program could crumble. Um, we want the kids to be enjoying what they're playing. Um, and if I have to sacrifice not learning something in that rehearsal, but they enjoy coming to band and being there as a group, um, I can teach that in another lesson.

### **Outcomes of Music Education**

At our third meeting, Alison shared a video of her teaching a group of students to perform "Joshua" by ear. Her video, combined with participants' previous conversations about repertoire and their experiences with and ability to implement creativity-based instruction, catalyzed a conversation about outcomes in music education.

Lucy suggested that instrumental music education outcomes may vary among students:

It sounds to me like the objective is just for these kids to be successful at being a musician or [on] an instrument, or successful in some kind of way. And for each kid, that's going to be different, you know? Enjoying it too—maybe they find more enjoyment in improvising. Some kids might not feel successful just reading off the page.

Alison shared that in a district-wide music teacher meeting, her high school colleague asked her: "What are we aiming towards? Don't you think after they get out of high school, we

want them to be in community bands? That's what we want them to do, right?" Alison responded, "No! [laughing] That's not what I want them to do. . .that could be *one* thing. Maybe when they graduate, what they want to do is be in a garage band, or maybe they want to play in their church, or maybe they just want to play on their own." Alison continued, "I don't think that what [this colleague is] doing right now is going to facilitate that. Like maybe they can play in a community band, maybe, but they could do anything on their own."

Todd felt that improvisation and composition could be an important outcome, if a teacher felt it was, but that decision should be within a teacher's purview: "Maybe [Alison's colleague] doesn't even see that as a goal. Maybe his goal—the way he has etched out his existence in life really—is to get those kids to be passionate about something so they come to school every day, so they graduate high school." Todd continued:

I find myself frequently having huge philosophical disconnects with colleagues, too, because the way I look at the school music program is, I think very different from how most people look at it. Most people would say very very succinctly that 'our job is to create the best musicians we possibly can,' and I'm not sure if that's it. ... Like what I really want is the kids that I see in junior high to continue playing in high school. Why? Because I want them to be a part of that group, because it's a good group of kids, because I want to be able to hold a hammer over their head when they start failing classes, saying 'you can't be in jazz band unless you're eligible.' I guess to focus in a little bit more on what I'm trying to say is if he's been teaching for many years and he has a very firm opinion on what it is he's doing, and he's always done it that way because he sees the value in it, and he's seen people graduate from it, and he's seen the benefits of what he's done. If he feels like what you're doing is inhibiting that goal, then of course he's going



to be upset.

Turning back to Alison, Todd concluded:

You know, but you see it completely differently. You see his goals as not being the same as yours, and he's not willing to change it or learn, and I just feel like this antagonistic point of view is very disruptive because who's caught in the middle of it? It's the kids. The kids get caught in the middle, because you want them to learn this one way, and he gets upset and some of them probably end up quitting as a result.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Specific to our original research questions, these participants felt unprepared, and sometimes unwilling, to teach improvisation and composition (Adderley, 1999; Abrahams, 2000; Louk, 2002). Alison and Jack both reported having a background in improvisation; however, neither obtained this background in a concert band setting. While Alison transferred skills developed in an African drumming and dance group to her teaching, Jack did not articulate a connection between his experiences and teaching, except for his work with several advanced jazz saxophonists. It was not surprising that Todd and Janet, who indicated these skills were not part of their own experience as musicians, articulated barriers to implementing this instruction. The contradiction that Jack—who identified as an improviser—was not engaging all of his students in learning to create their own music, perplexed us. While his self-portrayal as a skilled improviser may have potentially masked his questionable musicianship skills and seemingly limited knowledge of improvisation pedagogy, Jack's overriding concern that students “enjoy coming to band and being there as a group” seems misguided in context of research suggesting that students—and teachers—find opportunities to create their own music and broaden their own musicianship meaningful (e.g., Menard, 2015; Randles, 2009).

Beyond individual teacher readiness and willingness to engage in these activities, we wondered why participants did not follow through on assignments mutually agreed upon at conclusion of each meeting (i.e., bringing scores and sharing examples of their teaching). We designed this research study as an opportunity to provide sustained and ongoing professional development for instrumental music teachers sustained. Our goal was to delimit our scope to materials that were content-specific (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) and curricular in nature (Bransford, et al., 2005; Conway, 2006; Roulston, Legette, & Womack, 2005).

Our participants were familiar with objectives and content of our work, and knew one or both of us prior to enrolling in this study. It was critical that they actively engaged in processes of sharing repertoire and practicing activities we recommended with their students. We found it curious, therefore, that they did not fully participate in this professional development experience.

We felt six weeks was enough time to try out activities we suggested. Elpus (2013) reported that eight weeks of professional development related to creative musicianship skills (e.g., improvising, composing) positively affects the likelihood of teachers including these skills in their teaching. Perhaps implementation of our suggested activities required additional time to digest and integrate into their curricula.

Additionally, it may be possible that participants would have been more comfortable developing these skills in individual settings, which would not have necessitated being vulnerable—musically, professionally, or personally—in front of peers. While the purpose of our study was to neither document nor evaluate our participants' musicianship, we noticed that several activities (e.g., singing, playing by ear) posed a challenge. For example, Jack's demonstration of what he considered stylistically appropriate jazz improvisation (see Figure 3) lacked any discernible tonal context. Similarly, when we were working on "Simple Gifts," Jack

disagreed with the harmonization we shared, and expressed that he felt a different solution—which created a dissonant sonority—would be more appropriate (see Figure 4). Paul was the only participant who articulated that improving his own musicianship would help him teach more effectively.

The figure displays a musical score for the piece "Simple Gifts" in C major, 4/4 time. It consists of three staves: Melody, Standard Harmonization, and Jack's Harmonization. The melody is a simple, repetitive line. The standard harmonization uses chords I, I, V, IV, I. Jack's harmonization uses chords I, I, V, V, I. The chords are indicated by Roman numerals below the notes.

Staff	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
Melody	C4	C4	D4	E4	F4
Standard Harmonization	I	I	V	IV	I
Jack's Harmonization	I	I	V	V	I

*Figure 4.* Jack's Harmonization of "Simple Gifts".

Regardless of why participants resisted the stated purpose of our meetings, they steered much of our time toward other concerns: selecting repertoire for performance and perceived outcomes of instrumental music education. To be fair, providing teachers a space within which they can freely discuss topics of interest to them is valuable professional development (Kitchen, Ciuffetelli Parker, & Gallagher, 2008). It is logical that they may have more of an interest in repertoire selection as a default conversation point, consistent with performance-centric practice in our profession at large. Nevertheless, we felt we were clear that the purpose of our meetings with these teachers was to share our ideas and receive their feedback. We wonder, then, why participants limited their contributions to concerns about finding repertoire that students would enjoy, facilitating student retention, accomplishing specific performance goals, and developing specific music performance skills.

Participants' concerns about repertoire and performance outcomes are important: students should enjoy repertoire they perform in ensembles with required enrollment. Yet, avoidance of discussing and developing skills related to facilitating students' creativity highlights an ongoing inconsistency with policymakers' calls for engaging students in artistic processes of creating, performing, responding, and connecting (e.g., State Education Agency Directors of Arts Education, 2014). Teachers who wish to address such directives have a growing number of practical resources available (e.g., Hickey, 2012; Kaschub & Smith, 2009, 2013, 2016; Randles & Stringham, 2013; Riley, 2016). Improvisation and composition are critical to developing student musicianship, and should be central to instrumental music education curricula. In this context, then, it is unfortunate that our participants reinforced extant research regarding importance of, and preparation to teach, improvisation and composition (Abrahams, 2000; Bell, 2003; Bernhard, 2012; Bernhard & Stringham, 2015; Byo, 1997; Kirkland, 1996; Louk, 2002; Orman, 2002; Riley, 2009).

Based on our participants' conversations, it seems performing repertoire, preparing students to continue performing repertoire as adults, and extended engagement with band activities are their perceived outcomes for instrumental music education. These outcomes are similar to the rationale our participants shared for selecting repertoire. For Todd, outcomes were social—staying connected with “a good group of kids”—rather than musical. Interest in developing creativity, or even a sense of individual independent musicianship, was lacking.

We wonder, then, about how to disrupt the status quo of performance-centric instrumental music education. Pre-service instrumental music teachers may or may not receive preparation that includes engaging in and teaching improvisation and composition (Hewitt & Koner, 2013; Stringham, Thornton, & Shevock, 2016). Will one or two methods classes broaden

their perspective beyond our profession's primary criterion measure of music performance? For in-service teachers, if not through content-specific professional development of this nature, where, when, and how will systematic engagement with musical creativity be a normal expectation for instrumental music educators' instruction?

Many music teachers are continuing to do that which they themselves experienced, and may have found interesting. This continues to perpetuate a performance-centric model. Within professional organizations, teachers are often recognized for training students to recreate others' repertoire, regardless of whether students' music learning includes other knowledges and skills (e.g., analysis, listening, creating). This leads us to question what philosophical frameworks are guiding instrumental music teachers. Some viewpoints expressed in ongoing debate within our profession (e.g., Fonder, 2014; Kratus, 2007; Miksza, 2013; Peterson & Fonder, 2014; Task Force on the Undergraduate Music Major, 2014; Williams, 2011) suggest that without a philosophical framework wherein creativity is contributing to curricular goals and outcomes, application of activities such as those in this professional development opportunity will encounter resistance.

What incentives, then, exist for engaging students in musical creativity? Our participants' prioritization of performing repertoire and encouraging ongoing participation in both curricular and community ensembles suggest a lack of motivation to embrace a more comprehensive, standards-based instrumental music curriculum. These participants did not perceive an incentive to include generative creativity in their instruction, in spite of a focused professional development opportunity devoted to doing so. Only Paul and Alison articulated a connection between developing student musicianship and engaging students in creative activities such as improvising and composing. Further, Paul was the only participant who acknowledged that his

musicianship was preventing him from effectively teaching his students to improvise and compose.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Our study raised questions about priorities and outcomes of music education we did not intend to examine as part of our initial inquiry. Our first recommendation for future research is to replicate this professional development opportunity wherein a different group of participants experiment with a teaching model, researchers offer support for content- or repertoire-specific applications, and participants discuss challenges of integrating generative creativity into music curricula.

Additional research might examine questions such as: What would happen if we replicated this study with a different group of instrumental, strings, vocal, or classroom music educators? What would occur in a similar study where the researchers do not know the participants? Would monetary compensation, professional development credit, or compulsory participation lead to different results? Do music educators not teaching in winds and percussion settings have different beliefs?

Researchers have previously examined pre-service teachers', in-service teachers', and music teacher educators' perspectives related to including creativity in instrumental music education. In addition to continuing these strands of research, it may be fruitful to examine stakeholders' music education philosophies; what do they perceive as guiding philosophies for learning and teaching music? For example, how do principals, arts administrators, district-level administrators, parents, community members, students enrolled in music instruction, and students not enrolled in music instruction conceptualize creativity as part of instrumental music education? To what extent are pre- and in-service teachers aware of, and in alignment with, ideas

articulated by music education scholars? How do teachers and stakeholders reconcile perceived competing interests of large ensemble performance, individual musical development, aural skills, and creativity in this literature?

To what extent do in-service instrumental music teachers consider engagement with music education research the purview of university professors and continue to explicitly or implicitly propagate philosophies of instrumental music education as large ensemble performance, with little or no regard for individual musical development, aural skills, and creativity? As Allsup (2010) notes, music educators “may be forgiven if they too often confuse the activities of school with what it means to teach” (p. 39). Teachers’ day-to-day responsibilities may not provide space—or perception of space—to engage in conversations around research, philosophy, and larger-scale professional dialogues.

Research literature affirms that prioritization of generative creativity is improving among various stakeholder groups. Our study further contributes to ongoing research of inclusion of generative creativity pedagogy in pre-service music teacher preparation, in-service music teacher practice, and music teacher professional development. More research is necessary, however, to effectively integrate and prioritize creativity in instrumental music education.

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