

# MEASURES OF COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

## **Measures of Preservice Music Educator Commitment Social Justice**

### **[Abstract]**

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Fifth Biennial Colloquium for Instrumental Music Teacher Educators  
Deer Creek Resort, Mt. Sterling, Ohio  
Thursday, May 16, 2013  
Poster Session #1

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### Measures of Preservice Music Teacher Commitment to Social Justice

Recent scholarship in music education has focused on the barriers to music education, impacts on music curricula, and injustices that may result from traditional music education practices. Socioeconomic, racial, ethnic, and cultural factors impact both access and quality of music education, but teachers and preservice teachers often dismiss the impact of these issues on classroom practice (Albert, 2006; Balleytyne & Mills, 2007; Costa-Giomi & Chappell, 2007; Easter et al, 1999; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2012). Some programs identify social justice in a critical multicultural or antiracism approach as an explicit goal involving teaching in culturally open ways, expanding access for students and challenging the status quo when needed, although this may conflict with some beliefs that teacher candidates cite for electing to teach (Schmidt, in press).

A variety of teacher preparation programs across the United States, particularly those located in urban areas, have developed survey instruments to measure equity and social justice beliefs (Cochran-Smith, 2006). As part of an effort to measure a host of outcomes in teacher preparation, the *Boston College Teachers for a New Era Evidence Team* developed The Learning to Teach for Social Justice: Measuring Changes in Beliefs Scale (LTSJ-B) to measure the beliefs associated with a commitment to social justice (Cochran-Smith et al, in press). The LTSJ-B scale utilized sources for item development from social justice and teacher education literature, practical experience in teacher education, and focus group exercises in undergraduate and graduate education classes, starting with 200 items and ending with a final 12 item scale (Ludlow, Enterline, & Cochran-Smith, 2008; Enterline, Cochran-Smith, Ludlow & Mitescu, 2008). Using Rasch scaling, the LTSJ-B data of candidates provided item and person estimates to assess where teacher education completers lay on a continuum of social justice beliefs.

The LTSJ-B was intended to reflect a focus on beliefs in regards to change agency, equity of learning opportunities and outcomes, and the valuing of knowledge, traditions and identities of multiple groups (Enterline, Cochran-Smith, Ludlow, & Mitescu, 2008). Rooted in a conceptual framework of teacher knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and values as these affect practice and pedagogy, this scale was “conceptualized as a continuum along which people differ” (Ludlow, Enterline, & Cochran-Smith, 2008, p. 195). Data collected over several years in the United States, Puerto Rico, Ireland, and New Zealand, regardless of wording and/or language changes, have confirmed the validity, reliability, consistency of the instrument. A similar pattern of growth in the social justice beliefs among teacher education candidates has also been confirmed (Cochran-Smith et al, 2012; Enterline et al, 2008; Ludlow et al, 2008). Results also revealed that beliefs were maintained among teachers into their first year of teaching (Enterline et al, 2008). To date, this instrument has not been used with candidates preparing to teach music.

The purpose of this study was to examine the commitment to social justice of music teacher education students between program entry and student teaching at four different institutions. A survey of recent graduates served as a confirmatory measure to determine whether social justice beliefs continue into full time teaching. Research questions addressed in this study include (a) Which LTSJ-B items are easier and which LTSJ-B items are more difficult for music student teachers to endorse? (b) How do the ratings of LTSJ-B items by entry level candidates compare with the ratings by student teachers? (c) How do the LTSJ-B ratings of in-service teachers compare with student teachers? (d) What differences in item ratings exist across

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institutions? (e) How do the LTSJ-B ratings by music candidates compare with results of education candidates in general?

### Methodology

This study is a modified replication of previous research (Cochran-Smith et al, 2012; Enterline et al, 2008; Ludlow, Enterline, & Cochran-Smith, 2008) that measured beliefs relevant to social justice in general teacher education using The Learning to Teach for Social Justice: Measuring Changes in Beliefs Scale (LTSJ-B; see Appendix). The instrument was administered to music education candidates during introductory music education coursework and student teaching at four music education institutions, along with recently graduated teachers within the immediate area of each institution. Current teacher candidates were surveyed via paper administration and Qualtrics<sup>®</sup> online survey software was utilized to administer the survey to recent graduates.

The Rasch rating scale allows for raw data collected on human attributes being transformed into additive, equivalent (i.e., logorhythmic) measurement scales and distinguishes item difficulty from persons. In Rasch scaling, total scores for persons and items are converted into logits, which can provide an individual's level of the overall construct and difficulty levels for endorsing each item and rating successively higher categories. Typically, logits range from +4 to -4.

### Results

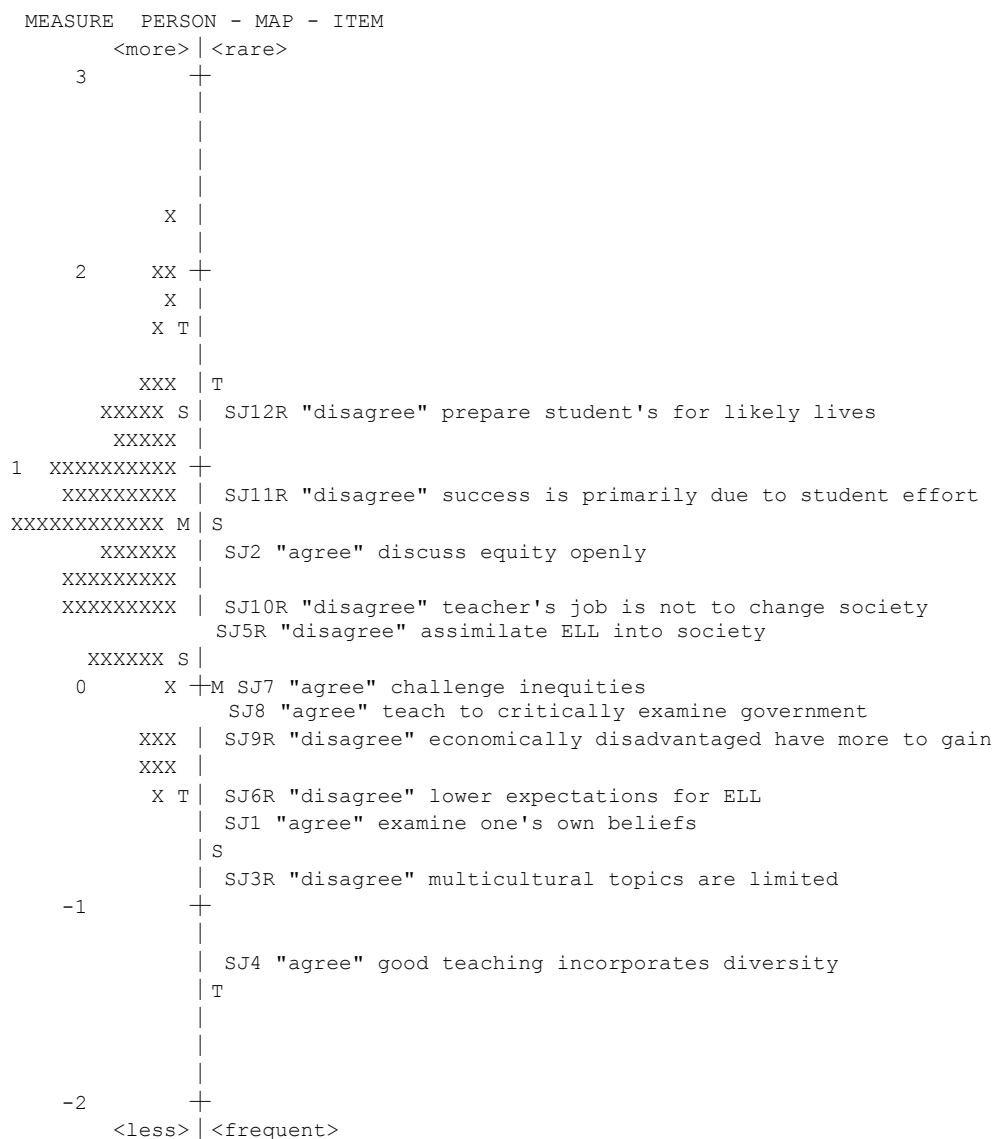
Table 1

*Results of Rasch Scaling Analysis of Learning to Teach for Social Justice Beliefs Scale (Ludlow et al, 2008)*

	EL	ST	IS
Logits	0.53	0.70	0.94
Item Reliability	.98	.97	.93
Item Separation	6.57	5.46	3.78
Person Reliability	.49	.61	.82
Person Separation	0.98	1.24	2.13
Cronbach Alpha	.41	.57	.72
<i>M</i> (Total Score)	42.3	43.8	43.8
<i>sd</i> (Total Score)	4.3	4.9	5.7
<i>n</i>	101	87	53

*Note.* Abbreviations EL (Entry Level), ST (Student Teachers), IS (In-Service Teachers)

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*Figure 1.* Variable map for the LTSJ-B Scale for student teachers. This map reflects ratings of 87 student teachers, 12 items and 5 scoring categories. Each “X” represents 2 candidates. M = Mean Candidate Estimate; S = Standard Deviation of Estimate; T= Two Standard Deviations. Highest scoring persons and most difficult items are near the top. Lowest scoring person and easiest items are near the bottom.

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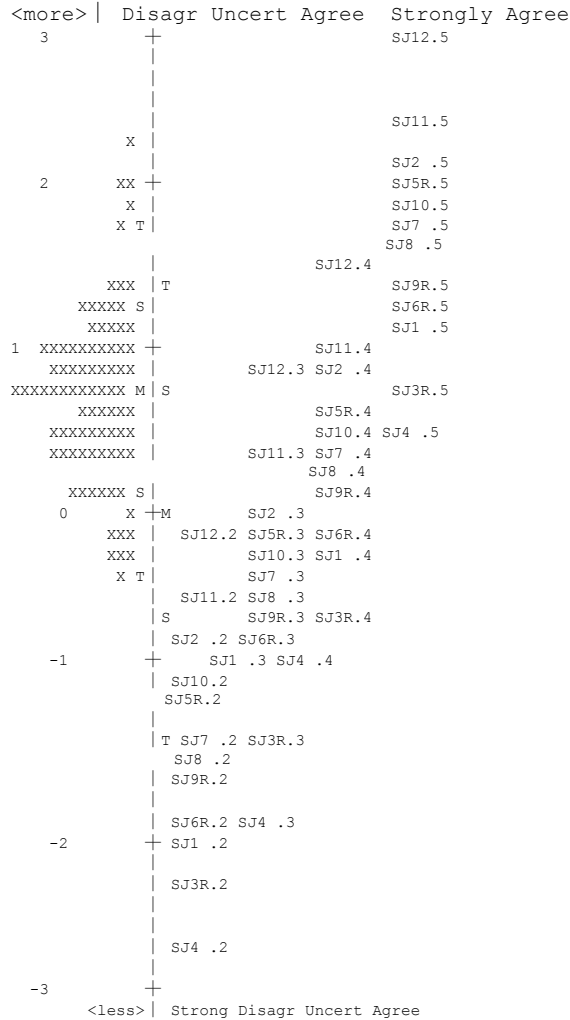


Figure 2. Mean cohort estimates on Learning to Teach for Social Justice-Beliefs Scale. The number following the item number represents the 50% threshold for selecting that rating. This map reflects ratings of 87 student teachers, 12 items and 5 scoring categories. Each “X” represents 2 candidates. M = Mean Candidate Estimate; S = Standard Deviation of Estimate; T= Two Standard Deviations.

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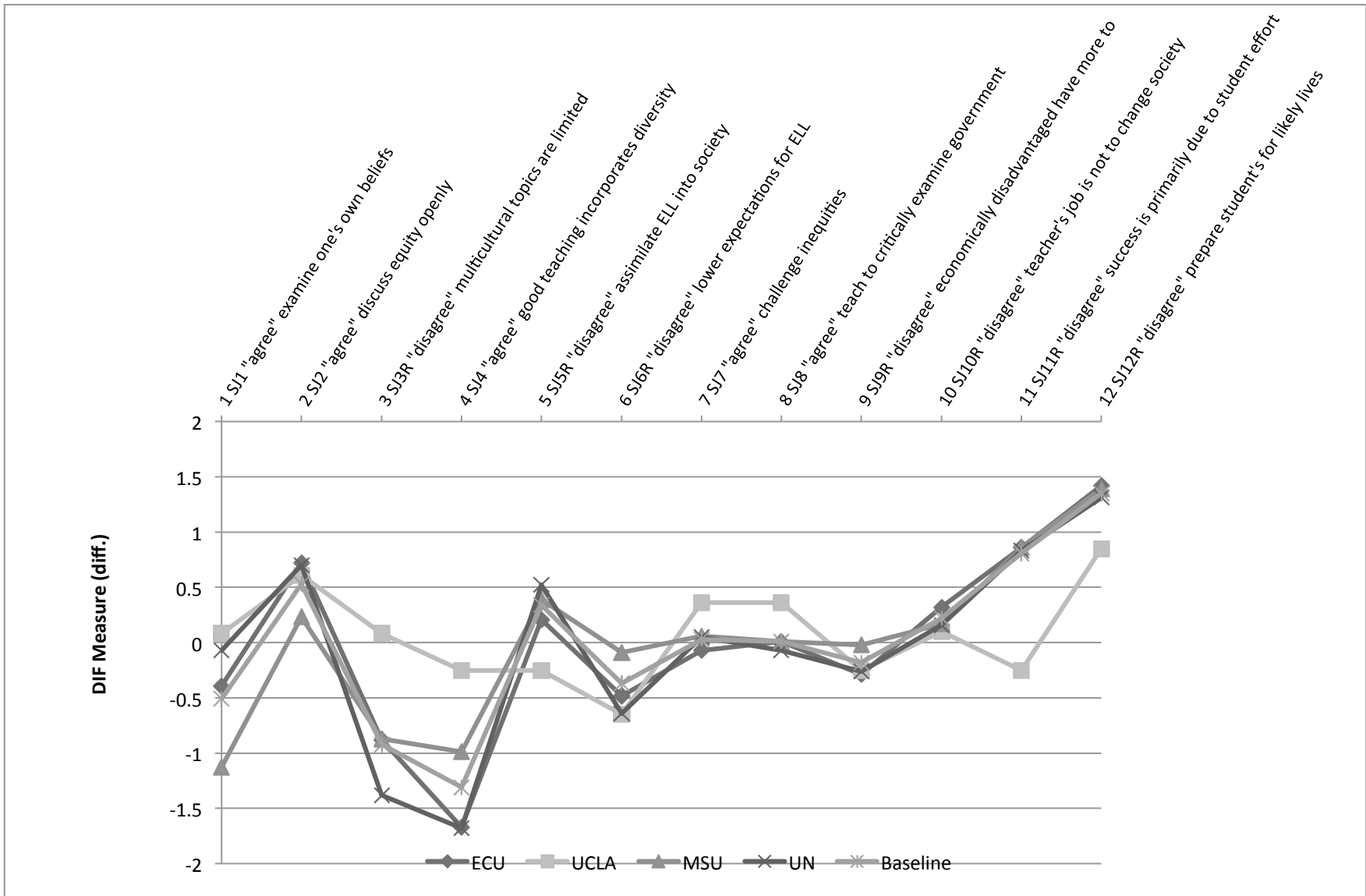


Figure 3. Difficulty rating of LTSJ-B items by institution. Note. Abbreviations ECU (East Carolina University), MSU (Missouri State University), UN (University of Nebraska), UCLA (University of Los Angeles)

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Table 2

*Logits and Mean Score by Institution*

	Logits			Mean Total Score		
	SY	ST	IS**	SY*	ST	IS**
ECU	0.31	0.54	0.64	40.2	42.3	41.9
<i>n</i>	23	28	11	23	28	11
MSU	0.55	0.75	0.78	42.6	44.2	42.9
<i>n</i>	37	33	18	37	33	18
UN	0.66	0.84	0.85	43.5	45.3	43.0
<i>n</i>	26	22	14	26	22	14
UCLA	0.60	0.76	1.68	43.1	43.8	48.7
<i>n</i>	15	4	10	15	4	10

\*There was a significant difference among the second year set of scores by institution ( $F = 2.85$ ;  $p = .041$ ). Analyses revealed that ECU was significantly lower than the other institutions.

\*\*There was a significant difference in the scores of in-service teachers ( $F = 3.06$ ;  $p = .036$ ). Analyses revealed that ECU and MSU were significantly lower than UCLA.

Note. Abbreviations ECU (East Carolina University), MSU (Missouri State University), UN (University of Nebraska), UCLA (University of Los Angeles), SY (Second-Year Students), ST (Student Teachers), IS (In-Service Teachers)

### Discussion

Based on the results, there was a continuum of beliefs ranging from agreeing with “[g]ood teaching incorporates diverse cultures and experiences into classroom lessons and discussions” through disagreeing with “[r]ealistically, the job of a teacher is to prepare students for the lives that they are likely to lead.” The continuum was fairly similar for program entrants and student teachers. There was some growth documented from program entrance into student teachers but the practical significance of that growth may be questionable, as it appears to be quite small. Based on the survey with in-service teachers, it seems that beliefs are maintained once candidates enter into full time teaching. However, it also appears that it is difficult for music education candidates to endorse teaching as political or sociological work. Some differences were evident by institution. Notably, three institutions in the study were located in predominantly white communities while one institution was located in a large metropolitan area. While participants were not asked to self-identify on the survey, the metropolitan institution contained a much wider sampling of racial and ethnic diversity among preservice and practicing teachers than the other three institutions. Students at the metropolitan institution appear to have found it easier to endorse the relevance of multicultural topics and the incorporation of diverse cultures into teaching. It was also easier for them to disagree with the statement, “Whether students succeed in school depends upon how hard that they work.”

Student teachers also had some difficulty endorsing the items that may be associated with integrating multiculturalism into teaching. It is notable that this survey was administered at the beginning of student teaching, and these beliefs may be likely to change during student teaching.

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Several issues specific to music education may impact the development of beliefs: (a) music as a cultural construction, (b) perspectives on the relevance of multiculturalism for music education, (c) conformity of beliefs among preservice music teachers.

The beliefs of entry level candidates appear to be expected and generally consistent with the results of administrations of the LTSJ-B with candidates in other disciplines. However, the results of the survey with student teachers in our study did not reveal much change. These data were cross sectional, and it is possible that these results could reflect differences among candidates; however, the level of growth was fairly similar across the four institutions. In line with previous research, it does appear that beliefs are quite stable and reveal a considerable amount of “uncertain responses” (Schmidt, in press). Music candidates had difficulty endorsing those items which involve recognizing the impact on society and the ways in which schools have systematically advantaged and disadvantaged particular groups. Disagreeing with “[w]hether students succeed in school depends upon how hard they work” and “[r]ealistically, the job of a teacher is to prepare students for the lives they are likely to lead” appears to be difficult for music candidates. They may also see their efforts as change agents more in terms of making a difference with one student at a time rather than with effecting societal change in a larger way. Anecdotal comments by participants following administration of the survey at one institution revealed a high level of commitment to social justice but disagreement with the social justice framework reflected in the survey items.

Undoubtedly more research is needed in cultural and musical diversity with respect to the beliefs of preservice teachers (Schmidt, in press). While Rasch scaling provides a useful means for examining the difficulty with which belief statements can be endorsed, research is needed that adopts a longitudinal rather than cross sectional design in order to gauge the change in beliefs over time. Second, while the use of surveys can provide some measure of beliefs, it does not uncover the factors that led to those beliefs and given the messiness of investigating influences and the fluid nature of beliefs, qualitative studies that investigate the development of social justice dispositions would be valuable. Finally, while the scale used in this study was carefully developed, we suggest that a similar process be used to develop a scale specific to the needs of music education candidates.

The development of teaching behaviors to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and documentable results are growing demands upon music teacher preparation programs. The methodology in this study focuses exclusively on beliefs. The development of teaching strategies and skills to address the needs of diverse student populations, however, also necessitates the implementation of appropriate teaching behaviors as well as the development of ideal beliefs and dispositions. This is an important obligation of teacher education programs as they prepare teachers to work with the changing student population in schools.



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