



Intersections of Music-making and Teaching For Four Student Music Teachers



Purpose Statement

The purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the phenomenon of music-making in four student music teachers' lives by exploring the meanings of music-making in their pasts, present, and imagined futures as well as the intersections between music-making and teaching.

Research Questions

- (a) How do participants describe the meanings they constructed about their past music-making experiences?
- (b) Why do participants continue or discontinue to engage in music-making outside of the classroom during their student teaching experience?
- (c) How do participants' music-making experiences intersect with their teaching?

Literature Review

Relationship between teacher and musician/ performer selves influences teacher identity (Bernard, 2004, 2007; Dolloff, 2006, 2007; Dust, 2006; Jorgensen 2008; Nielsen, 2006; Pellegrino, 2009, 2010; 2011; Russell, 2009; Scheib, 2006; Wilson, 1998).

Identity trajectory incorporates past and the future in the experience in the present (Wenger, 1998).

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Methodology

Case Study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2010; Yin, 2003) focuses on a particular phenomenon, leading to rich, thick description, which can bring about the discovery of new meanings, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known.

Participants

Four student teachers with dual placements: elementary general music and secondary band.

Data

- ❖ Background survey
- ❖ Video of student teacher making music in the classroom
- ❖ Semi-structured interviews
Three per participant
(70-160 minutes each)
- ❖ Participant Journals

Analysis

All interviews were transcribed and data were coded individually and collectively (within and cross-case analysis) to answer the research questions. (Creswell, 2007)

Credibility

- ❖ Data collection triangulation
- ❖ Outside reviewer check
- ❖ Member check
- ❖ Attention to investigator expertise

Meanings of Past Music-making

Connected with identity, spirituality, "flow" experiences, and wellbeing. **Derrick used music-making to develop his own identity separate from his fraternal twin brother:** [music-making is] *satisfying, cathartic and relaxing in part because I'm locked away in this tiny little practice room. It's pretty secluded and so you kind of have that little space to yourself and it's all yours... I think the thing that you invest in becomes your identity—where you spend your time and what you work at and aspire to become...It becomes who you are...It was just kind of who I was.* (Derrick, Interview 1, 59-61).

Present Music-making Outside of Classroom

Connected with well-being; was fun, social, and spiritual. **Colleen described how she felt one week when she did not make music outside of the classroom.** *It wasn't a good week... it wasn't any more stressful than any of the other weeks but because I didn't have the outlet of escaping those stresses, it felt so much more stressful. By the end of the week, I was like, "I'm done"... it was a week later and I realized, "the week before I played and it was okay, and then week after I played and I was okay" and while I understand and know how important music is to me and how it is a tool of expression, I guess I didn't realize just how vital it was for my own mental well-being and how much it gave a balance to my life. I guess I need it.* (Colleen, Interview 3, 61-62)

Present Music-making Inside of Classroom

Connected music maker with music teacher; made teaching more fun; excited students and colleagues; used as classroom management tool; taught general music (instruments, musical genres/composers, opposites, improvisation) and band objectives (style, tone, intonation, phrasing). **On the first day of student teaching in the elementary school, I brought in my saxophone to play and they loved it and I was like, "I'm going to use it in every class" and even the teachers were excited about it. Teachers know that I play at the end of class so they come back early to hear me play.** *He also noticed, "The reaction was just better with the saxophone than with recordings...There's a lot less chatter.* (Alan, Interview 2, 25) **I even worked playing my clarinet into movement lessons...** *"Alright everybody get into a square, I'm going to need a line leader," and we marched around the carpet while I was playing. I was getting them to [react to] fast and slow and loud and soft...Then, I taught the blues shuffle. I was just playing when they came in and I just played blues solos...and we had percussion instruments out and I taught them about blues form and improvising a solo.* (Chris, Interview 3, 5-7).

Conclusion

All participants undervalued the connections between music-making and teaching in the beginning of their student teaching experience but all discovered it was more valuable in their personal and professional lives than expected.

Intersections of Music-making in the Lives of Four Student Music Teachers

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Music education researchers have found a correlation between inservice and preservice music teachers' love of music-making and their desire to become music teachers (Bergee & Demorest, 2003; Bernard, 2004; Dolloff, 2006; Dust, 2006; Gillespie & Hamann, 1999; Isbell, 2008; Jorgensen, 2006, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010, in press). However, less examination has centered around understanding the impact of music-making on music teachers' professional and personal lives. Roberts (2007) wrote about "a never-ending personal war between our musician and teacher identities" (p. 7). However, other researchers have found preservice and inservice music teachers desire more integrated identities, though (Brewer, 2009; Conway, Eros, Pellegrino, & West, 2010; Isbell, 2007; Pellegrino, 2010, in press a,b,c; Russell, 2009).

Although there are issues of conflict and tension between the artist identity and the teacher identity (Ball, 1990; Thornton, 2005), much of the artist-teacher literature also speaks about the way one informs the other (Ball, 1990; Heck, 1991; Johnson, 2001; Milne, 2000; Ortiz, 2008; Thornton, 2005), how both are part of the holistic person (Heck, 1991; Milne, 2000; Ortiz, 2008; Thornton, 2005), and how the artist teacher is one who finds multiple intrinsic connections (Elliott, 1995; Heck, 1991, Milne, 2000; Ortiz, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010; Stephens, 1995). Therefore, the purpose of this descriptive case study was to examine the phenomenon of music-making in four student music teachers' lives by exploring the meanings of music-making in their live and the intersections of music-making and teaching. Three research questions guided this examination: (a) How do participants describe the meanings they constructed about their past music-making experiences? (b) Why do participants continue or discontinue to engage in music-making outside of the classroom

during their student teaching experience? and (c) How do participants' music-making experiences intersect with their teaching?

Four student teachers with dual placements in elementary general music and secondary band volunteered to participate in this study.

Figure 1. Descriptions of Participants

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Primary Instrument</i>	<i>Secondary Instrument</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>
Derrick	Trumpet	Guitar	Caucasian
Colleen	Piano, bassoon, singing	Flute, bass clarinet	Panamanian, African American
Alan	Saxophone	Flute	Caucasian
Chris	Clarinet, Guitar	Singing	Caucasian

Data sets were generated through (a) background surveys, (b) videos of the student teachers using their own music-making in the classroom, (c) a series of three individual interviews (70-160 minutes) with each participant over a span of four months, and (d) participants' journals about how their own music-making effect them personally and professionally. All data were coded individually and collectively (within and cross-case analysis) to answer the research questions. Merriam (2009) referred to ways that contribute to trustworthiness and promote validity and reliability including: data triangulation; member checks; adequate engagement in data collection; rich, thick descriptions; and internal validity, all of which are elements of this study.

Findings were reported in five sections: meanings of past music-making experiences, meanings of music-making outside of the classroom, meanings of music-making inside the classroom, music-making in their imagined futures, and revelations during interviews. In general, participants found connections between their own music-making experiences and (a) identity, (b) wellbeing, (c) spirituality, (d) positive attitudes towards teaching, (e) classroom management, and

(f) student learning. In this extended abstract, I include few examples from the first three findings sections. First, meanings of past music-making experiences for these participants were presented in the following subsections: identity, music-making and spirituality, expressive quality, and “flow” experiences and wellbeing. Below are some examples from the “identity” section.

Music-making was described as “part of who I am” and “something I always did.” For example, Derrick believed there was a connection between what you do and who you are.

My success and enjoyment of music gave me the confidence to develop personally and it is part of who I am. I believe that we are defined by the things that we do and it was something that took up a lot of my life so it did define who I was. (Interview 3, 128)

For Derrick, music-making was something that distinguished him from his fraternal twin brother. As an elementary school student, Derrick, described being considered “the smart one” before his brother was labeled “gifted in math and science” and he was not. After this revelation, Derrick engaged more in the arts, in part because his brother did not excel in this area. In addition, Derrick described music-making as “satisfying, cathartic and relaxing in part because I’m locked away in this tiny little practice room. It’s pretty secluded and so you kind of have that little space to yourself and it’s all yours” (Interview 1, 39-40). Therefore, music-making gave Derrick a reason to have his own space and to develop his own identity separate from his twin brother.

Once band came, I was super excited so that was my means of dealing with both excelling at that as well as practicing and using music on my own was a kind of my means of finding my identity in some ways as a younger adolescent. *Researcher: That separated you from your twin?* That’s it. Twins always do that. (Derrick, Interview 1, 59-60)

In fact, Derrick chose to attend a “visual and performing arts” secondary schools while his brother attended a “math and science specialty center.”

I think the thing that you invest in becomes your identity—where you spend your time

and what you work at and aspire to because it's something that you're putting so much time into and your efforts. It becomes who you are... It was just kind of who I was. And I was good. Like, people considered me to be good. (Interview 1, 61)

Even though he liked that his friends recognized him “within the music community as a good player”, he said, “That’s not why I continued to [play]...Ultimately, I played because I enjoyed it. It was always for me.” (Interview 1, 62).

Music-making was something these participants “always did.” Colleen described how she felt about singing in choir when she was a little girl.

I always used it. Whether it was in church and we were singing a song or performing something, or I was at home it was always a way of expression and fun for me. I didn't really have to sing for anyone, and as I got older I actually didn't necessarily like singing for anyone, it was more for me—just a thing I always did. (Interview 1, 5-6)

Chris said, “If I wasn't doing schoolwork, I was playing the guitar because I was like, ‘This is so cool and I want to keep doing this’ ...There was just something intrinsically fun about it” (Interview 1, 26-27). He also explained that he enjoyed the challenge of it and he enjoyed that he was able to “notice his improvements” (Interview 1). There was another factor to Chris' music-making. Unlike his father, Chris did not like or excel at sports but music-making gave him something to do that interested him and was his own.

Second, present music-making outside of classroom was connected with well-being and was described as fun, social, and spiritual. An example of participants music-making's being connected with well being came from Colleen, who described how she felt one week when she did not make music outside of the classroom.

It wasn't a good week... it wasn't any more stressful than any of the other weeks but because I didn't have the outlet of escaping those stresses, it felt so much more stressful. By

the end of the week, I was like, “I’m done”... it was a week later and I realized, “the week before I played and it was okay, and then week after I played and I was okay” and while I understand and know how important music is to me and how it is a tool of expression, I guess I didn’t realize just how vital it was for my own mental well-being and how much it gave a balance to my life. I guess I need it. (Colleen, Interview 3, 61-62)

She also spoke about the positive impact of playing bassoon in an orchestra.

When I get into rehearsal, it all goes away... [whether it sounds good or not], I still love being there and I’m fully there—literally just a mental escape, which is not easy for me to forget about all of the other stuff. Playing actually elevated my mood every time and it would take away the stress for a couple of hours and I actually got more stuff done after rehearsal. Interesting, I didn’t think about that. Yea, I was in a better mood after rehearsing, and because I had had the hours not stressing and overwhelming myself or being over-anxious, I was able to focus more on what I needed to do and I did it more efficiently. And it was usually better, too! Weird! (Interview 3, 79-81)

Present music-making inside the classroom connected music maker with music teacher; made teaching more fun; excited students and colleagues; used as classroom management tool; taught general music (instruments, musical genres/composers, opposites, improvisation) and band objectives (style, tone, intonation, phrasing, and dynamics).

Alan, Colleen, and Chris all found more excitement for teaching when they were making music on their primary instrument while teaching. All participants found that the students were more excited and focused when the student teachers made music on their primary instruments and Alan even found that elementary classroom teachers were excited to hear his music-making.

On the first day of student teaching in the elementary school, I brought in my saxophone to play and they loved it and I was like, “I’m going to use it in every class” and even the

teachers were excited about it. Teachers know that I play at the end of class so they come back early to hear me play.” (Alan, Interview 2, 25)

During one of Colleen’s observations, her supervisor suggested that she needed to convey more excitement. Music-making helped her.

I realized that I was automatically more enthusiastic and excited when I was playing the music. I think back to when I was playing *Oh Susanna* while they were singing and I was excited and they were excited and it was an amazing moment. I would get chills often when I played with them! (Interview 2, 83-84)

Alan also noticed, “The reaction was just better with the saxophone than with recordings” and added, “There’s a lot less chatter” (Alan, Interview 2, 25). He also said, “I realized how much they loved it and the power of ‘Mr. [Alan] with not play if we are not well behaved’ (Interview 3, 21). All four student teachers noticed that their students were more focused when the student teachers themselves were making music. For example, Chris said, It actually started with just playing when they came in, and then we kind of go into what I was teaching... They were totally focused, and it was much easier to teach that week, which was shocking because I think that was right after break so I’m blown away! (Interview 3). Derrick had realized that the students responded quite positively to his music-making in the moment but he feared that the explosive enthusiasm expressed when he finished playing a short excerpt might be perceived negatively by others. However, while watching the video of himself music-making while teaching, he noticed that his students were intensely engaged and focused while he was playing and all of the explosive student reactions were on-task and the students were even more engaged than he was first aware.

Chris had the most difficulty in figuring out how to use his music-making in the elementary classroom and was conflicted about not wanting to appear as if he was “showing off.” He was not excited about teaching general music and, during the second interview, began wondering if music

teaching was right for him and whether he would find another occupation before he would agree to teach general music.. During the final interview, he was excited to share the transformation that had occurred in his attitude toward teaching and he shared the many ways he incorporated his music-making into his teaching. First, he incorporated his music-making into a movement lesson. “We marched around the carpet while I was playing. I was getting them to [react to] fast and slow and loud and soft” (Interview 3, 5). Then, he played blues solos, “taught them about blues form and improvising a solo,” and had the older students improvise “using major pentatonic on percussion instruments and...the younger kids used a pair of boomwackers, Sol and Mi, and the kids actually recognized, ‘Snail, Snail,’ the thread that went K through almost 2” (Interview 3, 6-7).

Alan spoke often about the connection between his music-making inside the classroom and his identity as a music teacher. “It’s an identifier for me—teaching on a cart, ‘Here comes the music teacher.’ I used the saxophone so much that it was like my partner. My relationship with the horn was important part to me” (Interview 3, 21). He explained that it kept his focus on the music.

I felt more like music class when I had my saxophone. We were asked to bastardize folk tunes, like “I’m a Little Teapot” tailored to teach science, “I’m a little magnet.” Playing saxophone solidified that it was music class. “This is Mr. [Alan]. He plays saxophone. This is music class. (Interview 3, 19-19:30)

Many of the elementary students mentioned how much they will miss me playing saxophone in their goodbye cards. It was important to me, to have my horn with me. It made me feel like I was more involved with music. It was a teaching tool for them and more fun for me. In high school, I always had my horn unpacked and I would play examples to model. Teachers and students would say, “You’re the music teacher” when they saw the saxophone case. I appreciated the recognition and how appreciative they were. (Interview 3, 21-22)

Alan added, “Being part of the study solidified how much I loved music-making and how it impacts me when I teach. I realize why it’s important” (Interview 3, 22). All four participants undervalued the positive impact of their own music-making inside of the classroom on their students’ learning at the beginning of this study as well as the connection between their music-making inside and outside of the classroom to their wellbeing. Music-making in the present was connected with music-making in the past because it helped reaffirm their sense of identity, successes, and remembering what they loved about music-making in the first place and why they wanted to become music teachers. Music-making and teaching were considered a “complex duality” for these participants, as they realized the extent to which music-making was an important part of the personal and professional lives as music teachers.

Participants reflected on their thoughts and feelings concerning the meanings and values of music-making in their lives. As a result of this reflective process, participants benefited in the present and hopefully will in the future, from an increased self-awareness and a deeper understanding of the intersections between their music-making, their teaching, and their identity. This may have positive implications for music teacher recruitment and retention, pre-service music teacher programs, and programs designed to support music teachers. It is hoped that this study will provide greater insight into the complexities of music teacher identity and the role that music-making plays in this development. With this understanding, preservice string teachers may be better equipped to transition into the teaching profession and to appropriately structure their professional lives as in-service music educators.