

Identity Perceptions of Post-Graduate Music Education Majors

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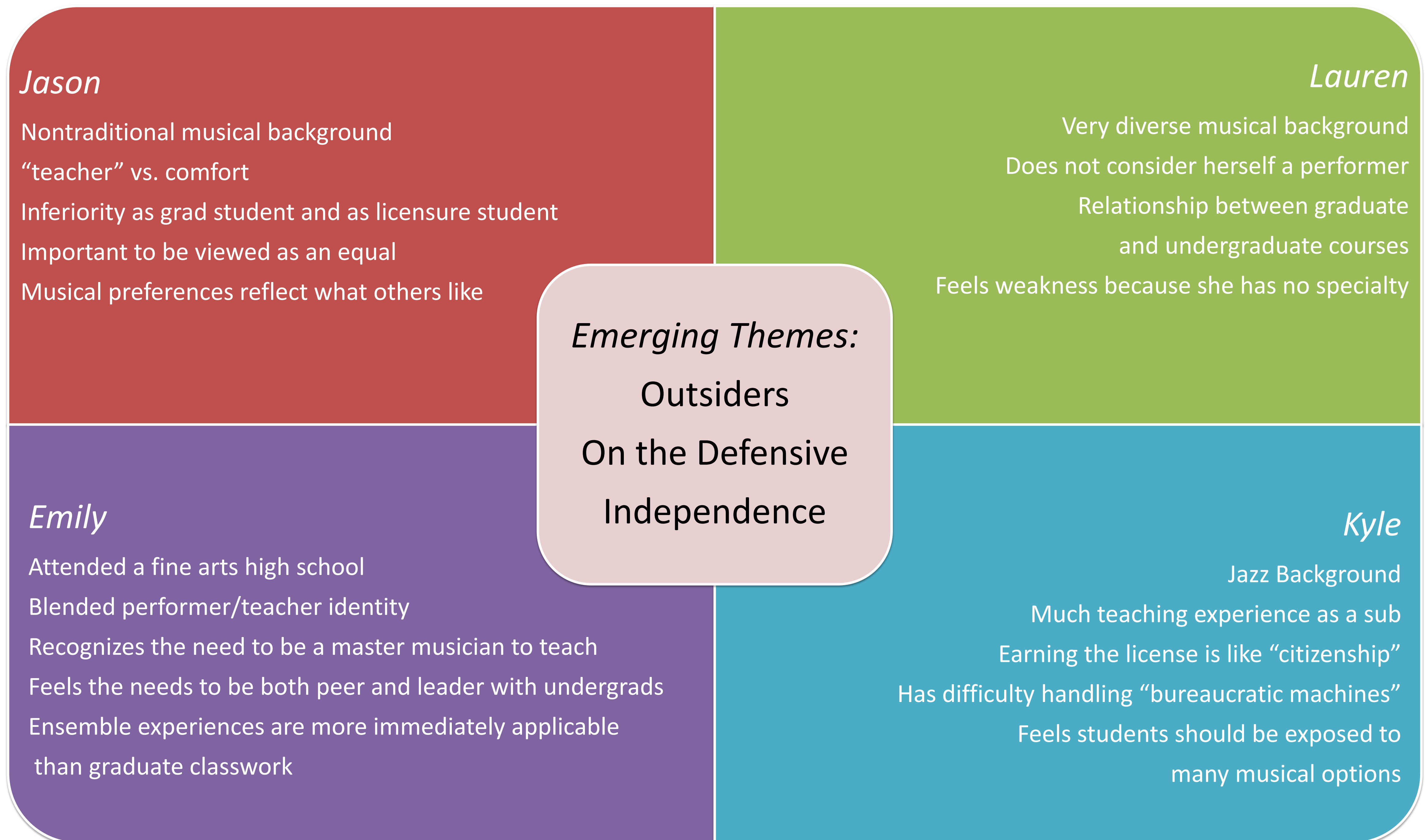
Music teacher identity has received recent attention in the realm of music education research. As the music teaching profession persistently evolves, pre-service teachers hoping to acquire positions in music must consider how teaching a variety of music areas will influence their identity as musicians and teachers. Students who choose to enter the music teaching profession after having already obtained degrees in other music fields present a unique perspective when considering music teacher identity. These students have spent years of their lives developing identities as musicians and performers, and then chose to develop a teacher identity. The secondary socialization processes involved with these students may also differ from those students who entered university settings as music education majors.

“[My graduate philosophy class] definitely has informed the way I think about...who I should be teaching, and what I should be teaching and why I should be teaching it and who I should be as I’m teaching it.” - Jason

“It’s kind of like I’m almost constantly on the defensive, like, ‘no, seriously I do belong here. I know what I’m talking about. I can do this.’” - Lauren

“For me, teaching and musicianship go hand in hand...I will always study; I will always be part of music in my community...to me that’s just as important as being an effective educator.” - Emily

“You get in these discussions with people who say, ‘oh,... who did you study with?’ You know? ‘What did you play on your senior recital?’ And I say, ‘well, what did I play on my senior recital? I played a couple of standards that I arranged for octet...’” - Kyle



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Music teacher identity has received recent attention in the realm of music education research. As the music teaching profession persistently evolves, pre-service teachers hoping to acquire positions in music must consider how teaching a variety of music areas will influence their identity as musicians and teachers. Students who choose to enter the music teaching profession after having already obtained degrees in other music fields present a unique perspective when considering music teacher identity. These students have spent years of their lives developing identities as musicians and performers, and then chose to develop a teacher identity. The secondary socialization processes involved with these students may differ from those students who entered university settings as music education majors.

Much attention has been given to pre-service music teacher identity regarding training and support, how they view themselves in comparison to performers, what their perceived teacher image is, and why they choose to teach or not to teach (Bennett & Stanberg, 2006; Bernard, 2009; Conway, Eros, Pellegrino, & West, 2010; Dolloff, 1999; Hellman, 2008; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Juuti & Littleton, 2010). Other researchers have focused on identity with regard to socialization factors, self-efficacy, and aspects of creative identity on teaching (Bouij, 2004; Isbell, 2008; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Randles, 2009). Some research supports the concept of music teacher identity and performer identity as related and balanced, while other researchers believe the teacher and the performer identity are separate and in conflict (Bernard, 2007; Isbell, 2008; Jones & Parkes, 2010; Pellegrino, 2010; Roberts, 1991; Stephens, 2007). In the current study, I examined music teacher identity development in pre-service teachers who earned degrees in other focus areas. In doing so, they have previously cultivated musical identities outside of music education. The manner in which each participant chooses to blend the facets will be varied, and through this study I hoped to reveal how their unique perspectives influence their professional identity.

Using individual and focus-group interviews and e-mail questionnaires, I investigated the experiences of four students working toward post-graduate degrees in music education. Participants were asked to describe those experiences that influenced their decision to teach in relation to their undergraduate degree experiences. Participants also shared experiences encountered during the post-graduate degree, made predictions about where they intended to be in future years, and explained how aspects of their multiple degrees have influenced their intentions. Data was examined for emerging patterns and coded according to the most prominent trends in responses. Trustworthiness measures included data triangulation, peer review, and member checking (Creswell, 2007).