Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

Ashland M Murphy

Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

Florida State University
Abstract

Women have been involved in music throughout their experience in secondary and postsecondary education for centuries. Females are experienced in the field of music, but many practices today are still masculine and dominated by males in various music professions. In order to combat this, music educators must work to recruit more females to the music and music education field while students are young. Women are notably missing in higher-level education directing, composition, jazz performance, and post secondary education. With advocacy and a strong representation for females in collegiate positions, more females may be recruited to jobs in higher education. Parents and teachers are responsible for creating a sense of confidence in students. With this confidence in music, students can feel comfortable choosing music as a degree program in college and as a career. Teachers must be persistent and encourage students that hard work will result in success in music.

Gender tendencies in musical subjects

Lucy Green (2002) researched school-aged children and surveyed them about their experience in music classes. She established the “affirmation of femininity,” the theory that girls are seen as strong in voice, string instruments, keyboard, and generally classical instruments. Girls are more likely to conform to values and expectations of the school and teacher in an educational setting. Females strongly associate music as a means of expression. However, girls tended to be conventional and conservative in their music composition. Compositions heard are
most likely composed by men; therefore, composition could be seen as more masculine in nature. Schools may offer a wide variety of choices for music classes, but historical connotations may cause women to conform to female roles (Green, 2002).

Lucy Green’s work is relevant because of the perception of females in a music classroom. Based on the results above, even young students think of females as being drawn to a specific type of instrument or music. While schools are trying to offer a variety of classes that will hopefully push stereotypes away from the music classroom, often times these classes are taught in the same manner as other performing arts classes and therefore encourage the same stereotypes.

The role of women in music can also be sexualized, especially in jazz. The lack of female participation in instrumental jazz music stems from decisions made at an early age. Many females choose instruments that are not primary jazz instruments. In a study by Kathleen M. McKeage, she found that 28% of women and 72% of men reported a primary instrument commonly found in jazz ensembles (McKeage, 2004). McKeage also found that 52% of women and 80% of men reported that they participated in jazz in high school. Only 14% of women and 50% of men participated in jazz in college (McKeage, 2004). The attrition rate for females in jazz performance is much greater than that of males that accounts for the lack of females in the professional jazz community. In conclusion, there is a significant relationship between gender and participation in jazz ensembles.
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

Students and teachers should be informed of the role of women and stereotypes of women in music. In the future this may create a better relationship between learning, teaching and doing. Music education may be understood in a broader realm in which males see music from the female perspective, as woman have for much time (Lamb, 1994).

Recruitment and Influence for Music Majors in Postsecondary Education

Music educators have been leaving the profession rapidly, necessitating administrators to hire unqualified individuals for the music classroom. While the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation was widely controversial, it did increase requirements for public school teachers. This in turn increased the need for highly qualified teachers as defined by NCLB. It is important to study why students choose music education and directing as a career path so that more highly qualified teachers can be recruited. Students surveyed by Jeff Bright (2006) were considered to be outstanding band students with the intention to become music education majors (Bright, 2006).

In this same study, students cited parent and teacher influence as an important factor in choosing to become a music education major. This finding has been verified in other studies as well. Another influence was students having the opportunity to teach and lead in the music classroom. Not only is the number of females who enter the music education profession lower but also women have a higher percentage of dropout rates within the first few years of teaching. Current teachers should work to specifically guide and encourage females to enter the music
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing,
Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

education profession (Bright, 2006). Students who were more confident in their
talent were more likely to choose music as a career. Because most students decide
their major in high school, high school teachers and private teachers were
considered some of the most influential people in a student’s career choice
(Gillespie and Hamman, 1999).

Women in Collegiate Director Positions

Caucasian males dominate the realm of postsecondary music directors and
professors. Sheldon and Hartley (2012) conducted a survey of instrumental
directors at the Midwest Clinic attempting to observe the gender and ethnicity
amongst music directors. Only 7.56 percent of conductors were women. Women
were most present in the junior high or middle school positions, but even so, this
still only represents 5.8 percent of all primary conductors (Sheldon & Hartley,
2012).

Deborah Sheldon and Linda Hartley (2012) note that providing role models
for young musicians to become collegiate directors is critical to providing a variety
of future directors including women and various ethnicities. Half of undergraduate
instrumental music education students are females, but the rate drops considerably
for graduate students. Only five percent of collegiate band directors are female. The
position of a university band director may be considered a gendered role. Even
something as simple and meaningful as conducting gestures may have a feminine or
masculine tendency. This trend continues when retiring band directors in college
seek out directors who are like themselves, often male and often Caucasian (Sheldon & Hartley, 2012)

Gender equity is a concern in society. Payne (1996) believes that society is desensitized to gender equity, including the financial unfairness that still exists in the job market. Music is also stereotyped as feminine, yet women are not well represented in higher education. Women in major American colleges who do hold positions are represented at lower levels and lower salaries. Professionals argue that women are not qualified for the high-level tenured tracks at universities; however, this is untrue. Women obtain approximately fifty percent of all masters’ degrees. The majority of females working in colleges of music earned a doctoral or master’s degree. Females are most represented in colleges of music in the following fields: keyboard, voice, theory and analysis, and music education. However, women are missing almost entirely from the following fields: band, brass, composition, conducting, and orchestra (Payne, 1996).

**Influences of Self Esteem and Confidence in Music**

Both intrinsic and extrinsic factors contribute to student confidence in music knowledge, music performance, and overall participation in music. High school course offerings in music continue to increase; however, participation is decreasing. Some dropout is due to curricular and extra-curricular pressure. Other factors include parent pressure, poor student to teacher relations, loss of interest, and negative self-image. Poor self-image is a concept that starts at a young age. Adults must combat these thoughts early in student development. Music can help or hurt
these thoughts. For example, students may think poorly of themselves if they receive a low score in a music assessment. Other factors such as grade level, socioeconomic status, and gender may influence self-image (Austin, 1990).

Forty-six percent of participants in Austin’s (1990) research did not participate in school music. Seventy percent of students did not participate in musical activities outside of school. He also studied the effect of self-esteem on participation. Gender was the only significant main effect. The study also showed that a higher degree of self-esteem resulted in higher participation in music programs. In the future teachers should particularly seek out students who need encouragement in the music class to keep them participating in music (Austin, 1990).

As explained earlier, teachers have a huge impact on the career path chosen by students. They also influence students’ self-perception. Little research has been completed on the influence of parents in regards to student personal identity. However, it has been proven that music students with parents who support and believe in their children are more likely to be successful and participate in music for longer. Results from studies conducted by McClellan (2011) showed a moderately weak correlation between parental influences and self-concept as a music educator. A moderately positive result came from the parent’s belief that their son or daughter can be a good music teacher, work with children, and complete the requirements for the qualification of the position (McClellan, 2011).
Internal reasons are accountable for most of a student’s belief that they will succeed (or fail) in music. Positive self-concept and successful task performance are reliant on each other. The attribution theory states that an individual determines achievement of a task with beliefs about the causes of success and failure. Events such as ability and task difficulty are considered consistent and stable. Luck and efforts are unstable events. Females were found to attribute more internal, stable reasons for success in music (Asmus, 1986).

Teachers are extremely influential in these results. Teachers who relate effort to success are more likely to have students who adopt the same view. As students increase in age, their attitudes change about attributes of success in music. Between the sixth and seventh grade students seem to change from effort related views to ability related view (Asmus, 1986). It is important for teachers to encourage positive thinking and insist on a fierce effort in music at all times. This will hopefully encourage students to continue their education in music and influence others that they can participate in music as well.

My research

There is a missing link between female students involved in school music and the professional industry of music. In order to have more females in the areas of higher education directing, composition, jazz performance, and professional conducting, there need to be more female role models in those areas. However, with few females currently in those positions, young women must rise to the occasion and become involved in those professions on their own. This requires young women
to be confident and comfortable not only in the field of music but also in their personal lives.

I created a survey that attempted to study the thoughts of students, grades five through twelve, in terms of musical potential and personal self-confidence. I was hoping to get at least 100 responses from students of all ages who had music teachers that were male and female. I received 99 responses, but those answers came mostly from students in grade five with female music teachers. The responses mostly came from strings students in elementary schools in northern Virginia. Surveying proved to be a difficult but rewarding opportunity.

The survey was anonymous and distributed electronically. There were categorical questions with multiple-choice options as well as opinion questions, placed on a Likert scale from one to ten. Because the survey was for students, parental permission was given on a consent page prior to beginning the survey. Snapshots of the questions can be seen in the images below.
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

Answer the following questions thinking of the music instructor that you spend the most time with.

Description (optional)

Name the gender of your music instructor.

- Female
- Male

I like my music instructor.

I strongly disagree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I strongly agree

My music instructor helps me learn.

I strongly disagree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I strongly agree

My music instructor encourages me to be more involved in music.

I strongly disagree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I strongly agree

My music instructor inspires me to continue to be involved in music as an adult.

I strongly disagree: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I strongly agree
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

I feel confident that I am a good musician.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

I feel confident that I have a good understanding of music for my age/grade level.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

I feel confident that I could be successful in a music career as an adult.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

In general, I am a confident person. I have high self esteem.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree
In order to use this data effectively, I used a Spearman correlations test. This tested the significant relationship between the answers of any two questions. No significant difference was found for the following sets of questions:

“In general, I am a confident person. I have high self esteem” and “I feel confident that I am a good musician.”

“My music instructor encourages me to be more involved in music” and “My music instructor inspires me to continue to be involved in music as an adult.”

“My music instructor helps me learn” and “I feel confident that I am a good musician.”

There was a small but significant difference between the answers to “I feel confident that I could be successful in a music career as an adult” and “In general, I am a confident person. I have high self esteem,” producing a result of $p = 0.017$. There was also a significant difference between “I like my music instructor” and “I feel confident that I am a good musician,” producing a result of $p = 0.045$.

It is possible to conclude from these results that students have the same personal confidence level and confidence in their musical abilities. This would confirm results found by Gillespie and Hamman in relation to confidence and perception of musical ability. When students like their music teachers, they tend to feel more confident in their musical abilities. As proven by research by both Bright and Austin, the teacher has great influence over a student’s choice in musical career.
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

Music teachers should take care to value relationships with their female music students.

The teacher should encourage female students to pursue careers in higher education directing, composition, jazz performance, and professional conducting. Of course, the classroom is not just a place for females, so teachers should consider it a great opportunity to educate all students on the influence of these professions as well. There is often a stigmatism that these careers do not have any potential for secure future. The music teacher needs to share the security and prospect of all music careers.

Because this survey required parental consent on behalf of students under the age of 18, it is possible that there is some biased in the results. Parents who are actively involved in the student’s music education may have been more likely to respond to the electronic survey and encourage their child to answer the questions. As mentioned by McClellan, parents who think positively of their child’s involvement in music are more likely to have students who think positively of their music education as well.

In future surveys, I hope to receive more responses from high school students. This could bring us closer to understanding the relationship between personal confidence and the missing numbers of females in careers of higher education directing, composition, jazz performance, and professional conducting. Additionally, I would like to conduct further research to see if the late addition of conducting, composition, and jazz to the music education curriculum prevents
students from thinking of them as vital careers. Scales, listening skills, and note-reading are vital to a beginning musician’s curriculum. However, in many method books, conducting and composition are hardly present. They may indeed take up one or two pages in the method book. Some teachers could easily skip these pages and concepts. Jazz is rarely found in the beginning method, and jazz method books and music pieces are usually for more experience band students. I can say from experience, that jazz is missing almost entirely from the average strings and voice music class. With more study, we can possibly relate these missing musical topics in beginning music curriculums to the missing females in their respective professions.

**Conclusion**

Women are missing in music professions of higher-level education directing, composition, jazz performance, and post secondary education. Research has shown that women are missing from the above-mentioned occupations for various reasons. Among all of the reasons it is most important that females find role models in these fields. Female students must also find confidence in themselves and have the support of parents and teachers to encourage them. In time, with more focus on getting female students to pursue these professions, they will no longer be considered male-dominated musical careers.
Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education

References


http://doi.org/10.1177/0959353502012002003


Women Missing in Music Professions of Higher-Level Education Directing, Composition, Jazz Performance, and Post Secondary Education


http://doi.org/10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.192.0039