



Inspired Artistry: The Values of High School Band Directors

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Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the belief systems and values of high school band directors as evidenced by the operationalization of those values through the musical experiences, artistic opportunities, and curricular goals provided to participating students. This study further investigated how a particular high school band director's value system is formed through an analysis of the following areas:

1. The High School & Collegiate Band Experience of the High School Band Director.
2. Identity Establishment of the High School Band Director.
3. The Band Program Curriculum Designed By The High School Band Director, and Significant Moments in the Teaching Experience.
4. Educational & Artistic Opportunities Within a High School Band Program.

Research Questions

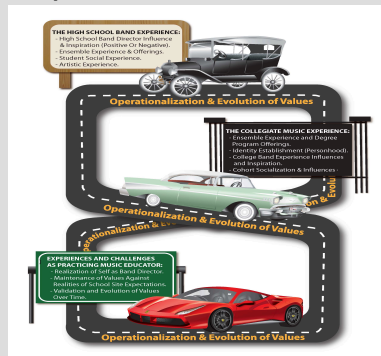
1. How do Southern California Band Directors describe their beliefs and values for music education?
2. How do Southern California Band Directors operationalize their beliefs into educational and artistic experiences for their students?
3. What are the factors that shape, guide, and influence a high school band director's values?
4. How do high school band directors maintain this value system against the expectations of administrators, parents, and community members?
5. How do these values evolve over time?

Research Methodology

1. Qualitative Research Design within a Social Constructivist context. (Creswell, 2014)
2. Interview Methodology Informed by Kvale (2007).
3. 13 mid-career high school band directors participated in this study, selected via purposive sampling. Mid-career teachers are defined as having at least five to seven years in the teaching profession (Feiman- Nemsler, 2001).
4. Participating band directors reflect four program types:
 - a. Heavily competitive band programs in the Marching Arts.
 - b. Aesthetically focused & centered around "serious" music, private lessons, and chamber ensembles.
 - c. Band programs centered around service to community & providing a "fun" student experience.
 - d. Band programs that are balanced in curricular approach.
5. The participating schools were located in the State of California.



Conceptual Framework



Framework depicts the progression along the journey that one makes en-route to taking the podium as a high school band director. Each pit-stop is highlighted by those particular educational and artistic influences that shape and guide the student experience, and ultimately inform and influence the values a high school band director will espouse.

Operationalization – “There is evidence of philosophical inconsistency between what ought to be done and what is done; between desirably conceived educational purposes and actual programs and practices; between intra-musical and extra-musical understanding; between music education by media fallout and by public school instruction.” (Schwadron, 1986, p. 86)

Values – “The classroom is a microcosm of the world: it is the chance we have to practice whatever ideals we cherish. The kind of classroom situation one creates is the acid test of what it is one really stands for.” (Weimer, 2013, p. 33)

Identity – Each music educator arrives at their professional identity with some degree of consternation about who they are and where they fit on the artist/educator continuum. (Conway et al., 2010)

Inquiry – Elliott and Silverman (2015) state that the purpose for deep inquiry into, and ultimately the development of a set of personal values regarding our teaching practice is not to destroy the confidence we may hold in our beliefs about why we teach the way we do, but to question why we hold onto the beliefs we have.

References

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Key Findings

Key Finding 1:

The overwhelming majority of the participants (12 of 13 participants [92%]) indicated that they recognized with a degree of certainty the desire to become music educators (high school band directors) by the time they completed participating in their middle school music program (seventh or eighth grade). *This finding is connected to research question three.*

Key Finding 2:

Those participants who were granted the opportunity by their own high school band directors to teach, or conduct their own high school bands as students further reinforced their desire to become music educators themselves (10 of 13 participants [77%]). Additionally, the participants stated that the influence of that hands-on student experience in high school compelled them to provide similar experiences for their own students. *This finding is connected to research question one and three.*

Key Finding 3:

The majority of the participants (12 of 13 participants [92%]) indicated the importance of well-curated wind band literature that is of significant educational and artistic merit within their curriculum. Experiences as performers with quality literature were also a leading influence into the desire to move forward with a career in music education for the participants when they were students. The importance of programming quality literature in the school band experience is paramount, as most participating band directors inspired by quality literature can recall being inspired by a specific piece of music in their student experience. *This finding is connected to research question one and two.*

Key Finding 4:

A majority of participants (11 of 13 participants [85%]) indicated that their professional identity is multifaceted. However, participants indicated that their identity is further established within the locality of instruction, and can be broken down within the discipline according to one of the following labels: Music Educator, Musician, Conductor, or Teacher. *This finding is connected to research question three.*

Key Finding 5:

Regarding competition, the participants indicated that competition within the high school band environment is both covert and overt. In the discussion concerning overt competition, participants (9 of 13 participants [70%]) indicated that there is an understanding of the ways in which certain elements of competition can galvanize a band program in a positive way, yet overt competition is in many ways still viewed unfavorably. However, participants also indicated that there exist elements of covert competition that often surfaces in the interpersonal relationships between band directors that fuels both curricular decisions made and the way in which band directors interact with one another. *This finding is connected to research question one.*

Key Finding 6:

Participants (6 of 13 participants [46%]) in the study stated that a challenge that inhibited their work professionally was the hegemony and parochial approach of the regional music education association to which most high school band programs in Southern California belong. *This finding is connected to research question four.*

Key Finding 7:

A majority of the participants (11 of 13 participants [85%]) indicated that the culture and experiences of the participants when they were students in their own high school band program had a significant influence upon the formation of their own values and curriculum. Most notable in this discussion is the interaction and personality of the participant's own high school band director and collegiate instructors, which serves to develop and reinforce educator pedagogical techniques, curriculum, and disposition. *This finding is connected to research question three.*

Key Findings, Continued

Key Finding 8:

There is a love-hate relationship with the marching/pep band. A majority of the participants (54%) stated that they appreciate certain elements of the marching/pep band experience, while (46%) held negative views. This thought is mostly centered around the positive aspects of the experience, and the opportunity to put the band program name in the community. However, there was a stated concern about the amount of money, time, and program resources that marching/pep band requires to stay within the current practice paradigm of Southern California. *This finding is connected to research question one.*

Key Finding 9:

Participants in the study highlighted challenges that they must overcome in order to be successful in their work. Those challenges fall into three categories: (a) Challenges related to the socioeconomic status of their community, fundraising, or program finances as they relate to educational goals for students; (b) challenges related to the expectations of the school/community; (c) challenges related to pressures the participants placed upon themselves in their position. *This finding is connected to research question four.*

Key Finding 10:

All of the participants in this study have undergone some type of evolution of their values throughout their educational career. In reviewing the evolution of these values, the following categories emerge: (a) An evolution in values away from competition; (b) an evolution in values towards an enhanced educational experience for students; (c) recognition of educator personality traits that have evolved in new ways; (d) an evolution in the way that participants program literature for their ensemble; (e) recognition of an evolution in values due to the influences of the school/community. *This finding is related to research question five.*



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