Through the Looking Glass: Music Educator Values as Interpreted Through the Student Experience.

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)

With a central focus into large performance ensembles, and the primacy of artistic performance consisting of a largely static canon of repertoire; the high school band experience in the United States has been marked by a measured and guarded evolution (Hoffman, Carter and Allen, 2013). Indeed, the high school band room is a dynamic space in which the high school band director serves as musical architect. The typical high school band director teaches in a professional environment in which the pressures of developing, growing, and maintaining a successful program is often the underlying impetus for many of the curricular decisions made (Edwards, 2011). These curricular decisions are the operationalization of each high school band directors own set of values - those beliefs, ideals, and principles concerning what they deem should be of central importance in instrumental music education. Each high school band director feels that the educational experience they are providing participating students is of merit and is offered with the best of educational intentions. Central questions grounding this research were: (1.) How does the student classroom experience inform what students interpret and understand to be the values of those music educators who lead them? (2.) In what ways do the artistic opportunities, and curricular experiences music educators provide students frame those student's thinking about what music educators believe to be important tenets for music education? This session will present research which peered through the lens of the student experience into music education; investigating the connection of the classroom experience to what students comprehend to be their teacher's beliefs for music education in principle and practice.

Viewed through the eyes of student musicians (N=307) participating in over 20 different high school band programs in Southern California, this phenomenological research utilized a mixed-methods approach to investigate the high school band experience as described by the students themselves (Moustakas, 1994). Set during the 2018-2019 academic year, participating students completed a 33-question survey, which investigated all aspects of their high school band experience (ensembles offered, artistic experiences/performance opportunities, literature programmed, student leadership/musicianship opportunities, as well as band director/student demographic information). The study also involved semi-structured interviews with randomly sampled students to enrich the survey data with first-person narrative. The interview approach utilized is based on that outlined by Kvale (2007), which outlines an interview methodology centered on the participant's everyday world – in this case their music classroom. This interview approach allowed research participants to describe the student experience as young musicians in a high school band program. Participating students in both aspects of the study were asked to connect their band program experience to what they interpret as their high school band directors' values for music education.

Critical Theory serves as the means through which this study analyzed the data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2002). Data analysis found that student perceptions into their music educator values form a distinct reality unto students themselves. Additionally, student cognizance into the values of their music educators occurs with a breadth and depth of understanding often unseen and overlooked by music educators currently in the field. This study found that students are actively

attuned to the meanings behind the decisions made by music educators ("student truthfulness"), especially regarding the underlying beliefs that may inform the operationalization of tenets music educators hold central to their practice. This study found that the perception of prescribed artistic activities between band directors and students often have drastically different interpretations. While high school band directors often see performances/culminating artistic events as an end unto themselves, student perception goes beyond mere performances/culminating artistic events - and is often deeply rooted into elements of Participatory Performance (Turino, 2008). Implications for the impacts band director curricular choices have on student artistic and social well-being also emerge. Student perception into the personality of their high school band director, and subsequent student interpretation/connection to their director's values operationalization were also found through data analysis.

These findings have direct implications for both active and pre-service music educators, specifically regarding consideration of curricular choices, and artistic experiences music educators implement in their practice – and the inclusivity, and equitability of outcomes these decisions have for students. This session will offer insights into new practices of music education curricular and artistic planning for current and future music educators.

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