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GEMS, Volume 6, Number 3, November 2013
GEMS is a peer-reviewed, online journal that explores the myriad intersections between gender, education, music and society. Emphasis is on the ways in which music teaching and learning can be used to re-dress and eliminate inequalities brought about through ideologies of domination by creating an open-ness to the musical experience that promotes access to all (and thus by extension, also the ways in which music teaching and learning have not been transformative in the past). Gender will be approached, not as male or female, but as a continuum of possibilities sustained by socially and historically constructed notions of masculinity and femininity that interact in complex, often competing and contradictory ways. A wide variety of methodological (historical, ethnographic, philosophical, sociological, etc.) and inter-disciplinary orientations will be featured, with contributors encouraged to make use of the variety of creative options presented by the electronic medium.

Materials submitted to GEMS must conform to the current edition of one of the following writing style manuals: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*, *The Chicago Manual of Style*, or *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. Articles and Book Reviews may not mix styles within a single manuscript. To allow for the identity of the author(s) to be transparent, it is requested that both first and last names be used when citing and when listed in the references.

For Text:
Roberta Lamb and Julia Koza brought feminist critiques of music education.

For References:

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Questions or comments? gems_editor@yahoo.com
Editorial

I would like to welcome GEMS readers to the November 2013 issue. Our co-chairs Jennifer Blackwell and Miroslav Pavle Manovski have been working to update the GRIME websites. I asked them to share what they have accomplished so far, and their future vision for the GRIME website.

A New Face for GRIME: New Website Launched

Gender Research in Music Education [GRIME] includes an international community of activists and scholars committed to research about gender in music education. For the past few years, however, our social media and web presence have not reflected that vitality. GRIME is now in the process of developing a wider audience base, a cohesive identity as an organization in terms of logos and branding, greater visibility in advertising, streamlining our web presence, and attracting more submissions for GEMS. As such, we have built a new website that better reflects our current mission and connection to contemporary issues. The new website, genderresearchinmusiceducation.org, is designed to be user-friendly, current, and streamlined. If is our hope that the re-branding of GRIME will help to achieve our immediate goals as an organization, and further this important work.

Jennifer Blackwell & Dr. Miroslav Pavle Manovski

The CrossRef service for GEMS will expire at the end of December 2013. CrossRef is the service that links scholarly and professional publications so that they are searchable online. To have the online journal GEMS, the articles, and the book reviews published in GEMS linked on CrossRef is vital to all involved. Roberta Lamb has kindly agreed to pay for CrossRef for 2014. Melissa Natale-Abramo, Joe Abramo, and Monique Buzzarté have also paid for CrossRef in the past. We are grateful for their financial support of GEMS.

I would also like to send a call for articles and book reviews for the up-coming editions of GEMS. In addition, I would like to invite anyone who would be interested in reviewing articles or who would enjoy proofing or editing please contact me at gems_editor@yahoo.com.

I would like GEMS and GRIME readers to support the authors whose articles and book review are included in the November 2013 edition of GEMS. You can post your comments pertaining to individual articles published in GEMS on GEMS blog page at http://gendereducationmusicandsociety.blogspot.com/

In the November 2013 issue of GEMS, Dr. Rick Parker in this article titled, “The Effects Of Loneliness On Social Interactions Among Middle School Students”, provides the reader with a literature review on loneliness; he then identifies and describes the core characteristics of lonely students and concludes with his findings based on his observations of middle school students who isolated themselves from their peers. As a teacher in higher education, I often would observe some of my college students who appeared lonely and isolated. For many of my students, being away from home for the first time was difficult, and for others meeting and making new friendships was not easy. I made a point, especially at the beginning of the school year, to plan a few social events for my students in my band and choir classes. I soon saw their level of loneliness diminished as these students were able to connect. I also discovered that I was able to retain a greater number of students in my performance groups because they established social bonds. As illustrated, this topic remains important for professors, teachers, and students at all levels of academic research.

Dr. Leslie Ward discusses the culture of hip-hop as a vibrant means of expression in an article based on her dissertation titled: “Exploring The Distinct Hip-Hop Culture Of Urban Students”.

Dr. Miroslav Pavle Manovski’s article, “Snapshot Reflections: Targeting Young Boys Singing Girls’ Songs In School” provides the reader with an introduction to LGBTQ2IA2 theory and then Manovski shares his personal experience as an adolescent boy who often felt negatively marginalized in school and more specifically as a member in the choir. This heartfelt article should be required for all undergraduate music method classes.

Lastly is Mr. Jason M. Cherry book review of Border Sexualities, Border Families in Schools by Maria Pallota-Chiarolli. I had personally heard Pallota-Chiarolli speak at AERA on the topic of her book. It was one of the most powerful sessions that I have attended. I highly recommend this book.

Dr. Colleen Pinar, Editor
A Qualitative Data Analysis: The Effects Of Loneliness On Social Interactions Among Middle School Students

Dr. Rick Parker

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Abstract: This article attempts to identify and describe core characteristics of lonely middle school students, regarding how these students socially interact around their peers in classes. Findings reveal that lonely students often keep to themselves. Often, they distance themselves and select another activity, such as walking or reading. In some circumstances, they will not even speak a word unless someone asks them a question. Lonely students will choose to remain alone for various reasons: 1) They lack interest in the activity 2) They fear ridicule by their classmates and/or 3) They perceive that their peer do not want them to participate. If lonely students are forced to participate, they often remain on the outskirts of the activity; in essence, they will participate as little as possible. In summary, lonely students report that they choose to remain alone and distance themselves from their classmates. Strategies that can be implemented to encourage participation include creating small groups that are less competitive, incorporating peer assistance with activity skills, and/or encouraging lonely students to attend other activities after school that appeal to their interests.
Review Of Literature

The idea of loneliness is broad and sometimes vague (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). In regards to the educational environment (and in this case, the middle school setting), loneliness is also operationally defined as a lack of participation and social interaction by a student or students who choose not to participate in class or other school activities. There has been a limited amount of research, which correlates the impact of loneliness on middle school students’ social interactions with their classmates. This is in part because previous federal legislation has concentrated on the bottom line for academic achievement; an acceptable percentage of students who pass certain core subjects in middle school and high school (NCLB, 2001). Unfortunately, teachers often focus their efforts and energy on teaching to academic tests, and spend less time on the social aspects of education that can impact a student’s academic achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Valdes, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999). In particular, one such social aspect is that of loneliness, and its impact on a student developing appropriate social interaction with his/her peers.

“Loneliness is a discrepancy between desired and achieved levels of social contact” (Bucholz & Catton, 1999, p. 2). Lonely kids tend to be less accepted by their peers and/or feel rejected. As they have fewer friends than popular kids, they often feel more isolated in the school climate (Catalano, Haggerty, Oesterle, Fleming, & Hawkins, 2004). Isolated kids tend to lack the warm social interactions among their peers, and the social interactive process is hindered as these kids are often experiencing negative feelings. In essence, negative feelings further exacerbate the process of forming healthy friendships. Ulrich Beck (1999) reports how social interaction satisfies social needs, gives a person feedback regarding his/her behavior, and satisfies his/her love and belonging needs. In addition, belonging to a group is important for most kids, for groups enable kids to participate in social activities (Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, 2005) and understand themselves (Reiss, 2000). Overall, kids who have reported lower levels of loneliness demonstrate more optimism and stronger social interaction skills with others compared to students who have demonstrated higher levels of loneliness. Many lonely kids resort to other avenues of entertainment such as the Internet, shopping, and/or watching television (Nevid, Rathus, & Green, 2003.). Coincidentally, internet use among kids has been correlated with loneliness (Lindsay & Gant, 2002).

“Loneliness is attributed to internal influences such as interests, feelings, personalities, deficits, and strengths of a student.” (p.550) Bernard Weiner’s attributional theory (1974) reports that loneliness is attributed to poor ability and a deficient personality, culminating in depression and/or hopelessness. The students who distance themselves from their classmates either possess or lack some personality attribute or ability that demotivates them from wanting to participate in the activities. James Gee’s theory states, Loneliness is also attributed to external influences such as lack of encouragement by coaches, peers, and forcing students to participate. (Gee, 2004) Robert Weiss’s theory of loneliness (1973) corresponds with this statement. Social isolation refers to a lack of social integration between or among people (Weiss, 1973). Theoretically, symbolic interaction emphasizes the importance of daily social interactions and symbols that enable people to evaluate themselves from other peoples’ perspectives. Known as the “looking glass self” (Cooley, 1902, p. 22), people envision how they appear and are evaluated by others. These feelings may be positive and uplifting or dejecting. An individual’s identity is shaped by these social interactions, for these socially interactive experiences provide the social landscape or structure for a person’s individual identity development (Cooley, 1902; Cottrell, 1969; Goffman, 1959; McCall & Simmons, 1978; Mead, 1934; Stryker, 1980). In addition, Hollingshead (1949), Larkin (1979), Lesko (1988), Schwartz & Merten (1967). Elizabeth Douvan & Joseph Adelson (1966) and Eric Erikson (1963) report that teenagers sometimes socially label their peers as they explore and seek a personal identity themselves. Moreover, these social labels are also placed onto students in their respective peer groups. Here, teens in their groups are able to decipher as they socially interact within and among other peer groups a sense of their personal and social identity (Brown & Lohr, 1987; Cohen, 1979;Coleman, 1961; Cusick, 1973; Eckert, 1989;Eder, 1985; Foley,1990; C. Wayne Gordon, 1957; Chad Gordon, 1971; Hollingshead, 1949; Ianni, 1989; Larkin, 1979; Lesko, 1988; Lightfoot, 1983; Schwartz, 1987; Schwartz & Merten,
Examples of social labels include “geek” and/or “nerd” (Kinney, 1990, p.27). According to Susan Harter (1990), adolescents have difficulty distinguishing their own personal and social identities from others’ perceptions of them. Therefore, social labels such as “geek” or “nerd” can negatively affect their personal and/or social identity. While succeeding academically and/or displaying poor social skills, students labeled as “nerds” are often isolated as they internalize these social labels (Kinney, 1993; Harter, 1990). “Nerds,” in addition, often do not attend social functions or date. As a result, these students are less likely to develop appropriate social skills like the popular kids who are present in these social arenas. Often, they do not make many friends, and as a result, they are subject to feeling lonely (Kinney, 1993).

Teachers, parents, and administrators can train students to utilize more appropriate social and emotional skills; these skills have demonstrated to increase students’ feelings of belonging, and, in turn, reduce feelings of loneliness. In particular, one effective social skill is training students to develop social competence through appropriate assertiveness training among classmates. In addition, lonely students can learn how to participate appropriately in the classroom (Stoeckli, 2009; Paulsen, Bru, & Murberg, 2006). Moreover, lonely kids need to learn how to express their feelings openly with someone they trust, for hidden emotions are often indicative of lonely students. Most importantly, kids need to learn to accept other peers for who they are, regarding their culture, values, and habits (Ceyhan, 2008; Rezan & Cecen, 2008).

On an individual basis, middle school students can pursue other school-sponsored activities where they become exposed to upper classmen such as juniors or seniors. For example, juniors and seniors often provide a supportive social environment for middle school kids. Many upper classmen or women express the attitude that middle school kids should just go for it, regarding their participation in some minor activity such as a journalist on the yearbook staff. As reported by middle school students, juniors and seniors were encouraging to them. These upper classmen provided a supportive and a new reference group, serving as a protective venue from expectations and values of popular kids. In addition, middle school kids reported that upper classmen and women were often nicer to them as they offered them mature advice (Kinney, 1993).

Another avenue for lonely middle school kids to utilize is to gain knowledge of a sport such as baseball. By sharing this knowledge with some of the more popular peers, these middle school kids can somewhat distance themselves from the labels of being a “nerd”. In addition, knowledge of sports enables one to develop self-confidence, another feature that aids lonely students in social interactions (Kinney, 1993).

Finally, lonely students who free themselves from popular peer expectations can listen to the advice of other peers. These peers can encourage a lonely kid to avoid worrying about the comments of other students. In addition, as previously mentioned above, lonely kids can join extracurricular activities and meet new friends who have the same interests as them. In essence, instead of trying to fit into the popular peer group, he or she can join other groups who have similar interests (Kinney, 1993).

Methods

The invitation to conduct this study was extended to me, in part, because of my relationship with a classmate who was a teacher at the particular middle school where this research occurred. My background as a counseling psychologist and often a lonely student myself peaked my curiosity. I mentioned this topic because teachers and administrators focus so much time and energy on academic progress that they often overlook social issues, which can adversely affect student academic achievement. It is important that teachers and administrators consider the effects of loneliness among middle school students as a significant contributing factor, correlated with student academic achievement.

I gained IRB permission to implement a qualitative study that would allow me to observe middle school students during their classes. This research lasted 3.5 months, during the spring semester of the school year. Throughout the entire period of this study, I observed both as a participant observer and as a non-participant observer.
Data Sources

The participants consisted of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school students at a Southwest middle school. Data sources for this study were interviews and field notes. Informal interviews allowed the researcher to answer the ‘why’ questions involving lonely students; why do lonely students choose not to interact with their peers? While passive participant observation allows broader views of observing all lonely students, active participant observation enables researchers to focus more on certain loners. Transcriptions of interviews were taken from digital recordings. Transcribing an interview from a tape recorder is extremely important because it enables the researcher to play repeatedly the exact words that are spoken in an interview. Moreover, transcribing also allows the researcher to observe the nonverbal cues of an interviewee since he or she does not have to copy every word that is spoken.

Data Analysis

The process for analyzing data in a study such as this is by using grounded theory and discourse analysis. Grounded theory is utilized initially by openly coding various demographical data, locations of activities, grade levels, and comments expressed by students. These open codes are then combined into larger categorical codes which consist of locations such as inside the classroom and outside on the playground. Other categories are taken from the open codes such as demographics.

Further categories consist of status in the peer groups along with the dynamics of the groups of students who are interacting. From the categorical level, the themes are devised which entail feelings of loneliness exhibited by students, personalities of students, deficits identified by students, and interests of students. After the themes are established, axial codes are created which sum up external influences from coaches and peers, coupled with internal influences of students. The final coding step is the incorporation of loneliness theories. From the axial codes, the main theories concerning lonely students are reported. In addition, discourse analysis is implemented to gather information stated by the school counselor as well as identify patterns of language that reveal characteristics and reasons for ‘what’, ‘why’, and ‘how’ lonely students behave (Gee, 2004).

Finally, grounded theory is utilized. The first initial advantage of grounded theory is that it enables the researchers to create themes, which can be related to theories. Theories provide a base from which the “how’s” and “why’s” of the research questions can be answered. By answering the “how’s” and “why’s”, the researcher is able to comprehend the reasons behind decisions in social, scientific research (Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005). On a second note, certain research questions are exploratory in nature, which are not elaborated on in the research literature, so grounded theory enables researchers to analyze data. In other words, some research questions cannot be answered using hypothesis testing. In addition, since hypothesis testing is not applicable, researchers are not able to formulate ideas or hunches that they could associate in the early stages of the research process (Todd, Nerlich, McKeown & Clarke, 2004).

Results

I discovered from interviewing lonely students that they do not like to participate in certain activities because they perform poorly in the event. For example, one student commented, “I do not like to participate because I am not good at it.” Another student stated, “My friends do not want me to play.” Lonely students sometimes have friends, but some report that their classmates do not want them to participate in an event.

When students were given free time, the lonely students that I observed often sat by themselves watching their peers play or kept to themselves. Even if some of the loners were forced to participate, they did, but most often, they would distance themselves within the required activities from the rest of their peers. In this study, I recorded several pages of field notes, which described the behavior of the students who appeared to isolate themselves from other peers. From several observations, I noticed that some of the loners in the school activities were actually loafing on the periphery. Some sat and read books while others remained alone and appeared to almost hibernate. They did not participate but sat quietly, waiting for the bell to ring as the class ended.

Some students were just plain shy, and they lacked the assertiveness to either make friends or the
social skills to bond with their peers. Many times, these students were withdrawn and suffered, but they went unrecognized by their teachers since they tend to remain quiet and not disruptive. The school counselor commented that this is unfortunate, because these students often are unnoticed by teachers since they are not disruptive in class and are not disciplinary problems. However, on a more positive note, the counselor mentioned programs that are being utilized such as after school activities, which offer an opportunity for lonely students as well as all students to socialize with other peers in a non-competitive environment.

The counselor specifically confirmed that some students do not want to participate in certain activities because they feel that they will perform poorly. As a result, they are sometimes teased, and they want to avoid this, or being mocked in any way. The counselor also mentioned factors such as problems at home, which may contribute to the student feeling lonely. In essence, many students will bring their domestic problems to school and bottle those feelings. Moreover, some students will misbehave in order to obtain attention, which is really an attempt to alleviate their lonely feelings as mentioned by the school counselor.

Discussion/Conclusion

I conclude that I have found nothing particularly unusual regarding reasons that lonely students distance themselves from their classmates in activities. There will probably never be any ideal formula or plan to curtail and/or encourage students to participate in all activities, nor will there be any set method that applies to any and/or all students. However, “Great teaching will always be about relationships and programs; schools do not build relationships, people do” (Duncan-Andrade, 2007, p. 636). Theoretically, Janna Juvonen’s model (1996) highlights the importance of teacher and student behaviors along with environmental factors that interplay between and among students and teachers. These behaviors, in turn, impact a student’s sense of belonging in a scholastic environment. A student’s sense of belonging, in turn, impacts his or her behaviors. Students who do not feel a sense of belonging are less likely to develop healthy friendships and relationships with other students and/or teachers (Wei, Russell, & Zakalik, 2005; Juvonen, 1996).

When I began this research, I was a doctoral student. Initially, I was somewhat discouraged that so many students appear alone, and often remain alone. I am tentatively encouraged after conducting this research because I realize that a teacher by himself/herself can actually tackle loneliness if he or she will notice it, model his/her care/concern for the pupil, and attempt to include each and every student in as many activities as possible. If a teacher will demonstrate care and concern for any and all students, then he or she will probably notice that many students will respond positively and interact not only with the teacher but may attempt to interact on a more consistent basis with other students as well (Duncan-Andrade, 2007). If a teacher does not demonstrate that he or she cares for another student, then a student will often notice and detect a teacher’s lack of concern. Furthermore, a teacher who really cares for a student often finds that the student reciprocates in the learning process; the student becomes more motivated to learn (Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Juvonen, 1996; Reiss, 2000).

One of the strengths of using middle school kids is that these individuals are beginning puberty, and friendships along with peer acceptance are very important during this phase of life. Puberty is a time of discovery of who a person is and what their talents and abilities are, as well as forming friendships (Erikson, 1950). Many adolescents who feel uncomfortable or disinterested in certain activities will refuse to participate if they feel that they will be teased or ridiculed (Gibbs & Roche, 1999). As they are teased, this often lowers students’ self-efficacies if they cannot perform successfully in an activity. Albert Bandura’s research (1977) emphasizes how a student’s self-efficacy is very instrumental in his or her ability to successfully perform. A student’s self-efficacy can even determine if he or she will even attempt to participate in an event (Axtell & Parker, 2003).

The teasing or ridicule is often punishing to peers, as many students become aggressive. Rejected boys often respond more aggressively without justification (Coie, Dodge, Terry, & Wright, 1990). As a rejected adolescent is teased, he or she often intensifies his/her aggression and is less likely to submit than a non-rejected adolescent (Coie et al, 1999). Research reveals a positive correlation between peer
rejection and aggressive behavior (Kupersmidt, Burchinal, & Patterson, 1995).

On the other hand, many of the loners in middle school are actually choosing to remain alone, and thus, they are ignored by their peers. While some of the students remain alone because they fear being ridicule, others are actually disinterested in the some educational activities. Since these individuals are not interested, they are ignored. While some of them may actually be shy, others may possess undesirable social qualities. An unfortunate example of this was the shooters at Columbine High School, who probably had undesirable social qualities since they were ostracized by their peers (Gibbs & Roche, 1999). This, and other similar school tragedies leads one to question if it’s prudent for our education system to focus less on social aspects [such as loneliness], in favor of academic achievement.

References


Wei, Meifeng, Daniel W. Russell, & Robyn A. Zakalik. (2005). Adult attachment, social self-efficacy,


Abstract: Despite Hip-Hop culture's transition from urban ghettos to the mainstream, it is often viewed as deficient or deviant and not appreciated as a formal culture. This view on the part of educators has resulted in an unwillingness to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy to this distinct culture, contributing to the academic achievement gap between urban students and their peers. Effective urban teachers recognize this distinct culture and overcome dominant cultural assumptions in order to understand the communities in which they teach. This article focuses on a qualitative study designed to provide urban educators with a description of the Hip Hop culture, as well as identify skills and competencies associated with cultural competence. Findings from this study highlight the need for recognition, acceptance, understanding, and respect for Hip Hop culture, and the significance of building relationships by penetrating urban students' "street tough" persona (often mistaken for lack of interest).
Today there is growing concern that the urban teacher quality requires unique attributes in order to reach students of the Hip-Hop Culture. This culture has inspired many low-income, minority urban students to adopt a tough street attitude that is difficult for educational practitioners to reach. Considering that academic achievement occurs as a result of teachers’ ability to implement practices that indicate knowledge of the students’ culture, social class, and race (Haley, 2001; Ladson-Billing & Darling-Hammond, 2000; Ross, 2002), teachers must be aware of students’ diverse and unique cultural backgrounds. The absence of the Hip-Hop Culture in diversity and multicultural training and professional development has left teachers entering urban schools with a disadvantage as they attempt to cross cultural boundaries with the distinct Hip-Hop Culture. The purpose of this study was to research urban principals’ description of the new and distinct Hip-Hop Culture and how urban principals select teachers who demonstrate Hip-Hop Cultural Competence.

The problem this study sought to investigate was that urban areas typically represent the cultural diversity of the entire nation; however, there is a lack of diversity amongst the teachers who teach in these diverse urban classrooms. If America’s schools are to provide equal education opportunities for all children, they will have to address the mismatch that occurs between students’ and teachers’ culture in urban classrooms (Ward, 2011). “Hip-Hop Culture continues to be discouraged in many school districts and schools across the United States. It is seen as a cultural phenomenon that impedes educational growth and achievement by the dominant culture and schools are agents of reproduction for the dominant culture” (Gause, 2001, p. 25).

Principals that participated in this study described the culture of their students and the practices they use to select teachers who have Hip-Hop Cultural Competence. Hip-Hop cultural competence begins with the recognition that the culture, although new, is not deficient. It is a true culture that should be acknowledged and considered, if not included, in diversity and multi-cultural training, curriculum and education. The results from this study and the empirical evidence it is grounded in suggest that Hip-Hop Cultural Competence is a teachers’ ability to deliver culturally relevant pedagogy, engage and motivate a sometimes oppositional and high-poverty student population, build relationships by penetrating street-tough attitudes, and demonstrate general knowledge and a willingness to learn about the culture.

This research provides relevant information for practitioners, administrators, policy makers, and researchers with a preliminary glimpse of the Hip-Hop Culture and selecting teachers who demonstrate Hip-Hop cultural competence from the urban high school principals’ perspective.

The Hip-Hop Culture Is Distinct/Diverse

The literature on the Hip-Hop culture revealed that due to broad appeal, its major impact on mainstream/popular culture and the environment in which it was born, the Hip-Hop culture is distinct from other American sub-cultures. The Hip-Hop culture has emerged as one of the most distinctive and controversial musical genres and cultures of the past decade (Gause, 2001). Its emergence as a component of Black culture, now permeates the experiences of different racial/ethnic groups in the urban culture. The main cultural influence and leaders of the Hip-hop culture, remain largely Black. One reason that Hip-Hop culture is distinct is because it is also often seen as one that is in need of repair. This may be due in part to the strong influence of the Black culture, which has traditionally been viewed as deficient.

This lack of acknowledgment and respect for the Hip-Hop culture of urban students has limited its inclusion in literature and curriculum that focus on diversity and multicultural education. In addition to the impact of rap music, the lack of acknowledgment and respect for the Hip-Hop culture can also be attributed to the generalization, in the world of education, that all African-American children are products of the southern Black American culture and/or post-civil rights movement. This can be described as a culture heavily influenced by Christianity, the effects of slavery and Jim Crow, and the lack of a homeland and native culture that other immigrants cherish and celebrate (Hooks, 1994; Kitwana, 2002; Kozol, 2000; Ogbar, 2007; Ogbu, 1981). This generalization has ignored the child who lives in New York, who is from a family who has never been south of New Jersey. That student would not consider himself or herself part of the southern post-civil rights culture that values soul food, civil rights, quilts and traditions, and the strength
of family and prayer (Ward, 2011). The common culture of the students in New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Los Angeles and urban areas is Hip-Hop (Ward, 2011).

Greg Dimitriadis (2009) found that while young people didn’t verbalize it (out of respect), they seemed to resist the ways Martin Luther King, Jr. is used as a symbol for all Black history, representing all that is nonviolent and passive. He suggested that the history of King, Malcolm X, and others, seemed, in large measure, outside the school curriculum and popular texts in which these young people were invested (Dimitriadis, 2009).

Technology is also a driving force in the Hip-Hop culture. Principals described the culture as very connected to technology and focused on technology’s ability to allow students to communicate with peers and gain exposure to a broader global community. With all of the attention the digital divide has gotten, this data was unexpected. Apparently, urban students have found ways to stay connected without computers in their homes. They utilize and have become dependent upon cellular phones, school and library computer access, and other personal devices that allow them Internet access. Principals also discussed the issues and challenges that surround this cultures’ use of technology. Some principals were in the process of developing fair and effective school policies to control or limit student access to online and cellular technology in schools. The principals expressed concerns of the impact of cellular phones in their schools. One principal shared a story about a teacher being photographed, by a student, while using the restroom and subsequently having the photo posted on YouTube. Other principals commented on parental concerns regarding technology. Some principals felt it was unfortunate that in some cases the only time parents came to the school was to retrieve their child’s cellular phone or hand held device. Other principals understood urban parents’ demand to allow their child to have a cellular phone, as cell phones have become a safety measure post 9/11, and a necessity as the students commute through dangerous neighborhoods and return home from school to unsupervised homes.

Another finding from this study focused on language, slang, and use of profanity by students from this culture. Principals mentioned the need for the tolerance of profanity that is not directed at an individual. There was a general consensus that profanity was not enough of an offense to discipline students in urban high schools. One principal went, as far as to state, that unless the student directly used profanity toward the teacher or another adult/student maliciously, he/she did not think they should be sent to his/her office. Principals did not go into depth regarding the slang students used, only that the terms differ according to region of the city and neighborhood.

The legal issues and concerns of students from the Hip-Hop culture were also highlighted. Issues ranging from arrest, ankle bracelets (used for monitoring), and probation play a bigger role in this culture than in any other American youth culture. The incarceration rates of students from the Hip-Hop culture (which is primarily made up of low-income and under-achieving minority students), is much higher than the national average. According to Bill Quigley (2010), while African-American juvenile youth comprise 16% of the population, they comprise 28% of juvenile arrests, 37% of the youth in juvenile jails and 58% of the youth sent to adult prisons (Quigley, 2010). Marvin Lynn and Thurman Bridges (2009) attributed the over-representation of Black males in prisons as one factor stifling the achievement, aspirations, and efficacy among the Hip-Hop culture.

“For example, 80% of New York City’s drug users were white in 1989; however, 92 % of those arrested in drug busts were Black or Latino [in 1989]” (Ogbar, 2007, p. 166). Ogbar also shared the findings of the United States Commission on Civil Rights research that revealed that African-Americans constituted 14 % of all drug users, but constituted 35 % of those in drug arrests, 5% of those convicted of drug-related offenses, and 75% if those imprisoned for drug-related crimes (Ogbar, 2007). “The biggest crime in the U.S. criminal justice system is that it is a race-based institution where African-Americans are directly targeted and punished in a much more aggressive way than white people” (Quigley, 2010, p. 1).

Violence and legal issues will continue to be an issue for the Hip-Hop culture as long as urban areas continue to be plagued by these social issues. Legal issues are often created by the underground economy in urban areas (Ogbar, 2007). Low-income residents in urban ghettos often invest and participate in the underground economy of their local area, because the
national economy has little regard or respect for them or their situation. The Hip-Hop culture has been influenced significantly by the American prison system. Many of the cultures’ slang, fashion, and street-tough attitude were developed in prisons and eventually brought to the neighborhoods (urban ghettos) when prisoners were released (Ogbar, 2007). The legal issues and influence from prisoners and former-prisoners are often the most publicized aspect of the culture. In fact, serving time in prison or committing acts of violence in the drug trade give youth in the Hip-Hop culture, street credibility and boost or improve their standing in their community; thus, glorifying their criminal act as a rite of passage. American media deems hip-hop rap stars, actors, and athletes from this culture as leaders and role models, and profit from their sensationalized legal issues (Ogbar, 2007).

Principals also described the Hip-Hop culture as one that distrusts American social systems. This distrust often translates into disengagement. This, in the case of education, results in low-academic achievement. The culture’s street-tough attitude is due to economically stressed urban environments and is expressed through resistance and lack of faith in the very social systems that are designed to improve their quality of life.

Students’ personal experiences and historical events have contributed to the urban culture’s disbelief that education can level the playing field in careers and economically. Bakari Kitwana (2002) and Marlene Munn-Joseph (2007) argued that this Hip-Hop culture is a new “platform” that enables many hip-hop stars to speak about their community plight and educate both Black and White youth. “This ‘education’ consisted of highlighting the disillusionment of the promise of “equality for all” as well as providing alternative perspectives of history not presented in formal schooling” (Munn-Joseph, 2007, p. 42).

The Hip-Hop culture’s lack of trust (caused by inequality) that an education will improve their life, is demonstrated in the achievement gap. For those that subscribe to underground economy prevalent in their world, the belief is that formal education will not result in social capital or higher economic status. Regardless of educators opinions about the culture of their students, it must be acknowledged that the youth sub-culture particularly Hip-Hop Culture is influential in the “schooling” of young people (Gause, 2001, p. 18). “Popular [hip-hop] culture is a dominating force in our society and we must acknowledge its effects and usages in the educational process” (Gause, 2001, p. 7).

**Neighborhood And Poverty As Perceived Cultural Factors Influencing Hip-Hop Culture**

The literature on this culture describes students who have a street-tough attitude, which allows them to survive their environment and navigate the neighborhood, and/or impoverishment in which they live. The Hip-Hop culture does not believe that “book smarts” are “sexy “or “cool” (If you “sound white” or are deemed an “over achiever” you are sometimes deemed weak which can also make you a target). Instead students from this culture have adopted a “don’t snitch” mentality (regarding legal issues), and don’t trust the system or “the man” (white people in control). Jeff Chang (2005) described the environment in which the Hip-Hop Culture was born and provided a glimpse into why students from this culture believe in and behave the way they do. In short, he identified the culture as oppositional. Due to severe distrust caused by slavery and “Jim Crow,” African-Americans and those living in poverty no longer buy into the “American Dream” or the American justice system. Systems such as public education, welfare, and Medicaid designed to help families in poverty are under constant scrutiny for inequities and injustices in the Black community. Teachers’ equipped with this knowledge about the culture will be better prepared to deal with this mentality and ultimately help urban students filter and analyze unhealthy aspects of their own culture.

Principals also perceived the neighborhoods and communities of students from the Hip-Hop Culture as having a major influence on the culture. The unsafe, high poverty, high crime, and violent worlds that many urban students navigate through have a significant effect on the Hip-Hop culture; how they interact with social systems and other cultures, and more importantly their motivation and goals. “The ‘ghetto’ or the ‘hood’ (low-income urban neighborhoods) is drug infested and violent, thus, producing a street culture specific to the expressiveness of Hip-Hop Culture. The lack of economic opportunity forced many to turn to a life of crime” (Gause, 2001, p. 127). Urban principals explained that understanding the
culture of their students, involved knowledge and understanding about the world in which they live. There are three major challenges for teachers who lack knowledge about the Hip-Hop culture: a) selecting and delivering culturally relevant pedagogy, b) connecting what students learn in school to their world, and c) making personal connections with students that develop into relationships.

Violence and Gangs were also outside factors that urban principals believe influence the Hip-Hop culture. Emmett Price (2006) explained,

> From the very beginning of hip-hop, violence has plagued the community . . . Yet by the mid-1980’s and into the 1990’s, the effects of urban decay and the realities of class-based disparities led youth to engage in urgent, emotionally charged, yet mindless acts of violence against one another. Born of the inner-city cries for assistance and equity, hip-hop was unable to escape the brutal clutches of these violent acts and violent crimes… (p. 79)

Some Black parents identify with Hip-Hop culture and understand the role it has played in constructing their perspectives on addressing the dynamics of race and race relations in their lived experiences and their child’s schooling. Parents who come to school and defend their children do not want their children or themselves to conform to the status quo of society. Instead, they want them to develop their own individuality grounded in their culture, no matter how hybrid it may be (Munn-Joseph, 2007). He further remarked,

> Parents in the hip-hop culture sometimes demonstrate transformational resistance in that their hip-hop worldview demanded that they be who they are without conforming to others’ prescribed definitions, that they recognized the societal structures that acted to perpetuate deficit views of Black families, and that they recognized the contradictions in relationships among Blacks and other racial/ethnic groups. (p. 130)

**Effective Urban Teacher Attributes: Cultural Competency**

The literature on the cultural mismatch that occurs in most urban classrooms revealed that the cultural difference between urban students and their teachers might be having a negative effect on urban student academic achievement. In most urban schools with low-income students, the teacher is no longer a part of the culture (even if they grew up in similar circumstances), because in most cases teachers are not low-income, they are considered middle class. The mismatch in culture has more to do with the economic status and age difference, than ethnicity. Not all African-American teachers are from low-income families. Many older [post-civil rights culture] African-American teachers have difficulty connecting with students from the Hip-Hop culture because the culture is as foreign to them as it is to their Caucasian counterparts.

The cultural mismatch is exacerbated by the street-tough attitude some urban students pose. The data from this study revealed that violent neighborhoods and poverty have made it necessary for urban children to be street-tough in order to survive their environment. Penetrating students’ tough exterior is only possible if teachers are knowledgeable, respectful, and/or are open to the Hip-Hop culture. The urban or Hip-Hop culture is not included in diversity and multicultural pre-service teacher education because it is not a respected culture in the field of education (Popplewell, 2010). “For an academician to come into schools and conduct research without an understanding of the youth [from the Hip-Hop culture] and their perspectives is disrespectful and will often be met with resistance by the students” (Williams, 2007, p. 63). The attributes revealed in this study provide teachers with the ability to bridge the cultural divide in their classrooms and improve academic achievement.

The results from this study do not imply that teachers need to become members or experts on the Hip-Hop culture, but knowledge about the historical context, attitudes and beliefs, diversity, and oppositional disposition can be helpful in delivering effective and culturally relevant pedagogy. Greg Dimitriadis (2009) suggested that the struggle to open space for Hip-Hop culture in education, offers a key counter to much work in pedagogy and popular culture, which inherently will explore the complexity...
of the popular culture not on its own terms, as noted, but as a resource for teachers to scaffold traditional curricula.

Principals discussed the relationship between cultural competence and urban teacher quality. Most stated that teachers of students from the Hip-Hop culture need cultural competence in the same regard that teachers on a Native American reservation needs to understand the culture of the students they teach. The notion that teachers need to be culturally competent has recently become popular in education. This study, however, explored the notion that the Hip-Hop culture must be acknowledged and therefore needs to be included in the cultural competency training urban teachers receive, an attribute evaluated during professional observations. “The need for institutions of higher education to produce culturally proficient teachers, leaders, and educators is of most importance as we near the twenty-first century” (Gause, 2001). The results of this study imply that including the Hip-Hop culture in multicultural and cultural competency research and training may further indicate that like other specialty areas identified by additional and unique skills and expertise, it is associated with effectiveness with a given population of students. Certification and/or licensure may be necessary to assure competency in this specialty area.

Principals perceived that effective urban teachers feel it is their duty to understand their students culturally, regardless of whether they identified with Hip-Hop Culture and/or rap music (Gause, 2001). Gause (2001) described the culture of Hip-Hop as a powerful cultural movement, which shapes and forms multiple identities. Educators must understand that Hip-Hop constitutes itself as knowledge, complete with its own discursive forms, citing its own traditions. Emmett Price (2006) suggested that it is imperative to revisit the political, social, economic, and cultural developments that the early innovators faced when making an effort to understand the new and sometimes controversial Hip-Hop Culture.

Building Caring Relationships
Principals identified the ability to build caring relationships as an attribute of significant importance to improve academic achievement. The literature on teacher quality, in all environments, typically included that ability as important to quality teaching. What is unique about this attribute for urban teacher quality is that it is perceived to be a mandatory attribute. For example, a former NASA scientist might be successful delivering science content in a private school; this expertise may not translate to success in an urban school. While urban students value effective instruction and content knowledge, a relationship is necessary in urban classrooms. As a result of their urban environment, many students have a resiliency and street-tough attitude that often requires a teacher who is willing and able to build relationships. David Ellis (1997) described resiliency as the ability to rebound from adversities having the potential to cause serious psychological harm and maintain competent functioning in the face of major life stressors. “The establishment of strong relationships was also found to be an important protective factor for resilient children” (Ellis, 1997, p. 22).

Respect
Nathan Ambrose (2008) found that teachers of high-poverty students in high-performing schools believed that developing professional relationships with students was a distinguishing characteristic at their schools. The teachers also revealed, they valued the relationship they formed with students (Ambrose, 2008, p. 168). David Ellis (1997) provided further evidence that education is highly interpersonal and the quality of the interpersonal relationship between teachers and students makes a difference in who succeeds and who fails in school. “School improvement initiatives ignoring this fact are missing a critical variable important to students and shown to be related to the school problems of student absenteeism, discipline, and academic achievement” (Ellis, 1997, p. 85). David Ellis (1997) also found that respect from teachers is important to students. Perceptions of teacher respect are related to student success in school. “In their own words, students said they would not come to school if they felt disrespected, that without respect they want to rebel, and they would work harder if they have the respect from their teachers (Ellis, 1997, p. 86).
Cultural Instruction And Pedagogy

Traditional instruction and pedagogy has been focused on the majority culture that holds the most power in America. “The fact remains that mainstream America is “ignorant” about education that is culturally relevant and the impact of that education on today’s classrooms” (Gause, 2001, p. 123). There is little to no research that discusses instruction and pedagogy relevant to the Hip-Hop culture. “Hip-hop is ignored by the formal school curriculum; in fact it is banished to the margins. This banishment continues to privilege an official culture, which a majority does not find the resources to sustain desirable identities and high expectations” (Gause, 2001, p. 38).

Principals discussed the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy. The background and environment of the students were perceived as essential factors to consider when teaching in urban classrooms. Principals also shared that urban teachers must understand the culture of poverty and its effects on student motivation and achievement. When describing effective urban teachers, principals noted teachers who acknowledged the culture of urban students and made obvious attempts to learn about and incorporate the culture into the classroom and instruction were most effective. “Poor academic performance and excessive discipline problems are attributed to the boredom that some young Black males (from the Hip-Hop culture) experience from a perceived irrelevant educational curriculum” (Gause, 2001, p. 123).

Younger teachers were often discussed when describing effective instruction that includes culturally relevant pedagogy. “Any visit to any prestigious university will find privileged young people (of any race) able to engage in spirited debates about the merits of the latest hip-hop beef or who qualifies to be the hottest new rap artist” (Ogbar, 2007, p. 136). The ethnicity of the teacher seemed to be of less importance than age. Jeffrey Ogbar (2007) explained that consumers of hip-hop are overwhelmingly white and middle-class and the Black consumers range from poor to upper middle class. “By the 1990’s, hip-hop was the dominant force in popular culture as the culture spread to all facets of society within the United States and abroad” (Price, 2006).

High Expectations

Principals perceived teachers with high expectations are more likely to be successful with urban students than those who think urban students are from a culture that is in need of repair. Teachers from high-performing schools in low-income areas believe that low-income students could perform as well as their peers when expected to do so and when they received support at the school to enable them to perform well at school (Ambrose, 2008). Quality teachers reject the notion that students from low-income backgrounds could not achieve at high levels (Ambrose, 2008). “They (teachers of high-poverty students in high-performing schools) also communicated how they held high expectations for students; they relayed they worked with students one-on-one and in grade-level meetings to make these high expectations for student achievement known (Ambrose, 2008, p. 168).

Nathan Ambrose’s (2008) research uncovered similar findings when researching how teachers from high-performing schools in high-poverty areas overcame barriers to student achievement. Although Ambrose’s sample included rural principals, the themes uncovered were similar. “These included, (a) maintain high expectations for all students, (b) reject deficit notions about low-income students, (c) provide quality instructional practices, (d) provide supplemental instruction for students in reading and mathematics, (e) develop school-wide literacy programs, and (f) maintain a positive school climate” (Ambrose, 2008, p. 180).

Urban principals also discussed the need for urban teachers to be flexible and have “a love for the job.” Successful teachers and schools must equip themselves with necessary skills and the capacity to adapt and change in order to make a difference in the academic lives of their students and this includes understanding and embracing “popular culture” (Gause, 2001). This is in contrast to urban teachers who believe urban students of color should assimilate to the schools’ culture, rather than have the school culture and their instruction adjusted to meet the needs of urban students. Currently, teachers who do not adhere to school and district rules are at a crossroads. They have little room to adjust their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students, including their lives, families, and environment. “The presence of
highly dedicated and hardworking faculty and staff underscore these schools’ rejection of deficit notions, treated students as unique individuals, and worked toward increasing the achievement of low-income populations” (Ambrose, 2008, p. 145). Several principals also shared that teachers who love their job were often successful because they went above and beyond to meet the needs and learn the culture of their students, delivered culturally relevant pedagogy, and had high expectation of their students’ academic achievement.

Effective Teacher Selection Methods Used By Principals

Some researchers believe that urban teacher selection process is more important than urban teacher pre-service training (Haberman, 2002). Research on urban teacher selection acknowledges that selecting teachers who are effective in urban classrooms is paramount to improving academic achievement and closing the achievement gap. High performing schools exert great effort when selecting quality teachers by being extremely discerning in their hiring. Principals in this study described their formal and informal teacher selection methods used to assess the cultural competence and urban teacher attributes. “The dilemma we face is how we select teachers. Selection is currently based upon traditional measures that are no longer adequate” (Teske, 1999, p. 16).

The formal teacher selection methods principals discussed have been validated through extensive research, most of which is represented in the review of literature for this study. Principals used traditional methods such as interviews, resumes, and classroom demonstrations. Resumes were commonly used as a preliminary screening tool to filter the candidates who would be invited for interviews. Resumes, which demonstrated exposure, experience, or competency in the Hip-Hop culture, were preferred. Principals assessed resumes that demonstrated an ability to connect with the culture of their students by considering the organizations, volunteer work, and the candidate’s personal, professional, and educational background.

The most common method used in teacher selection is the interview. Principals discussed the use of district-wide structured interviews used as well as more informal methods of interviewing that includes unstructured interviews and group interviews. Principals considered, and some are moving towards, classroom demonstrations as a method for assessing candidates during the teacher selection process.

The findings in this study indicate that urban principals utilized discussions, whether formal or informal, structured or non-structured, individual, group, or personal, to learn and assess less quantifiable attributes that they associate with Hip-Hop cultural competence and teacher quality, such as respect for the students, flexibility, tolerance for profanity, and exposure to the Hip-Hop culture. The informal discussion was the most commonly used non-traditional teacher selection method. Principals described attempts to analyze teacher candidates through candid discussion with the goal of revealing more personal beliefs and attitudes. These discussions also allowed principals to assess candidates’ comfort level with urban environments as well as their Hip-Hop cultural competence.

Understanding How To Effectively Teach Within The Hip-Hop Culture

Teachers should also work diligently to build relationships with urban students. This does not need to come in the form of friendship; it can instead begin with connecting with students through their culture and connecting the students’ world to academics and pedagogy. This study also indicated a need for urban teachers to a) become more flexible, b) develop a tolerance for inappropriate language and profanity, c) set high expectations, d) incorporate their use of technology into the classroom, and e) understand their students’ distrust of the educational systems. Empirical evidence is needed to inform how teachers navigate the Hip-Hop culture and deal with the unique issues and concerns of their students.

The findings from this study also have implications for the practice of urban high school principals. There are implications for professional development, teacher evaluation, and teacher selection practices, which need to be adjusted for teachers of students from the Hip-Hop culture. Principals who consider this can provide professional training that is culturally relevant and will help teachers connect their classrooms to their students’ worlds.

As principals select and evaluate teachers, they need to consider the teachers’ understanding of how to
teach students from the Hip-Hop culture and a teachers’ Hip-Hop cultural competence as criteria of effectiveness. This may require principals to give urban teachers credit for attributes and methods that are not recognized or included on district evaluation tools and in their practices. A teacher who may be considered off task by district and school policy, but is able to engage students and connect Shakespeare to leaders and/or artists from the Hip-Hop culture, may be effective with the Hip-Hop culture and should be evaluated as such. Based on these findings there are implications for further research on whether urban principals do this consciously and/or subconsciously. This would then lend itself to research that would investigate how they take Hip-Hop cultural competence into consideration when they do their formal observations. These observations often require the use of evaluation tools that may not include the assessment and/or consideration of the Hip-Hop cultural competence attributes they demonstrate. Hence, conclusions about the best way to teach in a Hip-Hop culture could be reached by inductive reasoning.

Conclusion

The findings from this study support the research literature on teacher quality and teacher selection. The literature reviewed for this study painted a distinct image of the Hip-Hop culture and highlighted the unique struggles they navigate and methods to select effective teachers. The data spoke to the distinctiveness of the Hip-Hop culture. It allowed educators to look at the traditional methods and descriptions through the urban lens. Interestingly, urban principals seemed to acknowledge and accept the culture of their students. Gause (2001) believed, Urban principals have witnessed and are experiencing the realities of the Hip-Hop culture. They understand that today’s Hip-Hop culture is not the same as it was in the beginning (1970s) or at the height of its crossover appeal (1990s). Today’s Hip-Hop culture includes youth from varied socio-economic households and ethnicities. This culture no longer only includes low-income African-American and Latino students.

Hip-Hop’s greatest potential though, is to be a catalyst for racial and social-class healing and reconciliation. As an expression catering to a variety of communities both around the country and around the world, Hip-Hop is positioned to begin conversations addressing ways to mend both racial tensions and social-class disparities. (Gause, 2001 p. 18)

Educators’ inabilities to acknowledge, respect, and incorporate this culture into American popular culture and culturally relevant pedagogy demonstrates how educators need urban teachers who act as change agents for American urban schools. This cultural barrier is just one obstacle urban teachers face as a result of the cultural mismatch between the urban teacher and student. It is asserted that cultural aversion is still a response of the Hip-Hop culture in the school context, and that it has widespread implications in that it reinforces and encourages "non-learning." The findings of this study suggest that urban principals understand this aspect of the Hip-Hop culture; therefore, they recommend selecting teachers who demonstrate an understanding of cultural aversion and demonstrate the ability to overcome this social barrier.

Teacher education programs and selection criteria that are not focused on privileged perceptions of the dominant culture (Gause, 2001) are needed. “The future vision of schooling is that of deconstructing taken-for-granted meanings and knowledge, which would allow for the recognition of multiple voices and perspectives in the construction of knowledge. In allowing for those multiple voices, schools will allow for multiple identities” (Gause, 2001, p. 27). Tamisha Bouknight’s (2009) research supports the need for teachers to become more racially aware in order to provide a racially affirming and respectful environment. Tamisha Bouknight (2009)
attributed the lack of engagement and low-academic achievement to teachers’ inability to connect with students due to a lack of racial awareness and thus their inability to form trusting and respectful relationships with students from minority groups.

The most significant findings of this study are the importance urban principals’ place on selecting teachers with the ability to build relationships with students from the Hip-Hop culture, and principals’ use of non-structured and informal discussions to assess Hip-Hop cultural competence.

Although building relationships is an established teacher quality attribute, it is a mandatory attribute of Hip-Hop cultural competence. This unique finding may have a significant impact on urban teacher preparation and selection.

References

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Abstract: Phillip Brett and Elizabeth Wood (2006) note that sexuality, like musicality, is embedded in an individual sense of self. What if those unique or complex notions of our evolving self—including social identifiers like gender—fluidly transcend cultural expectations in educational contexts and beyond? In this study, I will share and reflect upon historical shards of my experience becoming a solo singer and musician in middle school. These events took place in a suburb of Detroit, Michigan in the late 1980s during my seventh and eighth grade years. Please join me in this arts-based work, as I revisit two live snapshot recordings of performances from that time, including curated personal artifacts/journals, and other relevant or intersecting works woven within a process that incorporated member checking with my then music teacher and those stakeholders who shared a part of constructing my world.
The veil of modesty torn, the shameful parts shown, I know—with my cheeks aflame—the need to hide myself or die, but I believe by facing and enduring this painful anxiety I shall, as a result of my shamelessness, come to know a strange beauty (Genet, 1964, p. 163).

**Angle Of View: Discourse, Away From Taboo [In School]**

Leo Bersani (1987) writes that male homosexuality advertises the risk of the sex itself, as the risk of self-dismissal of losing sight of the self, and in doing so it proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* (enjoyment) as a mode of askesis—that practice as severe self-discipline. Ellis Hanson (2009) finds such logic of male homosexuality arbitrary that advertises like a centerfold: it makes everyone’s risk and shame more visible. In Jonathan Ned Katz’s *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (2007) he notes Dr. Charles H. Hughes’ “Erotopathia—Morbid Eroticism” Pan-American Medical Congress speech (September, 1893), claiming that the mind and feelings could be turned back into normal channels by medical treatment: the homo and hetero sexual changed [back] into beings of natural erotic inclination, with normal impulses. Perhaps such binary ideals have brought about other studies, like that of Jason Cianciotto & Sean Cahill (2006) reflecting upon such etiology spurring ex-gay activism, including similar ideals from the conversion therapist Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, who wrote that homosexuality is a psychological condition that is not a sexual problem, rather a gender identity problem… where anticipatory shame is the foundation.

More background: Phillip Brett and Elizabeth Wood (2006) note that sexuality, like musicality, is embedded in an individual sense of self. Arguing along lines proposed of Foucault, David Halperin (1990) pinpoints historical difficulty: “Homosexuality presupposes sexuality, and sexuality itself… is a modern invention” which “represents the *appropriation* of the human body and its erogenous zones by an ideological discourse” (pp. 24-25). Yet by the end of the century, Brett and Wood (2006) share that the dominant model of heterosexuality was in opposition to an actual (but still incoherent) homosexual identity and that a similar process of identity formation can be seen in music, between musicalness (nature) and musicality (constructed in various music institutions).

The connection between musicality and homosexuality, and a strong supposition that the music profession is made up largely of homosexuals, entered public discourse as an indirect result of sexology, the scientific work fundamental to the modern understanding of sexuality, beginning with K. F. Ulrich’s pioneering work on Uranism in the 1860s and expanded by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Magnus Hirschfeld, Albert Moll, and other German authorities. Havelock Ellis (1915) referred to Oppenheim noting that the musical disposition is marked by a great emotional instability, and this instability is a disposition to nervousness where the musician has not been rendered nervous by his music, but he owes his nervousness (as also, it may be added, his disposition to homosexuality) to the same disposition to which he owes his musical aptitude (Brett & Wood, 2006 p. 352; Ellis, 1915).

Such beliefs, when juxtaposed with the trials and conviction of Oscar Wilde in 1895 (under the famous Labuchère amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885), aggravated the climate for homosexuals, as neither the presence of homosexuals in music nor their contributions to it could be acknowledged and the experience of social oppression that informs such lives could not be connected to musicality (Cook, 2005).

Phillip Brett and Elizabeth Wood (2006) also note that the art of music, the music profession, and musicology in the twentieth century have all been shaped by the knowledge and fear of homosexuality, for any talk or forbidden and illegal sexuality and music was proscribed. They make the case that the need to separate music from homosexuality has driven the crucial belief that music transcends ordinary life and is autonomous of social effects or expression, and that most homosexuals internalize their oppressions. It has also contributed to the resistance toward critical inquiry into politics—especially the sexual politics—
of music, and into issues related to sexual diversity such as gender, class, ethnicity and race, religious belief, and power.

However, Steven Seidman (2010) rallies us to think of sex as deeply social, approaching sex as a social construction (Seidman, 1995), where discussions of sexual morality from products of social factors (e.g., economics, gender, public discourses, media images, family, and science) come into a more reasoned tone, free from absolute authority (nature or God). He notes that few have frank, informative discussions about sex with kin, teachers, or peers; indeed, many lack the kinds of information about the body and sexual technique that would allow us to become skilled, effective sexual agents. Is it any wonder that many of us find it awkward or are simply incapable of talking about our sexual preferences and concerns in thoughtful ways? He concludes that we must consider available research, people’s actual experiences, and the likely personal and social consequences of varied forms of sexual control.

Bearing identity in relation to ego, we may think about this broadly to mean who we were and, Sharon Gewirtz and Alan Cribbs (2009) suggest, who we think we are and who we want to be. Manuel Castells (2004) further distinguishes between roles and identities, where identities are sources of meaning for the actors themselves, and by themselves, constructed through a process of individuation; [Roles] become identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct meaning around this internalization. This, along with David Hargreaves, Dorothy Miell and Raymond MacDonald (2002) noting that we use music not only to regulate our own everyday moods and behaviors, but also to present ourselves to others in the way we prefer. However, Sharon Gewirtz and Alan Cribbs (2009) remind us that this does not mean we must critically adopt the subject positions that are made available to us by dominant discourses. Still, the inability to pass or adopt such expectations from the metanarrative (Lyotard, 1984) makes one a target and is something to seriously reflect upon within any community of practice (Wenger, 1998) mindfully subjugating learner ego. In addition, Brunner (1990) reminds us that Selves are not isolated nuclei of consciousness locked in the head, but are “distributed” interpersonally. He continues, nor do Selves arise rootlessly in response to the present; they take meaning as well from historical circumstances that gave shape to the culture of which they are an expression.

Clearly, space could be made for all human beings, where any person may be empowered to construct what is meaningful, including other intersections of sexual orientation, gender schemas (Bem, 1981), or those influencers of identity without negative consequences. Tia DeNora (2000) writes that the heart of the matter, from how individuals not only experience culture, but also how they mobilize culture for being, doing, and feeling. Raymond MacDonald, Dorothy Miell and Graeme B. Wilson (2005) bring further light on views of talk as a means through which people establish their identities (and through talk about music, to establish their musical identities), allowing an interesting insight into the function of this form of music communication. Simon Frith (1996) notes that what makes music special for identity via a spatial metaphor, is that it defines a space without boundaries. Music is thus the cultural form best able both to cross borders and to define places. Jackie Wiggins (2011) shares:

Especially if there are circumstances embedded in music learning that can cause participants to feel vulnerable, we must assure that music learning environments nurture and support learners’ sense of purpose, optimism, autonomy, confidence, skill, and know-how. To be effective, music learning environments must nurture and support learner agency (p. 19).

**Aperture: Making My Experience Visible [For All Learners And The Profession]**

Yet, in my school experience, learner agency was rarely nurtured or supported. For example, male students who chose to sing in school were often disenfranchised. Peers, parents, and teachers often taunted them, calling them “gay,” isolating them or breaking healthy/humane boundaries within educational institutions and beyond. Yet, what if singing is the heart and soul of one’s life such that it is the most important part of one’s school day? What if one also happens to be or is evolving into an effeminate gay male? Then what?
I often found myself inspired to write upwards of memories, photographs, or other artful artifacts (Manovski, 2012) that fluidly compose a kind of collage from/of my life. In turn, I found myself expressing what I had come to know artfully—that my art was an active participant in my life—positively nurturing my agency that was a part of enabling me to take responsibility for my own healing/learning. Sharing my embodied knowing (Bresler, 2004) of a time from processes of identity construction taking place within networks of power and differential access to economic, social, and cultural resources was also framed by my studies including, but not limited to, narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), autoethnography (e.g. Ellis, 2004), arts-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012), social justice (Greene, 1995), and social constructivism in music education contexts (Wiggins, 2009).

Readers of this article will hopefully be asking themselves new questions along with other scholars and experts, including characters reconstructed from my lived life, wondering what it might mean for their own theory and pedagogy, so we all may become closer to being educational stakeholders dedicated to the endurance of the cognitive, the ethical, the aesthetic, and the useful, within lives that stretch out far [after] graduation day (Barone, 2001). This, along with my efforts to work through and away from negatively marginalized experiences that would continue to wound, to violently gag, to bind, to bury me into blinding silence, pressed by shoes heavily soaked with poisons of shame were I not unyielding.

**Latent Image: Can You Reach My Friend?**

I remember telling my choir teacher that I would love to sing a solo at the next middle school choir concert during my seventh grade year. I actually was surprised at how clearly I was able to articulate this and could see my teacher processing what I had come to share in a manic, fast, quick-tongued and excited sentence. She just sort-of blinked and nodded, sending me back to my seat. Soon thereafter, I remember her asking to speak with me (sealing it with a wink). Whatever doubt I carried seemed to lift away and I was excited, once again.

I’m not sure if it was before school, during lunch or after school, but I do remember that we were finally alone together. I remember the sheer joy of wondering what song she had found for me to sing, like I was going to be a part of knowing this really big secret. It was like anticipating the best present, e-v-e-r. My teacher then said, “I found this awesome song that I think you should consider singing for our next choir concert. I would like to know what you think of it. I think it would be a great fit for your voice and I think the song has a really good message for all of the students at our school. If you don’t like it though—don’t worry—we’ll find something else that will be just as good or better.” She handed me the cassette tape—which seemed to be happening in slow motion—and I remember seeing the color blue on the case, along with the title “Can You Reach My Friend?” written by Billy Sprague and Jim Weber.

I had never heard of this song before and I thought the woman singing was wonderful. I then became ecstatic when I realized that the accompaniment tracks on the other side of the tape (without the singer) sounded exactly like her accompaniment. During this time in my life, it was very difficult for me to find authentic accompaniments of songs I liked: this was an appreciated bonus. I wondered how I could make myself sound just like the singer on the recording—I wanted to be as good as the person singing on the tape. I would not tire of the two-part acoustic guitar beginning, sidled with a simple verse that flowed effortlessly to the refrain that would flower in texture, and would “bring his searching to an end,” over, and over, again.

However, though I would come to understand more about what the song was really about in time, the music seemed very meaningful to me for other reasons, too. It wasn’t like any of the other songs on the radio that I knew. It seemed to be about something really important. I also l-o-v-e-d that the music was for “high voice.” I began a process that included listening and re-listening, singing and re-singing, and imitating the woman on the cassette tape recording as best I could; I was trying to match the other singer’s voice on the tape and I was trying to make my voice sound just as authentic, somehow. I thought, “Wow, I think the audience (my imagined audience) would love the message in this song,” just like my music teacher said.

Later, I came to realize that there was nothing like having a chance to sing this song on stage. No matter how hard I tried to pretend that my bedroom was our middle school stage, nothing came close to my
imagination as actually being on our stage at school. Something magical seemed to happen when the house lights were turned down and when my voice was amplified with an accompaniment that hugged me. The feeling was different, the place was different, it smelled different… everything was different. I remember the intimate relationship I wove with the microphone, the appreciation I developed for the floor monitors, and I also remember the haloes I saw from the refracting lenses of my glasses: I was simply transported into another world between the sounds, the smells, the lighting… pretending to sing to God in context of the piece.

I also knew that, at home, I could always redo any part as many times as I liked until I was satisfied. However, at school, there was never enough time, and music class felt like a rare occasion that only happened once a week (my free pass from the drudgery of the rest of my school day). Still, I am forever grateful for those fleeting moments, because I loved music and my music teacher. She would always compliment me and help me figure out tricky parts. She would always try to find time for us to rehearse before school or after school, even though we both wished we could just rehearse during school. Overall, she wanted me to be the best I could be, while telling/showing me that she would be right there, supporting and cheering me on no matter what, which was unusual considering the rest of my experience.

When it came time for our dress rehearsal, I realized that I would have to sing this piece in front of the class. Even though this is something very logical—this was not my first dress rehearsal with this group—it was the first realization of my new role in a familiar context as a solo singer. In my mind at the time, I also knew that, at home, I could always redo any part as many times as I liked until I was satisfied. However, at school, there was never enough time, and music class felt like a rare occasion that only happened once a week (my free pass from the drudgery of the rest of my school day). Still, I am forever grateful for those fleeting moments, because I loved music and my music teacher. She would always compliment me and help me figure out tricky parts. She would always try to find time for us to rehearse before school or after school, even though we both wished we could just rehearse during school. Overall, she wanted me to be the best I could be, while telling/showing me that she would be right there, supporting and cheering me on no matter what, which was unusual considering the rest of my experience.

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When the music began, I couldn’t hear it on the monitors in front of me, so I gave my teacher the signal she taught me to give her if that happened. Thank goodness, she fixed the problem right away. I then was able to transport myself into the piece and again, just went for it and made it happen. I worked to make it happen and it was over before I knew it. Did I sound good? Did I remember all of the words? Did I screw up anywhere? How did I sound? Then, my eyes met with my teacher’s eyes and when I saw the glow from her smile, I knew I must have done something OK. I finally smiled (relieved). When I went back to my place on the risers, I didn’t hear anybody say anything this time, though there were still some whispers I couldn’t make out. I also didn’t have to squeeze my way back on the risers either. It seemed like people were actually making room for me to get back on, which was actually really weird.

On the afternoon of the performance for the entire school, I remember panicking about how I looked. I thought I looked horrible and I couldn’t get my hair to look as nicely as I wanted it to. I had a love/hate relationship with my glasses and that day was a hate day. I was also too fat for the shirt I was going to wear, and afraid that I would sweat right through it anyway, so I stole an oversized green sweater from my father’s wardrobe, putting on my favorite watch, too. Again, as if life was on fast forward, there I was in front of everyone in the school.

When the music began, I couldn’t hear it on the monitors in front of me, so I gave my teacher the signal she taught me to give her if that happened. Thank goodness, she fixed the problem right away. I then was able to transport myself into the piece and again, just went for it and made it happen. I worked to make it seem like this was the first time I was singing this song; I worked to make it seem like this was a real friend of mine that I was singing about; I worked to make it seem like this song really wasn’t about me, hiding the fact that I wished I had a friend who was singing this song for me.

Negative Bullying And Marginalization [In School]: Targeting Musicians Performing Beyond Expected [Gender] Roles

If I was ever bullied in school—in my life—it was exacerbated within the role of singer from within my developing performance identity (part of my musical identity). Alike Patricia Campbell, Claire Connell and Amy Beegle (2007), music is a prominent force in the lives of adolescents (for me—so far—it has been a prominent force in my entire life), and they value its potency in directing the course of their daily
activity as well as their long-range hopes and dreams. Still, I heard negative words then more clearly than I do now (people were less guarded, didn’t care if I knew what they thought, and didn’t value what I valued): “Did you see the way he was moving?” “He’s such a girl!” “What a total fag!” “What’s he wearing?” “Did you see the makeup on him?” “What did he do with his hair?” “Is he gay?!” “Why is his voice so high?” “Oh my god, we should call him Hollywood!”

The multitude of slurs would also encourage others to push me into lockers, knocking my books out of my hands, threatening me, “I’m gonna beat your ass, faggot!”

I was spit on and often used as target practice, dodging spitballs, gum, or other objects. In time, everything seemed to escalate and they did beat my ass, often. In addition, I had somehow inspired others to improvise humiliating impersonations of my singing: people would imitate me, and overtly gesticulate and brashly croon, bastardizing the music and way of being I found meaningful. I was bullied everyday and in time, I realized that many adults knew about what was going on, too. In fact, I would come to learn that many adults supported such unhealthy taunts endured, “Well, he shouldn’t act like such a girl! He’s too effeminate! He should learn to take a joke like a man.” I wonder how Colin Durrant’s (2001) reflection on how music operates in the world would positively support the musical development of the individual and the socio-cultural context of adolescents in this context. Perhaps we should take more time to unearth what Nicola Dibben (2002) refers to as gender typing, how it constrains the opportunities and engagements with music which are possible for an individual at any particular time.

Homophobia And Music Education

Branching from the camps of Nicola Dibben (2002), Kevin Jennings (2005), Kevin Kumashiro (2009), and Catherine A. Lugg (1998, 1999, 2003), Louis Bergonzi’s (2009) article “Sexual Orientation and Music Education: Continuing a Tradition” and reader’s comments concerning Bergonzi’s article (Readers Comments, 2010) bridge the way for us to consider -- isn’t it time for us to acknowledge the ways we reinforce heterosexuality and the heterosexual lifestyle, and to examine how homophobia biases our curricular content and the lives and work of LGBT music teachers? For me, I would broaden that question to the lives and work of anyone living within such unnecessary battles within music education and beyond, where the bully could be mindfully, compassionately disarmed and undergo a transformation toward cultivating specific kinds of relationships which may head off bullying before it develops.

However, if establishing a heterosexual identity has relied heavily on publicly stigmatizing homosexuality, as Steven Seidman suggests (2010), how is a public straight identity staked out when homosexuality is considered a natural and normal part of the human condition? Especially regarding music education, how do we move toward healthy processes that value all participants—reaffirming human rights—away from certainty or rigid expectations/expressions that intersect with gender, sex, or other social identifiers? How may we be free from stunting our opportunities for deeper ways of understanding, constructing meaningful connections through compassion and empathy? Akin to Phillip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, and Gary Thomas (2006):

The treat that “queering” represents may be to uncover for music’s lovers what it is we generally repress in thinking about our experience of music: our emotional attachments to music, our needs met by music, our accommodations to society through music, our voices, our bodies (p. xi).

Still, an example of the immense work ahead of us may also be gleaned from readers reactionary comments to Louis Bergonzi’s (2009) article showcasing polarized voices from praise to responses like:

“I completely disagree with this article on an ethical and moral standpoint, I’m also disappointed in the writing of the article” (p. 6),

“To suggest even the slightest modification of teaching/learning objectives to satisfy the political correctness disease that is running rampant in our country is pure folly” (p. 7),
and “how vulgar to include the homosexual agenda boldface in a publication such as MEJ” (p. 6).

Again, what if you had a gay male student in your classroom wanting to sing songs sung by other girls and could actually sing them? What if he wanted to sing alto or soprano? What if you had a girl who wanted to sing tenor or bass and could? What if they auditioned for the school musical, desiring to perform roles contrary to your expectations? Would you disallow these learners the opportunity for a positive experience? Would you want to shield them from any oppression that could soon take place? More important, what do you think should happen when verbal and physical harm comes to a student for singing songs like “Can You Reach My Friend?” What would you do if you or others in power had trouble condoning liberty and justice for all?

Lens Aberration: The Wind Beneath My Wings

So many people were overtly harassing me, it was overwhelming. Not a day went by that didn’t include an emotional or physical jab from the time I stepped onto the bus to school, to the moment I stepped off. Sadly, I didn’t realize then that I was actually bullied at home, as well and forced to endure my daily hell. However, all I knew, all I can remember in detail, was that I wanted to sing. Unfortunately, my wanting to sing was overshadowed by my wishing I was never born: I wanted to die. I hated myself—it seemed to me that everyone else hated me, too—what I was and I couldn’t find a way to change or pass. All of a sudden, there came a point in my life when I told myself that I just couldn’t handle it anymore. So, I slit my wrists that year, thinking about all of the pain that started before kindergarten. I remember everyone yelling at me about the choice I made. Things at school became worse and the girls became more aggressive as they harassed me. At the time, it seemed like the only thing keeping me trudging on was the fact that I somehow won a scholarship to go to the Interlochen All-State Summer Camp for young musicians. I also got to sing another solo for our next concert and 11-o-v-e-d Bette Midler.

The preparation for this experience was different, though. My music teacher said that I should think about wearing a tuxedo. Actually, she said that since I was doing a little breakout dance solo with a partner (a popular girl) in the song that was before my solo, we both should dress-up for the part. She also asked if I could sing without my glasses, so they wouldn’t get in the way of my dancing, and that my hair should be cut and styled more natural.

A tuxedo? I’ve only worn one of those to a wedding. Without my glasses… didn’t she know how blind I was? Wear my hair naturally—without gel, hair spray, and my signature flare—was she out of her mind?! And she wanted me to sing after our big dance number? I wondered if I’d have enough time to catch my breath before my solo. Still, I did whatever she told me and just nodded my head. I trusted her—well, she was the only one that was nice to me—and I knew that she was trying to help me in some way.

I still remember the feeling of those weird, hard, unyielding tuxedo shoes that clicked and slipped on the floor of the stage. I remember the feeling of the tuxedo that seemed to bind me like a kind of straightjacket, while the shirt and top button seemed to be strangulating me toward ruin and humiliation. I remember huffing and puffing—trying to hide it, holding my breath—wiping the sweat off my face, blind to my surroundings. I remembered just closing my eyes, singing the song as best I could, thinking about the words, making it happen, thinking about my manipulative mom and wondering if she really loved me, hoping this song would encourage her to leave my abusive dad… and then it was over.

My teacher was so very happy with me and I had no idea what I had done differently. She would play the video recording of me singing this song over and over again during conferences or just in class. She played it so often that the tape itself seemed to look all deteriorated from being overplayed. It exemplified something really special to her. One day, I asked her if she could play the video when I sang “Can You Reach My Friend?” She said, “Oh, no, no—honey, you sound and look much better in this song.” I knew something more was going on and I couldn’t put my finger on it then. I’m not sure if I can now. I asked her for a copy of those recordings, keeping in touch for many years. She finally gave me a copy when I was 36 years old; I never gave up asking.
Toning: Allowing Our Voices To Be Our Guide [In The School Experience And Beyond]

Very similarly, like in the work of Women’s Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and the Mind by Mary Belenky, Blyth Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger, and Jill Tarule (1997), my experience in family and school life consisted of violence instead of dialogue, one-way talk, inequality, and my rebellion toward releasing myself from negative cycles by freely questioning those in authority. Much was imposed upon me, my being silenced, and I somehow came to use music in a way that helped heal the split between my intellect and emotion (Manovski, 2012). Phillip Brett and Elizabeth Wood (2006) note:

Such tensions of the human spirit brought about by the forces of oppression and the counterforces it also generates are much in need of deciphering in order to make greater sense of social and musical experience. By focusing on such matters, a gay and lesbian perspective has the means to expand the entire critical and historical enterprise (p. 378).

Michelangelo Signorile (2003) also reminds us that heterosexuals may not realize that they routinely discuss aspects of their own sexuality every day, that some thought I suffered some kind of prolonged psychological trauma [unrelated to their oppression], and writes to give courage to millions of gay people who stay in the closet out of fear and shame, as they are not as alone as homophobic [U.S.] America would have them believe. And, somewhere in-between my later educational journey, I began to realize that I am worthy of belonging and love. I do matter.

I do not exclusively attribute this to my deeper understanding of sexual orientation, my gender, or other identity, rather to the opportunity and permission of reflecting upon those emergent themes in context of the qualitative whole that honors those taken-for-granted intersections critically. In addition—if you are willing, dear reader—you will also be a part of contributing potential findings, creating fresh questions, exploring the parameters and possibilities, away from certitudes in the dialogue we may embark. Then, should we find ourselves nose-to-nose with other antagonists opposed to empathetic ways of being and learning, perhaps we shall not be as alone or isolated as we may have once been. It could even be that we could make room for mutual dialogue including allies and our oppressors, hopefully further away from what Louis Bergonzi experienced (Readers Comments, 2010):

It was a bit disheartening that many, when asked, were not willing to place their ideas into the public arena and let them be considered for publication in this column. I say this because, in my experience, the most undesirable result of the looking at a contentious issue is a closing-off of dialogue (p. 11).

Conversations that are intentionally limited to a “gotcha” or a “slam dunk” are too common in our society. Civil discourse is often shut down; viewpoints don’t get exchanged, reconsidered, reaffirmed, or revised (p. 8).

Being and becoming a musician was not a ploy for my coming out, a way to argue or disgruntle, rather seemed to be the most natural way for me to participate, process, and become more aware of myself and the world I lived in. It was my lifeline.

I always knew that I wanted to sing and though I certainly was more inclined to sing girls’ songs, I more so craved that natural high from literally singing or performing: being a part of the music. During that short time, I was released from that negative grip, that numbing suffocation that seemed to obliterate my weird, moody, awkward, four-eyed, fat (or whatever negative label), feeling, or emotion I was experiencing. I became a part of something important, maybe even something spiritual. It was a hopeful opportunity and process, where I was able to momentarily escape the harassment I alone had to deal with from others’ conscious or unconscious intentions.

My artful moments were special and imperfect times of refuge; they were special and imperfect instances provided by music teachers or others in power that valued me wherever I was in my cognitive evolution. These people offered me the right to be my fluid self without negative consequences through music and the arts, empowering me to make more and more meaningful connections through such mediums. They furnished me a safe and healthy space where I could healthfully bridge gaps in my thinking. Soon, I
was able to penetrate negative barriers and found myself patiently learning to enjoy the processes a part of my learning, regardless of those misconceptions still invisible to me or seemingly impossible to solve, because it was more important to feed that will within me to continue learning within a collaborative, caring approach designed for my multiple ways of being and understanding.

In time I would also come to appreciate and healthfully use my evolving, real voice. Feeling it, allowing it to be my guide, free from pushing or making things happen would all become part of my unhurting process, too. I was able to release the pain and worthlessness that deeply welled with shame, as I was empowered to construct my own understanding through meaningful study, including the courage to demand healthy boundaries with whomever I studied with. Soon, I would become responsible for my own rescue. However, these experiences rarely ever occurred during my educational experience prior to my doctoral studies. Or did they?

Zoom Lens: Arts-Based Research And The Enlargement Of Mind

From music education to vocal pedagogy and further on, I have sought out opportunities that could revive and positively enable the best parts of myself to flourish (Manovski, 2012). In turn, this article is an invitation for you to be a part of that quest, to enter a conspiracy with this [writer] and those characters herein, a political and value-based conversation about the relationship between current conditions and a more desirable state of affairs (Barone, 2001). I do this because I have often worked with learners who have been confronted with terrible obstacles by those who actively worked to navigate them away from their own desired/fluid identities, roles, or self; I do this because I have often worked with learners who have difficulty experiencing healthy and safe spaces during their evolution within school cultures; I do this because I have often worked with learners who could benefit from our dialogue, our new questions, that examine how we may foster increasing compassion and empathy past poster boards and slogans. How may we move toward accepting, embracing, and valuing each other in authentic, genuine, and meaningful ways, honoring all of our ways of being—ways of expression—free from causing anyone verbal or physical harm in school? How may we learn to really listen to each other?

The verisimilitude of social progress in educational settings still remind me of my own negative prior experience, inviting me to be more critically aware of present conditions in our school culture(s), which evokes or triggers my own unfinished stories from memories I aspire to more deeply understand: those moments that include what was, instead of what should have been (Barone, 2001). Conceivably, this process may also help us to be ethically responsive to what is, while visibly reestablishing and making palpable those resonant principals of equity, freedom, liberty, and social justice for all.

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Border Sexualities, Border Families In Schools
By Maria Pallota-Chiarolli

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Border Sexualities, Border Families in Schools looks at the lives and experiences of bisexual and polyamorous youth in a school setting, examining their personal narratives and placing them into the broader cultural experience of existing in the odd murk between traditional views and modern counter-cultural views. The book is based on the author’s prior work in the subject, and draws heavily on interviews the author conducted with bisexual and polyamorous youth. The book provides a breath of fresh air for researchers and students examining the grey area between mainstream cultural assumptions surrounding relationship and sexual identity.

The book is split into five chapters, with the first two introducing the core analytical framework of passing, bordering and polluting that the author uses, and placing bisexual & polyamorous youth within current sociological and cultural perspectives. The third and fourth chapters apply the book’s framework, examining bisexual (Chapter 3) and polyamorous (Chapter 4) youth in much greater detail through the individual experiences of each within the book’s framework. The final chapter includes thoughts on
how to increase inclusivity for bisexual and polyamorous youth in the school environment.

The heart of the book lies in its use of the passing, bordering, and polluting framework. This framework is a useful, though challenging to apply, tool in understanding the lived experience of bisexual and polyamorous youth. The challenge in applying this model lies in how bordering relies on the contrast between opposing cultural images, rather than being independently definable. This is best exemplified by how bisexuality is placed between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and is often seen as having traits of both, instead of its own unique traits.

Despite the challenges of using this framework, the author’s choice of it, as opposed to a more traditional sociological framework, was an intentional decision to better capture the lived experience of the individuals studied:

The logics I utilize in this research that attempt to describe and interpret the complex realities of contemporary social relations and identifications without dichotomous reduction and distortion can be defined by the French term ‘metissage’ and the Spanish term ‘mestizaje.’ Both these terms mean mixture and multiplicity, or as so aptly translated by the young people…being ‘messy’ (p. 30).

The author often returns to this idea of ‘being messy’ in her explorations of bisexual and polyamorous youth experience. The book also shows that often bisexual and polyamorous individuals can’t help but identify themselves by contrasting their experience with existing opposing cultural images. It is fair to conclude that the ‘messy’ feel of bordering is simply reflects the ‘messy’ experience of bordering. This makes the passing, bordering, and polluting framework very effective as an ethnographic tool, however it is challenged by the lack of bordering’s ability to stand apart from passing and polluting.

Despite this challenge, the book’s framework proves to be an exceptional tool in understanding the experiences of bisexual and polyamorous youth. The challenges of using the framework are ultimately overshadowed by its usefulness in academically scrutinizing an experience that usually isn’t brought into modern sociological literature.

Border Sexualities, Border Families in Schools is not meant for the introductory sociology student, as it is dense with a robust sociological vocabulary and assumes at least some knowledge of sociological constructs of family, sexuality, and identity. Contained within this book, however, is a very insightful examination of the lived experience of bisexual and polyamorous youth, and a strong contribution to the literature examining both of these groups. Lastly, the book provides a unique framework for analysis, giving insight into areas of bisexual and polyamorous experience that are rarely acknowledged.