

TEACHING AMBITION: HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON BECOMING A MUSIC TEACHER

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Music teacher socialization has received increased attention in music education research, but few researchers have explored music teacher socialization with students during their primary socialization, or pre-college, years. The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to examine the perspectives of high school music students who plan to pursue a music teaching career. Participants were a purposeful sample selected from an outreach honor choir at a large Southwestern university. Criteria for selection were based upon the participant's self-identification as one who plans to pursue a music teaching career. Data collection took place over eight weeks during Fall 2008. Data collected included one formal interview with each participant, field notes from five observations of the outreach honor choir, and participants' visual representations of music teachers (Dolloff, 1999; Thompson & Campbell, 2003).

Data were coded using emic and etic codes (Stake, 1995). After preliminary coding, some codes were dropped and other codes combined and sorted as themes began to emerge (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). Data triangulation and member checks ensured trustworthiness. Three themes resulted from data analysis: Music Teacher Socialization, Ideal Music Teacher, and Expressed Music Teacher Identity.

High school music teachers influenced the participants' decisions to pursue a music teaching career, along with community music teachers and private lesson instructors. Participants recalled music making and music teaching experiences as influential in their decision. Participants characterized the ideal music teacher by both musical and personal qualities. Through visual representations and verbal descriptions, participants shared their perceptions that a music teacher embodies multiple roles. Participants expressed their own emerging teacher identities through the multiple activities and roles they sought in music making, confidence in their musical ability, embodiment of ideal music teacher characteristics, and demonstration of a particular teaching disposition: teacher-centered, subject-centered, or student-centered.

Implications for K-12 practice include providing multiple opportunities for music making within the school context and the incorporation of student-centered instruction in the music classroom to allow for peer teaching opportunities. At the university level, preservice music teacher preparation programs that implement a freshman, rather than sophomore or junior, introductory course may exert greater influence in expanding and shaping some students' burgeoning music teacher identities, while also helping others potentially discover theirs. Music teaching, in the form of peer teaching and micro teaching experiences in classrooms, could be a component of such a course. Further research with students during primary socialization who plan to pursue a music-teaching career is suggested.

References

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