

Developing and nurturing interpersonal communication skills through the self-directed music ensemble.

by

Russell Edwin Clark II

B.M., The University of Kansas, 2016

A REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF MUSIC

Department of Music, Theater, and Dance
College of Arts and Sciences

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2024

Approved by:

Major Professor
Dr. Rachel Dirks

Copyright

© Russell Clark 2024.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers utilize student self-directed music ensembles (SDMEs) in an attempt to develop certain musical and communicative skills within their students. Orchestra directors (n=3) within Kansas public schools shared their processes when implementing SMDEs into their curricula through a series of interviews with the researcher. Data analysis of interviews revealed how developing specific communication skills for chamber ensembles has perceived benefits for student music making as well as their day-to-day interactions with their peers. Emerging themes included: empathy skills, unique setting/unique opportunities, balancing teacher involvement, and develops community and connection.

Keywords

Music, communication, self-directed, chamber music, teaching

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vii
Developing and Nurturing Interpersonal Communication Skills Through the Self-Directed Music Ensemble.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Communication.....	2
<i>The Need for Dialogue</i>	2
<i>Verbal and Nonverbal Communication</i>	2
Music Ensembles and Chamber Music.....	3
<i>The Power of the Music Ensemble Setting</i>	3
<i>The Self-Directed Music Ensemble (SDME)</i>	3
<i>Empowering Students through Opening Classroom Dialogue</i>	4
Foundations of the Current Study.....	4
<i>Need for the Study</i>	4
<i>The Current Study</i>	5
<i>Operational Definition</i>	5
<i>Research Questions</i>	6
Review of Literature	7
Communication.....	7
<i>Definitions</i>	7
<i>Communication Skills</i>	7
Verbal vs. Nonverbal Communication	8
<i>Verbal Communication</i>	8
<i>Nonverbal Communication Overview</i>	9
<i>Nonverbal Behaviors</i>	9
<i>Empathetic Listening</i>	11
Teaching Communication Skills.....	12
<i>Considerations when Teaching Communication</i>	12
<i>Approaches to Teaching Communication</i>	14
Communication and Music	16

<i>Connections Between Music and Speech Processes</i>	16
<i>Communication in the Music Ensemble</i>	17
The Self-Directed Music Ensemble	19
<i>A Potentially Unique Setting</i>	19
<i>Communication Skills in the Self-Directed Ensemble</i>	20
<i>Conclusion</i>	20
Methodology	22
Purpose	22
Research Questions	22
Research Approach	23
<i>Limitations</i>	23
Participants and Recruitment	24
<i>Recruitment</i>	24
<i>Participants</i>	25
Procedure	26
Interviews	26
<i>Analysis/Coding</i>	27
Results	28
Purpose Statement and Research Questions	28
Themes	29
<i>Primary Research Question</i>	29
Theme 1: Autonomy Builds Independence	29
Theme 2: Teamwork	30
<i>Secondary Research Question 1</i>	30
Theme 3: Nonverbal Communication	31
Theme 4: Delivery and Reception of Verbal Communication.	31
Theme 5: Empathy Skills	32
<i>Secondary Research Question 2</i>	33
Theme 6: Resources and Support.	33
Theme 7: “Deliberate guidance”	34
Theme 8: Balancing Teacher Involvement.	35

Theme 9: Unique Setting/Unique Opportunities.	35
<i>Secondary Research Question 3</i>	36
Theme 10: Develops Independence.	37
Theme 11: Develops Leaders.....	37
Theme 12: Develops Community and Connection.	37
Conclusion	38
Discussion	40
Overview.....	40
Addressing the Research Questions.....	40
<i>Primary Research Question</i>	40
Autonomy Builds Independence.	40
Teamwork.	41
<i>Secondary Research Question 1</i>	41
Nonverbal Communication.	41
Delivery and Reception of Verbal Communication.....	43
Empathy Skills.....	43
<i>Secondary Research Question 2</i>	44
Resources and Support.....	44
“Deliberate guidance”.	45
Balancing Teacher Involvement.	46
Unique Setting/ Unique Opportunities.....	47
<i>Secondary Research Question 3</i>	49
Develops Independence.	49
Develops Leaders.	49
Develops Community and Connection.	50
Implications	50
Recommendations for Future Research	52
Bibliography	54
Appendix A - IRB Approval.....	57
Appendix B - Interview Questions	58
Appendix C - Revised Interview Questions.....	60

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge a few people who have been instrumental in my success during my time at K-State. I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Rachel Dirks for her endless trust, compassion, and support. She provided me with an incredible amount of opportunities for hands on experience, and has helped me not only become a better musician and educator, but a better person. I also want to extend my gratitude to Dr. Phillip Payne and Dr. Donald Saucier for serving on my defense committee and providing valuable perspectives and insights into my research process. I am also grateful for Dr. Fred Burrack and our numerous conversations around music, education, and life that have helped reshape many of my personal philosophies.

I would like to give a huge thank you to my fellow graduate classmates for our thought-provoking conversations in every class, the string studio for your continuous focus on building community, and the KSU Symphony Orchestra for your support from the first day I stepped on the podium. One particularly influential classmate was Colby Stevens. His diligence in developing good research helped push me, and his friendship helped get me through the thick of it. I am also extremely grateful for the participants who agreed to take part in this study. Their willingness to share their experiences and the experiences of their students has allowed for a deeper insight into how engaging in collaborative music making can positively impact our day-to-day interactions with others.

Finally, I would be remiss not to thank my partner, Kat Sterbenz, who has supported me in countless ways throughout my degree, and my parents and sister who have continued to support me in every aspect of my life. Without them, I would not be where I am today.

Developing and Nurturing Interpersonal Communication Skills Through the Self-Directed Music Ensemble.

Introduction

Upon returning from the COVID-19 lockdown period, colleagues in the music teaching profession often discussed their perceptions of how students' musical and communication skills had diminished when compared to their abilities prior to the lockdown. This same year, my colleagues and I decided to incorporate a small ensemble concert cycle into our curriculum in an attempt to reach the more varied levels of musical ability we were seeing in our students. During this cycle, students were allowed to form their own groups of 3-12 members and, with some guidance, select their own music to rehearse. Their rehearsals were 50%-80% student-led while teachers would interact with each group periodically to provide instruction as needed.

During this 8-week cycle in the Spring of 2022, my colleagues and I witnessed profound growth in not only our students' musical abilities, but also in their abilities to work cooperatively, communicate effectively, and take leadership roles when necessary. Additionally, many students seemed to develop a more powerful sense of self as indicated through regular sharing of their own original ideas and thoughts. When we returned to working in the large ensemble setting, students were not only playing at an increased skill level, but their willingness to verbally participate in this setting also increased. They asked questions that provided momentum to their musical learning and were having more conversations with their peers before and after classes. In essence, strong connections began to develop within each ensemble as a result. I believed this transformation stemmed from developing and practicing the communication skills necessary to have a successful small ensemble experience. Therefore, the purpose of this study contained two components: (a) I sought to explore whether the self-directed

music ensemble can serve as a potentially beneficial setting to develop, nurture, and practice positive musical and interpersonal communication skills and (b) I intended to identify strategies orchestra teachers utilize in an attempt to develop these skills.

Communication

The Need for Dialogue

Researchers suggest a need for relationships between humans in order to meet our basic survival needs, and these relationships are built through trust and dialogue (Thomlison, 1982; Stech, 1983). There seems to be a consensus among researchers regarding what communication skills support a healthy dialogue. These include skills such as controlling delivery of communication, correctly interpreting communication, and engaging in empathetic listening and empathetic response (Cook, 1979; Branker, 2010; Stech, 1983; Thomlison, 1982; Andersen et al., 1999).

Verbal and Nonverbal Communication

Verbal communication consists of two main elements: vocabulary and syntax (Boyd & Jones, 1977). Vocabulary is simply the words one chooses to say, and syntax is how they put these words together, also referred to as grammar. Verbal communication can be written, oral, or gestural (such as American Sign Language), but for the purpose of this study the focus will be on oral, verbal communication. Boyd and Jones (1977) also stated that words alone don't always get the full message across. Researchers estimate that 60-70% of all communication is done through nonverbal cues (Moore, 2021). Nonverbal communication includes the following elements: body language, facial expressions, voice, and space and time (Stech, 1983) and aids the listener in gaining a deeper understanding of the intended message. When nonverbal cues are not received or misinterpreted by the listener, the true meaning of the message can be lost (Hinde, 1973).

During dialogue, verbal and nonverbal communication work in tandem to relay very specific, and often intricate messages.

Music Ensembles and Chamber Music

The Power of the Music Ensemble Setting

The music ensemble setting, especially in the public school system, is an environment where students engage and communicate in a very different way than the stereotypical classroom. In this setting, students regularly utilize many of the communication skills that are beneficial in creating a healthy and balanced dialogue. Researchers mostly agree that certain nonverbal cues such as body gestures and facial expressions are regularly used in communicative ways within music ensembles (Biasutti et al., 2016; Dan, 2005). Branker (2010) described a “necessary mutuality” that exists within a music ensemble, where all members of the group must work collaboratively to achieve their desired goal. Through this mutuality, each member of the group could influence or even empower others through musical and communicative interactions, and these contributions can allow for an “enriched collaborative experience” (Branker, 2010, p. 14).

The Self-Directed Music Ensemble (SDME)

The traditional hierarchy of a music ensemble in the public-school setting is director-centric where the director provides most of the instruction and ensemble members adjust according to the provided feedback. In this setting, it is common for students to go through most of a rehearsal without ever interacting verbally with each other or the teacher. In contrast, the self-directed music ensemble regularly operates without a director always being present. Due to the autonomous nature of the SDME, this setting also provides more opportunities for peer-to-peer interactions (Sato, 2020; Branker, 2010), and members of a SDME must work in

collaboration with one another to achieve their goals. In this setting, students are afforded opportunities to develop communication skills on an equal plane with their peers.

Empowering Students through Opening Classroom Dialogue

I believe the following quote encapsulates the current trajectory of the education profession.

It can also be posited that "having voice" or the ability to not only express one's ideas and beliefs, but to also "be heard" is fundamental to a setting that encourages equal participation and sharing. When dialogue takes place in our classrooms, the opportunity exists for ideas to be shared, assumptions to be questioned, and understanding to develop. Pedagogically speaking, dialogue provides those involved in the process with the opportunity to experience a diversity of outlooks and to be exposed to "new possibilities" through communicative exchange. (Branker, 2010, p. 19)

According to the social learning theories of Vygotsky and Bandura, a class environment where students become teachers for themselves and their peers through social interaction with one another is extremely beneficial to learning (Mcleod, 2024; Mcleod 2024). Society is shifting away from the teacher-led classroom towards a more collaborative student-centered approach. From my perspective, for meaningful learning to occur in this alternative setting, students need to have the opportunity to develop the communication skills necessary to be successful within this context.

Foundations of the Current Study

Need for the Study

I believe music education should not focus solely on teaching music to people, but rather teaching people through music. This personal philosophy serves as the catalyst and foundation for all decisions made in the preparation, implementation, and analysis of the current study. In today's world of education there is a concerted effort to engage students in *social-emotional learning*, which is simply defined as a process through which people "acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve

personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). With social-emotional learning serving as an integral process of teaching, the ensemble rehearsal setting emerges as a powerful place to develop and practice skills that are beneficial to leading a productive, enjoyable life and can help move our society forward on a positive trajectory. Many researchers have focused on the aspect of interpersonal communication, even within the music ensemble setting. However, few have explored how to implement the development and practice of communication skills within the context of a self-directed music ensemble.

The Current Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers utilize SDMEs in an attempt to develop certain musical and communicative skills within their students. Due to the researcher’s geographic location and area of emphasis, this study focused specifically on self-directed music ensembles within public-school orchestra programs in Kansas. Through a set of semi-structured interviews with orchestra directors (n=3) and subsequent data analysis, the data revealed how developing communication skills for chamber ensembles (SDMEs) encourages the establishment of a framework that could benefit both the music making and day-to-day communicative interactions of student musicians.

Operational Definition

Self-directed Music Ensemble (SDME) – A music ensemble that functions and rehearses with minimal guidance from a director or teacher. Rather, the ensemble members rely on self-assessment and peer-to-peer feedback (Branker, 2010). In this study student SDMEs functioned

autonomously for at least 50% of the curricular unit—none of the SDMEs functioned autonomously 100% of the time.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the current study:

Primary Research Question

1. What skills do orchestra teachers hope to cultivate in their students through the implementation of self-directed music ensembles?

Secondary Research Questions

1. According to teacher perceptions, what student-to-student communication skills assist with creating a successful interpersonal dialogue within a self-directed ensemble in the orchestra classroom setting?
2. What strategies do orchestra teachers use in an attempt to facilitate, support, and implement the development of interpersonal communication skills?
3. According to teacher perceptions, how does the implementation of SDMEs impact the general orchestra classroom setting?

Review of Literature

Communication

Definitions

Moore (2021) defined *communication* as a “dynamic and ongoing process whereby people create shared meaning through the sending and receiving of messages via commonly understood codes” (p. 449). According to Moore (2021), we are always communicating through our verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and much of what we communicate is done subconsciously. Stech (1983) stated that choosing not to say something communicates a certain message as well.

Dialogue is when two or more people engage in communicating with one another (Branker, 2010). In the world of education, dialogue is specifically important because it has been found to be central to learning. According to Branker (2010), when students work together in an environment where there is trust and mutual respect, they are likely to contribute their ideas to the larger group. This group experience allows students to be exposed to new ideas from peers, become aware of relationship dynamics, develop communication skills, and become intrinsically motivated, independent learners. Communication skills that are nurtured in a classroom where *dialogue* is the standard have the potential to benefit students not only in the classroom but also in their everyday interactions with others.

Communication Skills

Researchers have diligently listed communication skills that are deemed essential for effective communication. Some of the most commonly mentioned skills are as follows: Controlling delivery of communication, correctly interpreting communication, and engaging in empathetic listening and empathetic response (Cook, 1979; Branker, 2010; Stech, 1983, Thomlison, 1982 Andersen et al., 1999). Controlling delivery of communication involves

managing voice and body language. Successfully interpreting communication requires understanding and perceiving vocal cues and body language. Empathetic listening, also referred to as *decentering*, is listening with the intent of understanding the perspective and feelings of another (Stech, 1983). Empathetic response stems from empathetic listening. An empathetic response usually involves questions that attempt to understand the *other*. All of these skills require understanding and the use of both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Verbal vs. Nonverbal Communication

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is normally used for sharing information (Penman, 1980) and can be spoken, written, gestural (such as ASL), or symbolic (Boyd & Jones, 1977). The main components of verbal communication are vocabulary (the words you choose) and syntax (how the words are joined together in a sentence). Syntax and vocabulary both affect how a message is received. One example is posing an idea as a question as opposed to a statement. Research has found a fundamental difference between statements and questions when communicating. Grover (2005) asserted that statements can be seen as dominant or assertive and often stem from the *self*, whereas questions are associated more with effective listening and seeking out information from the *other*. Questions put the speaker at the same level or lower than the other and are a way of showing interest in the opinions and knowledge of others. Questions are also used by person-oriented leaders and are found to be a way of communicating that assist in building relationships (Stech, 1983). The intentional control of both syntax and vocabulary are signs of a good communicator, but nonverbal communication also plays a major role in effective communication.

Nonverbal Communication Overview

Moore (2021) defined nonverbal communication as the process of “creating meaning in the minds of receivers...by use of actions other than, or in combination with, words or language” (p. 452). Nonverbal communication can be conveyed through body language, facial expressions, and voice (Stech, 1983). These nonverbal behaviors aid in the listener’s understanding of a verbal message, can communicate different messages than what people say, and can be transmitted and received subconsciously (Fussell, 1998; Hinde, 1972). Nonverbal communication accounts for approximately 60-70% of what we communicate. It has also been estimated that as much as 93% of emotional meaning is conveyed nonverbally. 38% of this is attributed to vocal cues (tone, inflection), and 55% of this is attributed to body language and facial expressions (Moore, 2021).

Grover (2005) stated, “One of the most important skills to develop is that of assessing non-verbals because a great deal of communication is gained through subtle non-verbals” (Grover, 2005, p. 178). Moore (2021) found that younger children often misinterpret nonverbal communication more than verbal communication and that adults regulate their nonverbal behavior for self-presentation. This research suggests that nonverbal communication skills are learned, as opposed to innate, and these skills can be taught.

Nonverbal Behaviors

Body language includes the categories of posture, proximity and orientation, as well as body movements which are referred to as *gestures* (Hinde, 1972; Moore, 2021). The study of body language is known as *kinesics*. Research in kinesics has suggested that much of our body language conveys the intensity of our current emotional state. Research also outlines some of the

most common kinesic behaviors including emblems, illustrators, regulators, and affect displays (Cook, 1970; Moore, 2021).

Emblems are signals that are given deliberately, have a specific meaning, and can often be translated directly into words. One example is the sign of a head nod. This is, of course, contextual but can mean several things from “Hello” to “I understand what you are saying”.

Illustrators are gestures used to support verbal communication. Illustrators are used to emphasize words, represent the thought process, and draw shapes. *Regulators* help us navigate the flow of a conversation, such as when to talk and when to allow others to talk. Regulators include eye contact, emblems (wave, smile, head nod), proxemics (how closely you stand to others), posture, and physical contact (handshake, pat on the back, hugs) (Moore, 2021). *Affect displays* are displays of emotion and are conveyed primarily through facial expressions (Cook, 1970).

Researchers indicated that facial expressions helped an individual communicate and evaluate emotions, which in turn helped them determine how to interpret a message (Grover, 2005). Researchers have studied the expression of emotions through facial expressions in extreme depth and have found that facial expressions are linked to communicating and eliciting feelings in the receiver more than when only body language or vocal cues were received (Spiegel, 1974). More recent research suggests that there are seven emotions that are universally expressed through facial expressions: fear, anger, surprise, disgust, contempt, sadness, and happiness (Moore, 2021).

Vocalics is the study of vocal qualities and focuses on how these qualities assist verbal messages (Moore, 2021). Research has found that modifying these vocal qualities can greatly affect how a message is received by the listener. The same verbal message paired with different vocal qualities can be interpreted in a variety of ways (Cook, 1979; Moore, 2021). Modifications

of these qualities assist an individual with communicating their *feelings* about what they are communicating (Moore, 2021). Research in vocalics has identified eight vocal characteristics that assist with displaying emotion: amplitude (volume), pitch variation (distance and contour), pitch level (high or low), tempo (speed), duration (round or sharp), filtration, tonality (atonal, minor, major), and rhythm.

Empathetic Listening

Empathetic listening is listening with the intent of understanding the perspective and feelings of another, and researchers have identified three levels of listening behaviors that lead toward empathetic listening: attending skills, response skills, and empathy skills (Grover, 2005; Moore, 2021; Stech, 1983; Hinde, 1972). *Attending skills* are used by the listener to remain mentally engaged in a current conversation. Hinde (1972) observed that for any communication to have an effect it must first be perceived by the listener. Attending skills are an essential first step in this process. One of the main attending skills is regulating eye behavior such as gaze/eye direction, and eye contact. Gaze and eye direction are essential in reading body language and facial expressions. By directing their visual attention to the message sender, a listener can more readily receive nonverbal cues. The direction of the listener's gaze can also tell the message sender information about the level of listening that is happening. Eye contact can send the message that one cares about what is being said and assists in regulating interaction between people, especially as a turn-taking signal (Andersen et al., 1999).

Response skills usually include behaviors such as paraphrasing or summarizing what someone has just said (Grover, 2005). This shows an attempt by the listener to ensure they received the intended message rather than misinterpreting the information. Grover (2005) stated that using clarifying questions helps individuals successfully communicate. Clarifying questions

are open-ended questions that attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the message being shared. Stech (1983) suggested that response skills developed to their fullest extent become empathy skills.

Empathy skills are used to understand the point of view of another person as fully as possible, even to the point of feeling similar emotions as the other person (Hinde, 1972). Some empathy skills include active listening, curiosity, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and open-mindedness. Many of these skills have parallels in the categories of attending skills and response skills. Active listening, curiosity, and open-mindedness can be shown through attending and response behaviors such as eye contact, clarifying questions, and paraphrasing. All three levels of listening behaviors are linked to each other and help lead towards true empathetic listening (Hinde, 1972).

This research in nonverbal communication highlights the impact that body language, facial expressions, vocal cues, and empathetic listening have on communicative interactions. Additionally, understanding and managing these behaviors can lead to more effective and empathetic communication.

Teaching Communication Skills

Considerations when Teaching Communication

Sprague (1999) stated that the way people communicate is closely tied to their “individual attitudes, values, and self-concepts” (p. 18). It is important to understand that each person has already developed an individualized way of communicating that expresses who they are and how they want to be seen or heard. This development begins the day we are born and continues throughout life. Frey (1999) suggested that one of the largest influences on how someone communicates is the groups of people they associate with throughout life. Involvement

in these groups helps us develop self-identity and how we relate to others. Frey also suggested that the *small group* is one of the most important social formations since many individuals can come to fully realize their identities through these relationships. Frey (1999) defined the small group as, “three to fifteen individuals who think of themselves as a group, are interdependent, and communicate by managing messages for the purpose of creative meaning” (p. 100).

According to Frey, those that teach small group communication should focus on the goals of developing group members’ ability to successfully create group identities, socializing new members, developing interpersonal relationships, and changing group processes.

Nicholson and Duck (1999) recommended that teachers of communication keep in mind the subject matter must be presented in an experiential way, meaning students must be able to have hands-on experience practicing these skills. In a course that teaches communication, students must interact with each other for this experience to be contextually relevant. Another suggestion when teaching communication is that the teacher should teach specific communication skills as well as model these skills in their instruction and curriculum (Andersen et al., 1999). Frey (1999) stated that teachers put some parameters around the course, such as selecting the topic of conversation or setting discussion guidelines. Teachers should recognize that these parameters can simultaneously create a focused approach for students while also functioning as a constraint.

When discussing group communication, Frey listed three perspectives that students should experience: participant, observer, and consultant. As a participant, students engage as active members in group decision making. As an observer, students analyze and evaluate communication processes that occur during group interactions. As a consultant, students

combine participant skills and observational skills to take an active role in assisting with and leading group communication.

Approaches to Teaching Communication

One course format laid out by Nicholson and Duck (1999) was a *Skills Course*. In this format the goal is to develop students' ability to communicate through learning certain skills, as well as through direct implementation or practice of the skills to be attained. The authors suggested that a discussion-based classroom environment would be the most effective way to execute this teaching style. Andersen et al. (1999) provide some reasons why a discussion-based class is optimal for learning communication skills. First, discussion-based learning requires more frequent classroom interactions, thus requiring students to communicate on a more frequent basis. Next, discussion-based interactions help students feel a higher sense of acceptance and belonging. These types of interactions also have the potential to create greater cohesion between peers and increase student motivation. This method has been found to help students achieve higher level cognitive and affective objectives when compared to other methods of instruction (Andersen et al., 1999).

In a course where group discussion is utilized, especially to this degree, it is necessary for students to feel they can trust each other and the teacher to gain the full benefits of these interactions. Andersen et al. (1999) stated that, "The most effective class discussions are enacted in an environment where participants share mutual respect and instructional responsibility" (p. 363). Supportive environments have been found to encourage greater interaction, trust, participation, and involvement between peers. Andersen et al. (1999) suggested that the teacher is the leading factor in creating this type of culture. Some of the best teachers facilitate healthy classroom discussions, which requires understanding individual students' communication styles.

The teacher can attempt to balance dialogue in a few ways. One strategy is to selectively place students in certain groups to create a balance of communication styles. Another strategy involves encouraging listening or participation from students who either speak too much or may be too shy to speak out. Teachers must not confuse discussion with recitation. Recitation is usually a call and response strategy, from teacher to student and back. Discussion implies that all group members have an equal influence on the conversation, and students often engage in dialogue without any teacher interaction (Andersen et al., 1999).

Boyd and Jones (1977) outlined a myriad of classroom activities for developing communication skills in public school students. Throughout the sequence there is a concerted effort to teach listening skills. Simply put, the goal of their listening activities was to develop sensitivities to sound. Listening skills developed include but were not limited to recognizing, recalling and imitating sounds; associating sounds with emotions, time, or place; identifying common sounds; identifying similarities and differences in sounds and sound patterns; ability to appreciate and understand creativity in others; ability to identify purposes and discriminate; and ability to alternate between listening and response.

Boyd and Jones (1977) introduced an entire section directed towards developing sensitivities to sounds in music. Their reasoning was that music is a basis for communication, and that music is often used to teach certain communication skills, especially those in the affective realm. Skills developed in this area included reacting to rhythm with body movement, noting themes in musicals, creating rhythmic patterns, recognizing instruments, interpreting music with art, and identifying changes in mood.

Speaking skills were also a focus in their instructional sequence. Skills developed in this area include building specific vocabulary, using nonverbal communication to convey meaning to

a spoken message, listening skills, applying sounds to songs and rhythms, and management of vocal qualities. The listening and speaking skills outlined by Boyd and James suggested that music and communication share many commonalities, and that developing certain musical skills has potential to lead to stronger communication skills.

This body of research regarding the teaching of communication skills suggests that learning through meaningful, application-based experiences is the strongest way to develop communication skills. This research also suggests that music and communication share many commonalities.

Communication and Music

Connections Between Music and Speech Processes

Kraus and Chandrasekaran (2010) studied potential correlations between music training and brain plasticity in the auditory system and found many commonalities between how humans process speech and music. Their research differentiates the processing of auditory information into two levels: the acoustic level and the cognitive level. They state:

“At the acoustic level, music and speech use pitch, timing, and timbre cues to convey information. At a cognitive level, music and speech processing require similar memory and attention skills, as well as an ability to integrate discrete acoustic events into a coherent perceptual stream according to specific syntactic rules” (p. 600).

When comparing musicians to non-musicians, the research outlined a few key points. First, musicians show increased brain plasticity for speech stimuli. Next, musicians are better able to detect minor differences in vocal cues such as pitch contour, pitch cues, harmonic components of speech, and speech timing. Last, musicians may be more attuned to hearing the affective meanings related to sounds, as their brains more readily recognized the segment of a baby’s cry that signals emotional meaning. This research suggests that people who engage

meaningfully with music have a more highly developed auditory system which assists in the development of listening skills.

Communication in the Music Ensemble

This section outlines communication skills that are regularly used in a traditional, director-led music ensemble. Verbal communication skills related to vocabulary and syntax are of major importance in this setting. During a rehearsal, musicians and conductors must clearly and efficiently explain musical directions. Therefore, musicians develop a specific vocabulary and syntax to discuss and explain their art form (Sato, 2020). One could also compare reading written music notation to written language since they are both symbol systems that represent sound.

Conductors, as well as musicians within the ensemble exchange nonverbal cues such as gestures and eye contact with each other to aid in full group communication, which is especially beneficial in larger orchestras. Biasutti et al. (2016) observed that *gestures* serve specific functions in music. Gestures are often used to “ensure the correct sound production” (Biasutti et al., 2016, p. 2). A conductor changes the intensity, size, shape, and many other aspects of their gestures to elicit a certain type of sound from the ensemble. Gestures can also contribute to creating musical expression. This aligns with research mentioned earlier which suggested body language can show the intensity of our current emotional state. Biasutti et al. (2016), also discussed the use of regulators in music ensembles. Regulators control the flow of dialogue through nonverbal cues such as eye contact, emblems (such as a head nod, smile, or a precise gesture from the conductor), and posture. In musical performance, verbal communication is often not an option. Therefore, a trained conductor uses each of these regulators extensively, especially in cueing entrances and encouraging sections to play out. Regulators essentially function as turn-

taking cues during musical performance. Turn-taking cues are nonverbal actions that help individuals regulate the flow of a conversation.

Facial expressions are regularly used by conductors in an attempt to portray a desired mood or feeling and in turn, elicit certain sounds from the ensemble (Dan, 2005). This is reasonable since facial expressions have been found to effectively communicate emotional information. An empathetic conductor must also read the facial expressions of their ensemble for a multitude of reasons. One reason is that these cues can help identify if the ensemble understands a musical direction. Reading these cues can also assist the conductor in identifying if a player is ready for their entrance during a performance or if they seem completely lost with the typical “Help me!” look on their face.

Empathetic listening is also a skill used within music ensembles and is required to adjust to other musicians in a cohesive manner. Musicians must come to a shared understanding about the sounds they are creating (Sato, 2020). In reference to verbal communication, Branker (2010) found that music ensembles communicated effectively when members of the group showed a “willingness to listen to each other and were receptive to each other's ideas” (Branker, 2010, p. 143).

This research regarding communication within music ensembles suggests that developing specific verbal and nonverbal communication skills such as (a) developing specific vocabulary, (b) correctly reading body language and facial expressions, and (c) engaging in empathetic listening, can lead to a more successful and cohesive musical experience.

The Self-Directed Music Ensemble

A Potentially Unique Setting

In contrast to a director-led ensemble, the SDME is a music ensemble that functions and rehearses with little direction from a director or teacher and members rely on self-assessment and peer-to-peer feedback. This creates what Branker (2010) defined as *necessary mutuality*, where group members are all viewed as equally important to the group's success. In this setting, the success of the group hinges on effective communication, both verbal and nonverbal (musical). As noted earlier, experiential learning seems to work best when developing communication skills. The SDME provides more opportunities for musicians to engage in relevant dialogue and collaborative processes. The SDME also provides an opportunity for group members to develop original ideas rather than just listening to the director tell them what to do (Trapkus, 2018). According to a study by Sato (2020), certain students felt that their communication skills grew in this setting:

“Communication was an area that she [the student] felt she improved on most throughout the student coaching experience. She claimed that being in a setting where she had to verbalize her thoughts and express her ideas in different ways each week helped with her general communication skills” (Sato, 2020 p. 212).

Hinde (1973) observed that social conventions within different groups dictate how communication occurs. He identifies three levels of social groups: work, friendship, and family. At the work level, interactions are rather formal in nature and are often task oriented. At the friendship level, members are brought together by interpersonal motivations rather than to perform a particular task. There is also often more self-expression at the friendship level than the family level, and there is more of an effort to interact collaboratively than in other settings. At the family level, expressing affection was found to be important for relational closeness and satisfaction. The SDME is a setting that can eventually feel more like a friendship or family

group rather than a work group. In friend and family groups the general level of trust has been found to be higher (Hinde, 1973). As noted earlier, trust is an essential component to creating a healthy space for students to engage in dialogue.

Communication Skills in the Self-Directed Ensemble

There are certain communication skills that are used more often or are more essential for success in a SDME. Musicians in this setting need to use verbal skills much more often than in the director-led rehearsal space in order to engage in dialogic communication about music. They must develop a common vocabulary that works for their respective group, and they must also manage message delivery when providing feedback to each other, so they don't offend their peers with a poorly worded message delivered with a negative tone (Sato, 2020).

In the SDME, the sending and receiving of nonverbal cues by all members of the group becomes paramount to their musical success since there is no conductor. Gestures that become essential are preparatory gestures that signal the start of a piece or an entrance, body movements to signify a group pulse, and movements that portray what type of sound should be produced (Biasutti et al., 2016). Turn-taking cues also become a responsibility of each of the ensemble members in this setting. In a small group, turn-taking cues are essential for a balanced dialogue (Andersen et al., 1999), and in the case of a music ensemble, a balanced and coherent performance. Eye contact, head nods, and body orientation are all cues that can assist musicians successfully navigate a musical performance. This body of research suggests the SDME can be a potentially beneficial setting to develop certain verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Conclusion

When considering the function of communication, controlling delivery of communication, correctly interpreting communication, and engaging in empathetic listening and

empathetic response comprise many of the communication skills that lead toward positive interpersonal dialogue. These skills are developed by using strategies that involve both verbal and nonverbal communication. Research in teaching communication skills has found that learning through meaningful, application-based experiences is the strongest way to develop communication skills. This same research has observed that music and communication share many commonalities. There are also studies that have found that those who engage in music have higher sensitivities to minute differences in qualities of sound that are associated with speech and listening. Research suggests that there are already specific communication skills being used within music ensembles, and that the SDME is a potentially beneficial place to further develop these communication skills. In terms of empathetic listening within the SDME, there is a current gap in the research which partially informed the need for this study.

Methodology

Purpose

A self-directed or chamber ensemble is a music-making experience where there is the potential to break away from the traditional music leadership dynamic of director-student. Given the need to shift this paradigm, defining the extent to which an SDME experience could serve as a learning strategy for developing and nurturing interpersonal communication skills emerged as the primary purpose of the current study. Rehearsing and performing within the SDME, students explored shared peer leadership, which can help develop essential communication skills. Through a series of interviews with orchestra directors (n=3), the researcher attempted to both investigate the skills taught during these SDME experiences and uncover which communication skills possibly emerged or developed in their students.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question

1. What skills do orchestra teachers hope to cultivate in their students through the implementation of self-directed music ensembles?

Secondary Research Questions

1. According to teacher perceptions, what student-to-student communication skills assist with creating a successful interpersonal dialogue within a self-directed ensemble in the orchestra classroom setting?
2. What strategies do orchestra teachers use in an attempt to facilitate, support, and implement the development of interpersonal communication skills?
3. According to teacher perceptions, how does the implementation of SDMEs impact the general orchestra classroom setting?

Research Approach

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose to utilize an exploratory case study methodology, which is a detailed examination of a certain event, person, or group in order to generate new theoretical understandings (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). This allowed the researcher an in-depth look into how three different orchestra programs with varying resources incorporated SDMEs into their curriculum, and what skills students gained or developed from this experience. SDMEs were the focus because they offer the opportunity for students to experience a different level of autonomy than the typical large ensemble rehearsal. As stated by previous research (Branker, 2010), the SDME is a setting where individuals have more opportunity and responsibility to engage in verbal and non-verbal communication with their peers.

Semi-structured interviews served as the primary method of collecting data for the current study. Interviews were conducted with the intent of understanding what skills, musical and non-musical, participants viewed as essential for success in a SDME, what skills they were trying to teach their students by engaging them in SDME, and how they incorporated these ensembles into their curriculum.

Limitations

Due to the researcher's geographic location and area of emphasis, this study focused specifically on self-directed music ensembles within orchestra programs in the Kansas public school system. It should be noted that this study cannot be generalized due to the small participant sample (n=3). Since this study's focus was on the teacher's perspective of the SDME experience, no students were interviewed, leaving out an important voice in the data-gathering process. These limitations provided some boundaries to the data gathering process, but the data

obtained still provided unique insights into the communication skills used in SDMEs, and how orchestra teachers can potentially facilitate the development of these skills.

Participants and Recruitment

Recruitment

For this research study, I employed purposive sampling, given the time constraints and limitations of my current framework. Essential inclusion criteria included participants (n=3) currently serving as public-school orchestra directors who are currently implementing chamber music within their curriculum. Each of the participants and their curricular goals with respect to chamber music were previously known to the researcher.

I sought and obtained approval from the Kansas State University's Institutional Review Board to conduct the current study and subsequent interviews on March 31, 2023 (see Appendix A). Next, the researcher contacted participants via email to ask for their willingness to participate in the study. Once participants agreed to be interviewed, consent forms were distributed and received by the researcher and interview times were established. To uphold anonymity and to respect the confidentiality of participants, the use of a pseudonym was applied for each participant. While participants' occupations were relevant to the research, a pseudonym was also chosen for participants' locations to ensure anonymity.

At the time of the initial communications, the participants were incorporating SDMEs in their programs, therefore, the researcher provided a few preliminary prompts for the participants to keep in mind while observing these ensembles prior to their interview. These prompts acted as primers for the overarching ideas that would be discussed during the interview.

Participants

At the time of the interview, Mrs. Bassoon was in her tenth year of teaching and her fifth year at Panther High School. PHS has an approximate enrollment of 1,500 students, grades 9-12, is located in a suburban city with a population of approximately 95,000, and is in close proximity of a D1 academic institution. At PHS, approximately 43% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The orchestra program at PHS consists of 150 students grades 9-12, and about 10% of them receive private instruction on their instruments. At the time of the interview some of Mrs. Bassoon's students were part of the local youth symphony program, and others were involved in a student-led, after-school Fiddle Club. Some of Mrs. Bassoon's goals when implementing SDMEs were to (a) encourage students to participate in a local competition, (b) provide opportunities for students to develop as independent musicians (c) provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills, and (d) provide opportunities for students to develop deeper relationships with their peers.

Mrs. Armstrong was in her tenth year of teaching and her ninth year with the Northwood School District when her interview took place. Northwood Schools is a rural district located in a city with a population of approximately 9,500. Mrs. Armstrong teaches grades 2-12, but only implemented SDMEs with approximately 100 students, grades 6-12. The combined enrollment of Northwood Middle and High School is approximately 700 students, grades 6-12. At Northwood Middle and High, 49% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. None of Mrs. Armstrong's students were receiving private instruction on their instruments during the interview process, but some played with her at her church and in the local community orchestra. Her goals when implementing SDMEs were to (a) encourage students to participate in a local

competition and (b) to prepare students with the skills necessary to continue playing music after they left her program.

At the time of his interview, Mr. Cameron was in his thirteenth year of teaching and his second at Kirkland High School. KHS has an approximate enrollment of 2,000 students, grades 9-12, is located in a suburban city with a population of approximately 55,000, and is in close proximity to a D1 academic institution. At KHS, 36% of students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The orchestra program at KHS consists of 65 students grades 9-12, and about 25-30% of them were receiving private instruction on their instruments at the time of the interview. To Mr. Cameron's knowledge, his students didn't engage in much music-making on their instruments outside of school. His goal when implementing SDMEs was to create an environment that had a heavier demand on individual communication and participation in order to cultivate more musical independence and confidence in his students.

Procedure

Interviews

All three participants implemented their chamber music curriculum during the spring semester. Semi-structured interviews took place at the end of the semester so that participants had ample time to observe the ensembles' interactions throughout an entire curricular cycle. Interviews were held via Zoom conference calling, recorded, and then transcribed for data collection and further analysis. Interview transcripts were then sent to the participants for accuracy and revisions.

Interviews varied in length from approximately 20 to 45 minutes due to the amount of detail given by each participant. The focus of the interview questions was to gain a detailed understanding of each teacher's "system" for incorporating small ensembles into their program

and what type of skills students were utilizing in this setting. Questions pertained to participants' interests in chamber music, processes used by participants when implementing SDMEs into their curriculum, skills necessary to be successful in a SMDE, and outcomes of students engaging in SDMEs. A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

All Participants were asked the same interview questions. During the first interview the researcher realized that some questions flowed better in a different order. The researcher also became aware of certain questions within the interview that benefited from more in-depth follow-up questions. Adjustments to the order of questions and lines of questioning were made for subsequent interviews. See revised interview questions and format in Appendix C.

Analysis/Coding

Interview transcripts were analyzed and coded by the researcher using methods outlined in *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, Saldana (2021). In vivo, process, and structural coding methods were used to analyze interviews. In vivo coding was used to keep the participants' voices as the central focus, and process and structural coding were then used to cross analyze findings. Once coded data were identified, they were examined and developed into themes relating to the research questions of the study. These themes informed further review of related literature.

Results

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers utilize SDMEs in an attempt to develop certain musical and communicative skills within their students. The researcher collected and analyzed data based on the following research questions:

Primary Research Question

1. What skills do orchestra teachers hope to cultivate in their students through the implementation of self-directed music ensembles?

Secondary Research Questions

1. According to teacher perceptions, what student-to-student communication skills assist with creating a successful interpersonal dialogue within a self-directed ensemble in the orchestra classroom setting?
2. What strategies do orchestra teachers use in an attempt to facilitate, support, and implement the development of interpersonal communication skills?
3. According to teacher perceptions, how does the implementation of SDMEs impact the general orchestra classroom setting?

Through the means of in-vivo, process, and structural coding, 12 themes emerged from interview transcripts. To keep the voice of the participants at the forefront of this study, themes derived from in-vivo coding are the focus of this chapter, and all themes appeared across all three participant interviews. Themes are addressed as they relate to each research question.

Themes

Primary Research Question

What skills do orchestra teachers hope to cultivate in their students through the implementation of self-directed music ensembles?

The two themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were: autonomy builds independence, and teamwork.

Theme 1: Autonomy Builds Independence. Throughout the interviews, all participants discussed the opportunities for autonomy and choice that students have in SDMEs. Terms such as “practice self-rehearsing”, “arrive at conclusions on their own”, and “I let them choose” were highlights of this theme. All participants gave their students opportunities to make their own choices in this setting including creating their own groups, selecting the literature they wanted to perform, and deciding how the rehearsal process looked within their individual groups. In addition, some students built collective group identities by developing their own group name.

Participants spoke about how working in SDMEs seemed to build musical independence in their students. Some key phrases mentioned were “cultivates independence and confidence”, “kids will take leadership”, and “increased accountability”. All participants talked about how the students were required to identify and fix errors on their own or as a group since the teacher wasn’t always there to assist them. Regarding moments in the rehearsal process that might feel challenging, Mrs. Armstrong stated “[I] usually let them [students] try to figure it out”. She found that allowing students to rehearse on their own was “really good for my kids...I have kids that will take leadership and they will self-rehearse while I’m gone”.

Mrs. Bassoon also spoke about students becoming independent thinkers during their time in SDMEs. She said, “The second thing that I really like about small ensembles is that it builds a

different level of musicianship with students...it tests their knowledge of music, what they know, and what they have to apply”.

Theme 2: Teamwork. All participants agreed that collaboration is essential for success in a SDME. When describing teamwork and collaboration, participants used phrases such as “teamwork skills”, “share responsibilities”, “help each other”, and “increased engagement”. Mr. Cameron noted that there is a “heavier demand on individual participation in the communicating aspect” when working in the SMDE setting. Mrs. Bassoon mentioned that this is a setting where students can also practice self- and peer-accountability. She spoke of students “establishing an expectation” for themselves and their group through ensemble contracts:

We start off with Ensemble Contracts...they have to sit down as an ensemble, I have a contract that they have to fill out, and they discuss things that they want...They're going to discuss all of those...inside factors about facilitating the group before they get into it. Practice expectations...rehearsal in class and what that should look like...They'll put something about cell phones on there and kind of the expectation. We'll talk about attendance and how...they expect it...Then they all signed the contract and agree on it and then...they can kind of go forward, I think, having established the expectation.

She went on to speak about how some students navigated making changes to their contract as a group to ensure that it fit every group member's needs.

Secondary Research Question 1

According to teacher perceptions, what student-to-student communication skills assist with creating a successful interpersonal dialogue within a self-directed ensemble in the orchestra classroom setting?

The participants' students engaged in a combination of verbal and nonverbal communication throughout the process of working in small ensembles. In reference to the primary research question, three themes emerged from participant interviews: Nonverbal communication, delivery and reception of verbal communication, and empathy.

Theme 3: Nonverbal Communication. The first theme to emerge was the use of nonverbal communication within self-directed interactions. Participants specifically spoke about “body language”, “facial expressions”, and “eye contact” to describe aspects of nonverbal communication. Mr. Cameron had students focus on nonverbal communication to achieve more emotionally expressive performances:

I’ve talked to my kids a lot about acting out a piece and thinking about their facial expressions when they’re performing...When they’re [students] more expressive facially and in their body language, then it comes through in the music so much more too...I mean our discipline is a nonverbal form of communication, and so I like to get them thinking about nonverbal communication as much as I can.

Mrs. Armstrong had observed that when students move their bodies more it creates “a more cohesive group” (p. 8). Mrs. Bassoon mentioned that these nonverbal skills aren’t something some students have much experience practicing, and they still need to be learned. She said, “Sometimes they have to learn about things like vocal inflexion or body language...maybe they don’t always have experience doing that”.

Theme 4: Delivery and Reception of Verbal Communication. Participants regularly mentioned aspects of delivering and receiving verbal communication. Most of the verbal interactions discussed occurred when students were providing feedback to each other. Participants used terms such as “tone”, “vocal inflection”, “passive aggressive”, “non-threatening”, “arguing”, “berating”, “come from a question standpoint”, and “how it’s being received” when discussing verbal interactions between students. Regarding students providing feedback to peers, Mr. Cameron stated, “It’s a complex thing”. He talked about how students sometimes need help understanding how their message is being received by others, and how this is particularly tricky when providing constructive feedback to peers. Mrs. Bassoon discussed

how she had conversations with her students about phrasing communications as questions rather than statements:

I've also had conversations about what does effective communication look like in an ensemble right. You can say something like, "Cellos, you are out of tune," or you can say, "Hey cellos, what's happening in measure something? Something sounds funny," right. If you come at it from a question standpoint it's less offensive right if you're inquiring. Because chances are then if it seems like a non-threatening thing the cellos are going to say. "Oh yeah we played F sharp and it was F natural," you know they'll own up to it.

She continued by discussing the opposite interaction and outcome, stating that most people don't want to be a part of an environment where they are being "berated" or "accused" of making a mistake.

Theme 5: Empathy Skills. Terms related to empathy were mentioned 44 times by the participants. Participants noted instances where students engaged in empathetic interactions. All three participants spoke about these instances with statements like "conflict management", "work together", "support a group", and "learn to balance with other people". When asked about the positive aspects of engaging in SDMEs, Mrs. Armstrong said her students were "learning to blend as a team both...personality wise and sound wise" in this setting.

Participants used terms such as "humility", "unselfish", "arrogance", and "steamroll" when discussing leadership dynamics within SDMEs. All participants preferred a shared leadership dynamic amongst their students in this setting. Mr. Cameron spoke about how humility is a key trait for all group members to have in a successful SDME: "Also humility right. One of the biggest killers in a group that performs at a high level is arrogance, and if somebody just gets too big for, even if they've got the skills to back it up...if they start putting their personal pride above the success of the group that's just poison".

Mrs. Bassoon spoke about the community that can be built in a learning environment that places emphasis on peer-to-peer support, and how this can lead to empathetic interaction. She observed that her students would often “check in with one another”, when they could tell one of the group members was not having the best day:

Yeah, and then you know in the same way too they also see each other every single day in a small group setting and so...they're building...a tiny community within...our bigger orchestra...in that bigger class, which means that there's comradery there and there's support and they you know, inevitably they will talk about their lives or what's going on or you know...they start to read each other's body language and say like, “Hey are you okay today?” and they check in with one another.

Secondary Research Question 2

What strategies do orchestra teachers use in an attempt to facilitate, support, and implement the development of interpersonal communication skills?

In reference to this research question, the four themes that emerged from the interview transcripts were: resources and support, “deliberate guidance”, balancing teacher involvement, and unique setting/unique opportunities.

Theme 6: Resources and Support. Participants spoke about the resources and support they need to implement SDMEs. Mrs. Bassoon pointed out the importance of support from administration and the community, especially since she uses almost an entire concert cycle to implement a full instructional unit based around SDMEs. Some other resources that were discussed were access to a large library of music that contains selections fit for less traditional instrumentation, and access to a large number of school instruments for students to use. Mrs. Armstrong mentioned that since she teaches in a district where many students are on free or reduced lunch, they often can't afford their own instruments. In response to this challenge she has an inventory of about 170 string instruments at her disposal to loan to students.

Theme 7: “Deliberate guidance”. Participants guided their students through the SDME experience in a variety of ways. They guided the formation of groups, selection of repertoire, rehearsals, and interpersonal interactions between students. According to Mrs. Bassoon, one important goal when developing student groups was to create “cohesive ensembles”. Participants spoke of “humility”, “big personalities”, “overshadowed”, and “multiple leaders” when discussing how they attempted to balance student personalities while forming groups. Mr. Cameron used the term “deliberate guidance” to explain how he is involved with the formation of groups in his class. Mrs. Armstrong and Mr. Cameron often placed certain students together so they could practice “shared responsibility” and “balance their sense of initiative”. In certain situations, participants encouraged students who are less vocal to share their thoughts.

One strategy participants utilized when guiding their students was to act as a group “facilitator” where they would lead students through conversations with each other to come to their own conclusions. Mr. Cameron stated, “I would . . . pretend I didn’t know any of the [music] terminology or anything so then I would make just observations that a non-musician would make by kind of helping them try to arrive at conclusions on their own and think through it a little bit more.” He found that this empowered more student independence through heightening their powers of observation. When Mrs. Bassoon’s students were not communicating well, she would have conversations about effective communication with the whole group. She also had them revisit their “ensemble contracts” to ensure that they were following the rules that they set for themselves:

When something then goes awry, or something goes off, or someone's not following the contract, then I bust the contract out and I go and I sit in their ensemble and I say, “Okay so tell me what is happening with this contract? What needs to be changed so that this works for all ensemble members?”

Theme 8: Balancing Teacher Involvement. Participants mentioned how they were aware of the delicate balance between teacher involvement and student autonomy needed in this setting. Even though they guided their students in certain instances, participants also found that it was beneficial to let the students handle things on their own. This balance seemed to stem from how well each teacher knew their individual students. Mr. Cameron stated, “I should step back more”, when discussing his involvement in running rehearsals. He knows his students have the ability to do this on their own, and he wants to allow them more opportunities to function autonomously. He did involve himself in the formation of ensembles because he wanted to intentionally balance musical ability as well as communication styles.

In contrast to the other participants, Mrs. Bassoon allowed her students to form groups on their own and only intervened in this process when necessary. She talked about how she was worried at first about friend groups forming ensembles together because she wanted to make sure they would get work done rather than potentially wasting rehearsal time. The work ethic her students displayed when working with friends, however, was contrary to her worry. She said, “I found that it's actually the opposite. . . [the students] I think worked harder having people that they wanted to be successful with”. Mrs. Bassoon and Mrs. Armstrong took different approaches to assigning repertoire to SDMEs. Mrs. Bassoon allowed students to select their music with minimal guidance and would try to “honor their requests” in this matter, whereas Mrs. Armstrong chose to assign music to the groups.

Theme 9: Unique Setting/Unique Opportunities. The SDME was described by participants as a unique setting for multiple reasons. When discussing their students’ experiences in this setting, they used phrases such as “stepping out of their comfort zone”, “change in pace”, “something different to do”, and “opportunities to be involved”. Their students enjoyed the

different learning environment and performance opportunities this setting provided. Students also had more opportunities to interact with each other compared to a director led ensemble.

Participants talked about a variety of opportunities for more personal interactions and connections between peers in a SDME. They spoke about the connection that can be created in this setting through phrases such as “building a community”, “connect with each other”, “fun to interact”, and “bonded”. This connection has the potential to affect student interactions beyond the music classroom. When asked about his personal experience being in SDMEs, Mr. Cameron spoke about how the connections and friendships made within the SDME have can influence interactions outside of this setting, and how these interactions in turn can affect the music that is made:

And I think the first thing that comes to mind about what made that a strong group, and a memorable and powerful experience, was that we spent time together not playing music too and we enjoyed...just being together, and that I think that deeply impacted our music. The summer before our senior year we hiked the Grand Canyon together as a string quartet.

Participants provided varying performance opportunities to their students including performances around their schools, around their communities, at contests, and in concerts specifically geared towards small ensembles. Mrs. Armstrong created a community event where students could perform in a low stress environment: “Yeah last year we did a chamber and coffee night at the coffee shop where they performed their chamber groups...for their families and community members. And they could...drink coffee and chat...while we just kind of performed as background music”.

Secondary Research Question 3

According to teacher perceptions, how does the implementation of SDMEs impact the general orchestra classroom setting?

When students returned to the general orchestra setting teachers observed greater independence, more student leadership, and an increased sense of community and connection.

Theme 10: Develops Independence. As mentioned earlier, the autonomy that students experienced in a SDME seemed to help in developing musical and communicative independence. Mrs. Armstrong said that SDMEs are, “the thing that helps them [students] most musically throughout the year to be...individual strong players.” Participants found that certain skills pertaining to musical independence could benefit their full class settings. Mr. Cameron discussed how the SDME “heightened their [students’] powers of observation”. By strengthening students’ observation skills, there was more potential for them to “arrive at conclusions on their own” instead of waiting for the teacher to tell them what to fix. Mrs. Bassoon observed that her students were also more engaged verbally when in the general orchestra setting. They seemed to share their ideas and opinions with the whole class more readily after engaging in SDMEs.

Theme 11: Develops Leaders. “Kids will take leadership”. This is a quote from Mrs. Armstrong as she discussed students self-rehearsing as a full class when she is gone. Could this stem from how she forms some of her SDMEs? She said that when her students are in “a mixed group of . . . lower-level players with higher-level players they usually tend to look up the higher-level players to be the leader”. When the higher-level players take the lead in SDMEs, they are getting opportunities to develop leadership skills, and these skills have the potential to translate into the full class setting. Mr. Cameron uses a similar tactic when forming groups. He stated, “I’ll also put people in groups where there is no obvious leadership, and so somebody will have to step up or find a way to just share those responsibilities, so something gets done.”

Theme 12: Develops Community and Connection. Mr. Cameron described the connections that his students made in this setting: “I think we [teachers] want to split them up

into those smaller groups. It forms those relationships a little bit tighter". Participants mentioned instances of community and connection 22 times. Phrases used included "building a community", "friendship", "relate to each other", "intimate group", and "people get closer". When her SDMEs performed their music for each other, Mrs. Armstrong mentioned they showed their support for their classmates as they "rooted each other on". Mrs. Bassoon spoke to the friendships that can be built in this setting due to the frequency that students are able to interact with each other:

They also see each other every single day in a small group setting and so...they're building...a tiny community within our bigger orchestra...in that bigger class, which means that there's comradery there and there's support...They have more people in that class that they connect with more personally...and I guess more on a friendship sort of standpoint than just a here's another person in class.

Conclusion

Participant interviews revealed three areas of communication skills that are essential for the success of a SDME: 1) nonverbal communication, 2) delivery and reception of verbal communication, and 3) empathy skills. Through developing skills in the first two areas, students seemed to show increased ability to display empathy skills. The data also suggests that the SDME is a unique setting that provides many opportunities for student autonomy. Because of this autonomy, students have more opportunities to develop independence and engage with each other in collaborative processes that develop teamwork. The participants acknowledged that teachers must provide some parameters and guide students during this process, but should also be careful to balance their involvement to ensure the best environment for student growth. One further reaching impact of students engaging in SDMEs was student opportunities for increased independence, which led to more students actively taking leadership roles in their general orchestra classroom. Lastly, SDMEs were utilized as a learning strategy in which students can

develop deeper connections with each other—positively impacting the general orchestra classroom culture.

Discussion

Overview

In this chapter, I address the research questions that framed the study. As I discuss each research question in the following section, I present themes and data from participant interviews along with supporting examples collected from previous literature. The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers utilize SDMEs in an attempt to develop certain musical and communicative skills within their students. Additionally, this study was designed to explore the impact implementing a SDME curriculum had on the larger orchestra setting.

Addressing the Research Questions

Primary Research Question

What skills do orchestra teachers hope to cultivate in their students through the implementation of self-directed music ensembles?

Autonomy Builds Independence. According to participant perceptions, the setting of the SDME provides opportunities to develop personal voice and musical independence. This is achieved through dialogue with peers, communication of individually conceived ideas, and peer- and self-assessment in an autonomous setting. Participants allowed their students to rehearse mostly on their own, which provided many opportunities for students to communicate their ideas with each other. This data is supported by research that suggests participating in an experience-based setting is the best way to learn communication skills. Participants also noticed that when they let students solve problems on their own, or as a team, they became more independent musically and their confidence seemed to grow. When students were allowed to develop their own solutions to a problem, they became more empowered in the learning process and more confident in their abilities.

Teamwork. Branker (2010) discusses the idea of *necessary mutuality*, where group members are all viewed as equally integral to the group's success. In this setting, the success of the group hinges on effective communication, both verbal and musical/nonverbal. This mutuality is specifically essential in a music ensemble. Each member has the power to affect the overall sound of the group in positive and negative ways. If one member is not playing well, it will affect the entire group no matter how well the other group members are playing. Also, if group members are not able to work in a cohesive manner, this will greatly affect the rehearsal process as well as the musical product as a whole. All participants emphasized the importance of teamwork, collaboration, and shared leadership in the success of a SDME. According to participant interviews, a group that has strong individual players but can't get along has a very hard time being successful. Branker (2010) spoke to this as well. He stated, "Whether communication takes place in a cooperative or a competitive context determines how effective and how defensive the patterns of communication are. The more cooperative the climate, the more effective communication tends to be. Group norms largely determine communication effectiveness" (p. 104).

Secondary Research Question 1

According to teacher perceptions, what student-to-student communication skills assist with creating a successful interpersonal dialogue within a self-directed ensemble in the orchestra classroom setting?

Nonverbal Communication. Interviews revealed that students mainly used nonverbal communication while in SDMEs to engage musically. Participants observed that when their students used facial expressions and body movement, the music making process was more successful. The use of specific gestures such as emblems, illustrators, and regulators (Moore,

2021; Biasutti et al. 2016) are what students seem to be using in this setting. *Emblems* are signals that are given deliberately and have specific meanings, such as a body cue to start the piece from a group member; *illustrators* assist give meaning to what is being said, such as a specific body movement to emphasize how a certain pitch is played or to indicate a specific dynamic; and *regulators* control the flow of dialogue and include body language such as eye contact, emblems, and posture.

Facial expressions have been found to communicate and elicit feelings more than body language or vocal cues. Since one goal of music is to help elicit an emotional response in both the performer and listener, it is plausible that using specific facial expressions could help students develop a common understanding of the emotion or feeling they are trying to portray during a musical performance. These facial expressions also have the potential to affect the listener's response to the musical performance. Additionally, eye contact or specific body gestures can act as turn-taking cues (Andersen et al., 1999) between ensemble members.

Mrs. Bassoon referenced controlling vocal qualities, such as inflection, when providing feedback. Research has found that modifying vocal qualities greatly affects how a message is received. The vocal qualities that can be altered are amplitude, pitch variation, pitch level, tempo, duration, tonality, and rhythm (Moore, 2021). Most, if not all, of these terms are also components of sound that, when manipulated correctly, create music. Correlating musical terms for the above vocal qualities would be dynamics, melodic contour, register, tempo, articulation, tonality, and rhythm respectively. Research has shown that trained musicians more readily react to minor differences in these vocal qualities (Kraus & Chandrasekaran 2010). It is plausible that developing sensitivities to these differences within a musical context could assist students in recognizing the same differences in spoken communications. While existing research supports

the connections between listening processes involved in both music and speech, surprisingly the participants in this study did not mention listening as a communication skill that supports a successful SDME experience.

Delivery and Reception of Verbal Communication. Participants viewed managing delivery and reception of verbal communication as especially important when students were providing musical feedback and constructive criticisms to each other. Students needed to manage their word choice (vocabulary) and phrasing (syntax) when giving feedback. Both Mr. Cameron and Mrs. Bassoon understood how tricky verbal communication in this setting can be for young students, and discussed certain strategies they use to encourage effective student communication. One strategy discussed by Mrs. Bassoon was how she encouraged students to phrase ideas or comments as questions rather than statements, so the message did not feel accusatory. Much research outlines the importance of questions in dialogue. Statements can be seen as dominant or assertive and often stem from the *self*, where questions are associated more with effective listening and seeking out information from the *other* (Grover, 2005). Questions are also used by person-oriented leaders and are found to be a way of communicating that assist in building relationships (Stech, 1983). Furthermore, an empathetic response usually involves questions that attempt to understand the *other*. This data is further supported by research which suggests some key communication skills that lead toward healthy dialogue are (a) controlling delivery of communication; (b) correctly interpreting communication; and (c) engaging in empathetic listening and empathetic response (Cook, 1979; Branker, 2010; Stech, 1983).

Empathy Skills. All participants preferred a shared leadership dynamic amongst their students. They discussed how teamwork, humility, and balancing one's personality with other people are all essential for a SDME to be fully successful. Participants also spoke of behaviors

that hindered empathetic interactions such as people who “steamroll” others as well as arrogant communication strategies. Hinde (1972) outlines some specific skills that encourage empathetic interactions including active listening, curiosity (asking questions), and open-mindedness (almost an antonym of steamrolling). Essentially, students need to use empathy skills to achieve a balanced interpersonal dynamic within their group.

A small group like the SDME requires a certain level of trust and respect between its members in order to function effectively. Where there are proper levels of trust and respect, empathetic interactions are more likely to occur. In turn, the development of empathy skills can lead to stronger attending and response skills (Andersen et al.,1999; Stech, 1983; Grover, 2005; Moore, 2021). Mrs. Bassoon talked about instances of students reading and reacting empathetically to each other’s nonverbal cues that weren’t directly related to music. Is it possible that through practicing the communication skills needed in the SDME, students can become more sensitive to verbal and nonverbal cues in their daily interactions with others and respond in an empathetic manner. Interestingly, while participants mentioned the development of some empathetic skills in their students, they did not specifically mention trust as an important component of a successful SDME experience.

Secondary Research Question 2

What strategies do orchestra teachers use in an attempt to facilitate, support, and implement the development of interpersonal communication skills?

Resources and Support. The first thing the participants needed to implement SDMEs into their curriculum were the proper resources and support. Most of these resources and supports were directly related to materials (such as music and instruments) and spaces to rehearse. Some of the participants did, however, speak to the necessity of supportive administration and a supportive

community (especially parents) when implementing SDMEs over the course of an entire concert cycle. Mrs. Bassoon works in a district that is known to support the arts, especially music, and feels like she has this support. Although participants discussed the need for external resources, they did not mention resources such as training in the implementation of curricular units involving SDMEs, or legitimate assessments that target the measurement of specific skills.

“Deliberate guidance”. According to participant interviews, teachers guided their students in multiple ways including the formation of ensembles, selecting literature, facilitating rehearsals, and navigating interpersonal interactions. By guiding students through this process, teachers are in line with Frey (1999) as he suggests that teachers place some specific parameters around a course that teaches communication.

The first guidance strategy the participants used centered around the selection of students in particular ensembles. All participants spoke to balancing personalities and ability levels of members in each group to create “cohesive ensembles”. By intentionally placing certain students together, the participants attempted to create an environment conducive to balanced personalities and shared responsibility. This guidance assists in creating a more supportive environment, and research suggests that supportive environments encourage greater interaction, trust, participation, and involvement between peers (Andersen et al., 1999). By intentionally placing certain students together, participants were also able to ensure that students were with peers of similar ability level, which allowed for more individualized instruction for students.

All participants displayed many of the teaching skills outlined by research that supports creating an environment of mutual respect and trust (Nicholson & Duck, 1999; Andersen et al., 1999; Frey, 1999)—skills that are essential for students in a setting where dialogue is the standard. Research also suggests that teachers are the leading factor in creating this type of

environment by facilitating healthy classroom discussions (Andersen et al., 1999). The participants acted as facilitators during rehearsals in the SDMEs by leading students to their own conclusions, encouraging students to either listen more or join in the conversation being had, and guiding difficult conversations. By leading students to their own conclusions through the process of directed questioning, Mr. Cameron found that his students gained deeper understandings of the problem at hand. This process allowed students to engage in dialogue with each other and learn how to vocalize an idea in a way that is understood by others.

When encouraging students to either listen or join in a conversation, teachers are showing the expectations of healthy dialogue by having students use listening skills and become aware of the importance of turn-taking. Mrs. Bassoon guided her students through the process of creating and amending ensemble contracts where all students agreed on the group expectations.

According to Branker (2010) these expectations have a great effect on a group's cohesion and the effectiveness of their communication. Frey (1999) further suggests that the teacher should model the communication skills they want to see their students displaying, a strategy Mrs. Bassoon utilized in her teaching.

Balancing Teacher Involvement. The participants in this study were very aware of how involved they needed to be while implementing SDMEs into their curriculum. Their level of involvement differed depending on the task and the individual students with whom they were interacting. These behaviors showed the participants' in depth understanding of their individual students *and* how they were likely to interact with each other. Mrs. Bassoon seemed to be the most hands-off when it came to her involvement throughout this process. She allowed students to form their own groups (unless they asked for help), select their own literature with some guidance, and mostly self-rehearse (depending on the group). Mr. Cameron and Mrs. Armstrong

struck a balance of slightly more involvement, but in different ways. Mr. Cameron formed student groups and let them self-rehearse with select guidance. Mrs. Armstrong formed student groups but allowed student input on group formation through a survey, picked appropriate skill level music selection for groups, and allowed students to mostly self-rehearse unless they came to her for assistance.

These findings align with research regarding teaching communication skills in a few ways. Research has shown that students learn communication best when they are able to actively apply the skills being developed (Nicholson & Duck, 1999). By having students engage in SDMEs teachers are exposing students to an environment where communication is essential for success, thus allowing for application-based instruction and experiential learning. SDMEs also seem to be a great way to individualize instruction for students, which research agrees is beneficial to student learning. Teachers are following what is seen as best practice when developing communication skills in an application-based setting by: 1) intentionally placing students in groups to balance their communication tendencies and 2) individualizing parameters for different students and different groups. Finally, when teachers balance their involvement in every step of the process, they have the opportunity to model the three perspectives of group communication outlined by Frey (1999); participant, observer, and consultant. The teacher can model how to appropriately participate in dialogue, observe a conversation, and then combine these skills to successfully lead the group as a consultant.

Unique Setting/ Unique Opportunities. By deliberately guiding students and balancing personal involvement throughout the implementation of SDMEs, participants created a setting that was distinctly different from what students experienced in the general orchestra classroom setting. The participant interview data suggests that students liked the change in pace SDME

activities provided, and the participants seemed to appreciate the opportunities for student growth in this setting by stepping out of their comfort zones and connecting with each other. Research has shown that the most beneficial setting, when teaching communication skills, is one where students can practice using these skills firsthand through dialogue with peers. These types of interactions have the potential to create greater cohesion between peers and increase student motivation (Nicholson & Duck, 1999; Andersen et al., 1999). This is exactly what the SDME provides. To be successful in this setting, students need to use verbal and nonverbal communication to interact with each other on a more frequent basis than in the director-led rehearsal.

The SDME setting seemed to allow more opportunities for students to develop their own personal voice through direct discussion with peers, to engage as leaders without the teacher in the room, and to interact with peers on a level that is more personal than the typical large, director-led ensemble. Participants agreed these smaller social interactions were something that makes SDMEs unique and helpful when it came to forging connection between peers. Additionally, within the SDME students had the opportunity to develop friendships. Hinde (1972) discusses that in friend groups there is often more self-expression and more effort to work in collaboration, and Frey (1999) suggests that the *small group* is one of the most important social formations since this seems to be where individuals can develop their individual identities.

The SDME setting provides students with the opportunity to engage in unique performances. Participants spoke of students performing around their schools, around their communities, at contests, and in concerts specifically geared towards small ensembles. Could these performance opportunities lead towards students engaging in music outside the formal classroom setting and continuing to perform after their years of formal training?

Secondary Research Question 3

According to teacher perceptions, how does the implementation of SDMEs impact the general orchestra classroom setting?

Develops Independence. The student autonomy cultivated in the SDME developed independence within students that carried into the general classroom. In the SDMEs, students were generally the only individuals playing their part and couldn't rely on anyone else to play it for them. This led to students growing in their musical abilities, and ultimately performing better on their instruments when they rejoined the general orchestra setting.

The communication skills developed in SDMEs also seemed to have a positive effect on student interaction in a large group. Participants noted that after the implementation of SDMEs, students engaged in appropriate verbal communication during group discussion in the general orchestra setting more often. Perhaps finding their voice within a small group of peers that they trusted led to enhanced engagement in large group conversation.

Develops Leaders. The development of musical skills and communication skills can lead towards student independence, which may encourage students to feel better equipped to serve in leadership roles. Participants strategically grouped students to help balance the leadership dynamics within each group. By placing students accordingly, facilitating rehearsals and conversations, and allowing students their own opportunities to lead, teachers were attempting to develop leadership skills within their students. These skills impacted the general orchestra in two different ways: first, students took an active leadership role when no obvious leader was present; and second, students led peers nonverbally through their use of body language and newly gained musical skills by being effective musical models. This data suggests SDME experiences help develop student leaders to the point where they can lead sectionals, run small portions of a

rehearsal, and even provide mentorship to younger students within their ensemble as well as throughout their communities.

Develops Community and Connection. By developing SDMEs teachers created microcosms of their larger orchestra communities. Within these smaller, more personal settings, connection between peers more readily occurred due to increased interaction. The connection built in this setting seemed to develop a more supportive and collaborative environment amongst peers when they interacted in the general orchestra setting. Mrs. Armstrong spoke about how her students “rooted each other on” when performing for each other in class. Mr. Cameron believed the SDME gave his students more people to connect with: “I think those small groups give them like, ‘Oh these are these are my people’”. Mrs. Bassoon spoke about how these connections between students helped to create a “tiny community within our bigger orchestra”. This data suggests that when students are allowed guided opportunities to connect with peers in a more personal setting, such as the SDME, there is potential for a positive impact on their larger orchestra “communities”.

Implications

The findings from this study suggest that communication skills in the following areas assist in creating a positive dialogue within a SDME: recognizing and reacting to nonverbal cues, managing delivery and reception of verbal communication, and skills that lead towards empathetic interactions. Nonverbal communication was used extensively in this setting. Body gestures were used to communicate aspects of group coordination like turn-taking, and facial expressions assist in the performers’ ability to elicit emotional responses. Even though nonverbal communication was used mainly as a music-making tool in SDMEs, these skills can be readily applied to interpersonal interactions outside of this setting.

The findings of this study suggest that participants attempted to utilize SDMEs to cultivate certain musical and communication skills in their students through a variety of ways. First, teachers need certain resources and support to implement small ensembles into their curriculum, such as access to a well-rounded music library, and support from administration and the community. Next, when implementing SDMEs, teachers should deliberately guide students through a process that intentionally focuses on developing the specific skills they want their students to have. Last, in order to allow students the opportunity to develop personal voice and independence, teachers must balance their personal involvement with allowing student choice throughout the entire process, from group formation and music selection, to rehearsals and interpersonal student interactions.

The findings from this study also suggest that the SDME is a beneficial setting to develop specific communication skills for a few key reasons. In a small group such as the SDME, teamwork and collaboration are essential for success. The autonomy of the SDME setting provides many opportunities for musicians to engage in relevant dialogue and collaborative processes. This increased collaboration creates opportunities for interpersonal interactions and connections between peers.

When implementing SDMEs, participants attempted to create opportunities for students to develop personal voice through (a) choice; (b) independent thought; and (c) dialogue in an autonomous setting. Participants in this study wanted their students to have a voice in the learning process, which gave students voice through choice. When students had a say in who they participated with and what music they played, their investment seemed to be much stronger and the process more enjoyable.

The findings of this study also suggest that student behaviors within the general orchestra classroom setting are impacted by their experiences in SDMEs. First, when students have opportunities to solve problems or come to conclusions on their own in an autonomous setting, they are developing skills that lead towards musical and communicative independence, and this independence has the potential to manifest through displays of leadership. The findings also indicate that when students engage in SDMEs they develop deeper connections with their peers, and a stronger sense of community arises within the larger orchestra setting. It is possible that developing communication skills through dialogue gives students the tools necessary to engage in empathetic interactions. These interactions can lead to a stronger sense of belonging, and in turn build connection and community.

When students achieve musical and communicative independence and are connected with their larger musical community, they may be more likely to pursue music-making beyond the classroom and possibly throughout their lives. For example, one of Mrs. Armstrong's biggest goals for implementing SDMEs was to prepare students to make music for life. By exposing students to the opportunities this setting provides and helping them develop the skills necessary to be successful, teachers can contribute to life-long music-making for their students.

Recommendations for Future Research

The researcher recommends a broader sample for future studies in this area. This sample should cover a wider range of demographics and student ages, and if possible, participants from different states. Future research should also expand into other musical domains such as band, choir, jazz, as well as modern and non-traditional ensembles. Student interviews would be a valuable primary source of data, and should be highly considered in future studies. Further

explorations of this study could include research into life-long musicianship and the effects of implementing SDMEs that include communication focused instructional units.

Bibliography

- Andersen, J., Nussbaum, J., Pecchioni, L., Grant, J. A. (1999). Interaction skills in instructional settings. In J. A. Daly, G. W. Friedrich, & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods* (2nd ed., pp. 359–373). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Biasutti, M., Concina, E., Wasley, D., Williamon, A. (2016). Music regulators in two string quartets: A comparison of communicative behaviors between low- and high-stress performance conditions. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7(1299), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01229>
- Boyd, B. A., Jones, D. M. (1977). *Teaching communication skills in elementary schools*. Litton Educational Publishing, Inc.
- Branker, A. D. J. (2010). *Creating in the collective: Dialogue, collaboration, and the search for understanding in the jazz small group* (Publication No. 3425024) [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College]. ProQuest One Academic.
- Chandrasekaran, B., Kraus, N. (2010). Music training for the development of auditory skills. *Nat Rev Neurosci*. 11, 599–605. <https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn2882>
- Cook, M. (1979). *Perceiving others: The psychology of interpersonal perception*. Methuen Publishing Ltd.
- Duck, S., Nicholson, J. (1999). Teaching interpersonal communication. In J. A. Daly, G. W. Friedrich, & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods* (2nd ed., pp. 85–98). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Frey, L. R. (1999). Teaching small group communication. In J. A. Daly, G. W. Friedrich, & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods* (2nd ed., pp. 99–113). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

- Fussell, S., Kreuz, R. (1998). *Social and cognitive approaches to interpersonal communication*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Grover, S. M. (2005). Shaping effective communication skills and therapeutic relationships at work: The foundation of collaboration. *Continuing Education*, 53(4), 177– 182 .
- Hinde, R. A. (1972). *Non-verbal communication*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hopkins, M. T. (2015). Collaborative Composing in High School String Chamber Music Ensembles. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 62(4), 405–424.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/43900267>
- Johnson, R. B., Christensen, L. B. (2020). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches* (7th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Mcleod, S. (2024). Vygotsky’s theory of cognitive development. *SimplyPsychology*. Retrieved April 8, 2024, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html#Critical-Evaluation>
- Mcleod, S. (2024). Albert bandura’s social learning theory. *SimplyPsychology*. Retrieved April 8, 2024, from <https://www.simplypsychology.org/bandura.html#:~:text=Social%20learning%20theory%2C%20proposed%20by,influence%20human%20learning%20and%20behavior>
- Moore, N. (2021). *Nonverbal communication: Studies and applications*. Cognella, Inc.
- Penman, R. (1980). *Communication processes and relationships*. Academic Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage Publications Inc.
- Sato, E. R. (2020). *Student-coached chamber ensemble experiences in a high school music classroom: An exploratory study* (Publication No. 27738507) [Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College]. ProQuest One Academic.

- Sprague, J. (1999). The goals of communication education. In J. A. Daly, G. W. Friedrich, & A. L. Vangelisti (Eds.), *Teaching communication: Theory, research, and methods* (2nd ed., pp. 15–30). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Stech, E. L. (1983). *Leadership communication*. Nelson-Hall Inc.
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (n.d.). *Fundamentals of sel*. Retrieved March 18, 2024, from <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>
- Thomlison, T. D. (1982). *Toward interpersonal dialogue*. Longman Inc.
- Trapkus, P. (2018). Structuring an effective chamber music class. *American String Teacher*, 68(3), 26–30.
- Vries, R. E., Bakker-Pieper, A., Oostenveld, W. (2009). Leadership = communication? The relations of leaders' communication styles with leadership styles, knowledge sharing and leadership outcomes. *Journal of Business Psychology*, 25, 367–380. DOI 10.1007/s10869-009-9140-2

Appendix A - IRB Approval



TO: Rachel Dirks
Music, Theatre, & Dance

Proposal Number: IRB-11631

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 03/31/2023

RE: Proposal Entitled, "Developing & Nurturing Interpersonal Communication Skills through the Self-Directed Music Ensemble."

The Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects / Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Kansas State University has reviewed the proposal identified above and has determined that it is EXEMPT from further IRB review. This exemption applies only to the proposal - as written – and currently on file with the IRB. Any change potentially affecting human subjects must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation and may disqualify the proposal from exemption.

Based upon information provided to the IRB, this activity is exempt under the criteria set forth in the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, **45 CFR §104(d), category:Exempt Category 2 Subsection ii.**

Certain research is exempt from the requirements of HHS/OHRP regulations. A determination that research is exempt does not imply that investigators have no ethical responsibilities to subjects in such research; it means only that the regulatory requirements related to IRB review, informed consent, and assurance of compliance do not apply to the research.

Any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or to others must be reported immediately to the Chair of the Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, the University Research Compliance Office, and if the subjects are KSU students, to the Director of the Student Health Center.

Electronically signed by Lisa Rubin on 03/31/2023 3:25 PM ET

Appendix B - Interview Questions

1. Demographic information about the teacher and program
 - a. How long have you been teaching?
 - b. How long have you been in your current position?
 - c. How many students are currently in your program?
 - d. To what extent do your students engage in private instruction outside of your classroom?
 - e. To what extent do your students engage in chamber music outside of your classroom?
 - f. How do your current students differ from your students at your previous program?
 - g. What resources do you have that makes chamber music possible for your program?
 - h. What resources do you wish you had in order to enhance this experience?
2. Ask interviewee about their personal previous chamber music experiences.
 - a. What experiences have you had making chamber music in a self-directed ensemble?
 - b. What skills, musical and non-musical, do you see as necessary to create an optimal musical product in this setting?
 - c. Are you currently playing in any chamber ensembles?
 - i. What has kept you interested in participating in this setting?
3. To what extent do your students engage in chamber music ensembles in your classroom?
 - a. What does your process look like?
 - i. How do you integrate chamber ensembles into your curriculum?
 - b. How many ensembles do you currently have in your program?
 - c. How many of these ensembles are participating in solo and small ensemble contest this year?
 - d. What are your goals when implementing small ensembles?
 - e. Do you encourage your students to go beyond the minimum requirement of performing a piece at contest or for a concert?
 - i. If yes, what does this look like?
 - f. What other opportunities do students have to perform in this setting?
4. What does the “leadership dynamic” look like in your students’ chamber setting?
 - a. Single leader, shared responsibility/equal leadership, or a combination of both.
 - b. Do you prefer a certain “leadership dynamic”?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - c. How do you facilitate the development of this dynamic?
 - d. How involved are you as the teacher when it comes to...
 - i. Selection of repertoire
 - ii. Disagreements among students, musical and non-musical
 - iii. Rehearsal direction and instruction
 - iv. Development and manipulation of the ensemble (i.e. picking ensemble members)
5. What pros and cons do you see in engaging in self-directed ensembles?

6. Do you see any changes to the large ensemble in either performance ability or social dynamic after implementing a self-directed ensemble cycle?
7. What skills can you identify that make your students successful/unsuccessful in this self-directed setting?
8. What other skills do you believe could reasonably be developed in this setting?
9. To what extent do you utilize the chamber setting to facilitate the development of students' communication skills?
10. If there were reputable resources available on facilitating the development of communication skills in a chamber music setting, would you utilize them?

Appendix C - Revised Interview Questions

1. Demographic information about the teacher and program
 - a. How long have you been teaching?
 - b. How long have you been in your current position?
 - c. How many students are currently in your program?
 - d. To what extent do your students engage in private instruction outside of your classroom?
 - e. To what extent do your students engage in chamber music outside of your classroom?
 - f. How do your current students differ from your students at your previous program?
 - g. What resources do you have that makes chamber music possible for your program?
 - h. What resources do you wish you had in order to enhance this experience?
2. To what extent do your students engage in chamber music ensembles in your classroom?
 - a. What does your process look like?
 - i. How do you integrate chamber ensembles into your curriculum?
 - b. How many ensembles do you currently have in your program?
 - c. How many of these ensembles are participating in solo and small ensemble contest this year?
 - d. What are your goals when implementing small ensembles?
 - i. To go to contest?
 - ii. To provide a small ensemble experience?
 - iii. To provide a long term ensemble opportunity?
 - e. Do you encourage your students to go beyond the minimum requirement of performing a piece at contest or for a concert?
 - i. If yes, what does this look like?
 - f. What other opportunities do students have to perform in this setting?
3. What does the “leadership dynamic” look like in your students’ chamber setting?
 - a. Single leader, shared responsibility/equal leadership, or a combination of both.
 - b. Do you prefer a certain “leadership dynamic”?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - c. How do you facilitate the development of this dynamic?
 - d. How involved are you as the teacher when it comes to...
 - i. Selection of repertoire
 - ii. Disagreements among students, musical and non-musical
 - iii. Rehearsal direction and instruction
 - iv. Development and manipulation of the ensemble (i.e. picking ensemble members)
 - v. Scheduling conflicts in regards to rehearsal times
 - vi. Conflicting levels of interest
4. Ask interviewee about their personal previous chamber music experiences.
 - a. What experiences have you had making chamber music in a self-directed ensemble?
 - b. What skills, musical and non-musical, do you see as necessary to create an optimal musical product in this setting?

- c. Are you currently playing in any chamber ensembles?
 - i. What has kept you interested in participating in this setting?
- 5. What pros and cons do you see in engaging in self-directed ensembles?
- 6. Do you see any changes to the large ensemble in either performance ability or social dynamic after implementing a self-directed ensemble cycle?
- 7. What skills can you identify that make your students successful/unsuccessful in this self-directed setting?
 - a. Verbal and non-verbal.
 - b. Musical and non-musical
- 8. What other skills do you believe could reasonably be developed in this setting?
- 9. To what extent do you utilize the chamber setting to facilitate the development of students' communication skills?
- 10. If there were reputable resources available on facilitating the development of communication skills in a chamber music setting, would you utilize them?