**The Creativity Conversation:**

**A Content Analysis of Music Educators’ Journal from 1955-2014**

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The National Association for Music Education (NAfME, formerly MENC) has encouraged teachers to infuse creativity into music education curricula in many ways. Published documents suggesting goals (e.g., Tanglewood Symposium, Project GO), policy (e.g., 1994 National Standards for Music Education) and projects (e.g., Contemporary Music Project) supported by NAfME illustrate a priority for creative development through music. As NAfME unveils the 2014 National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, the organization is again demonstrating value for creativity in music through the content of the Standards.

The purpose of this investigation is to examine how creativity is represented by authors in the NAfME-published *Music Educators Journal*. While the journal’s impact on music teachers’ lessons and curriculum is not known, the *Music Educators Journal* can be seen as a reflection of music educators’ concerns, as well as a resource for professional development. Creative musicianship is often discussed in the context of improvisation and composition skills, but creativity can also be present while performing from notation (e.g., Norgaard, 2014). Further, there seems to be some confusion as to how creativity itself is defined (e.g., Batey, 2012).

This analysis began with journals prior to the 1960s in an attempt to account for possible effects initiatives such as the Tanglewood Symposium and the Yale Seminar may have incurred on the creativity conversation. Each issue was examined for references to creativity, improvisation, composition and other possible terms/ideas that could be associated with creativity. Identified articles were then sorted by article’s purpose; whether that was pedagogical, theoretical/position, or other. The content of each article was inductively analyzed for themes.

We noticed an increase in the proportion of articles regarding creativity in the journal beginning in the 1980s. In addition, there was a gradual shift in the nature of the articles from being more theoretical in the earlier decades, to becoming more pedagogically-focused over time (although more recently the prominence of theoretical articles seems to have returned in this decade). Throughout the decades, the articles reflected struggles regarding defining creativity, the place of “new” music in classrooms and ensembles (such as jazz, popular music, and electronic music) and the role of improvisation and composition. Many articles addressed the benefits of, and pedagogy for, improvisation or composition; aspects of creativity such as technology and brain research were also found.

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**Applications**

* Creativity has had a noticeable presence in the *Music Educators’ Journal* since the 1980s.
* We found many cyclical issues addressed in *MEJ* regarding creativity over the decades; for example, articles in the 1960s reflected issues of the role of popular music (“rock music”) in the classroom, promoting sensitivity to other cultures in repertoire choices and available musical experiences, and encouraging teachers to serve as facilitators for learning in the classroom.
* *MEJ* used to be more of an umbrella journal, publishing articles written by many types of people with an interest in reaching music teachers (composers, performers, administrators, and politicians).
* Many articles focused on the importance of teaching expression in music, and often creativity was seen as tied to expression, or a way to help students express themselves.
* There are a vast number of suggestions for how to approach teaching composition and improvisation for every age and music setting!