

Band Director Perceptions of Tradition and Change

Many music educators strive to support and encourage changes in music teaching, but some reject ideas of change to their practice. Within band education in particular, discussions of change have advocates and opponents (e.g., Mantie, 2012; Fonder, 2014). While change can be *toward* either more or less traditional practice, progressive scholars often couch their arguments in a rhetoric of change and traditional scholars, by and large, do not. For instance, Jorgensen (2003) talked about change as natural, dynamic, and ongoing; and toward “ennobling agency” (xiv), while Fonder (2014) discussed “artistic standards” and, quoting Socrates, warned against change agents “fighting the old” (89). While discussion of change among like-minded scholars is documented, what remains unknown is the extent to which public school band directors consider particular practices traditional or less-traditional.

The purpose of this research was to explore band directors’ perceptions regarding change from and/or toward their notions of tradition, as well as their receptiveness to change. Our data reflected a national survey of band directors ($N = 1,833$) who identified given practices as more or less traditional and indicated their interest, and perception of the profession’s interest, in maintaining or changing tradition. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first part asked participants to categorize a particular practice as more, somewhat, or less traditional. The second part asked participants the amount of time they currently spend on each practice. Additionally, participants were asked if they would like to adjust the amount of time they spend on the practice and were given choices from “not at all”, “more/less time” and “I’m satisfied with the amount of time I devote to this practice”. The final section of the questionnaire asked questions about change in the tradition of band and was drawn from organization change literature (Drzensky, Egold, & Van Dick, 2012).

In general participants rated practices that did not directly emphasize formal performance as either *Somewhat* or *Less Traditional*. Items were placed in categories based on where the majority of respondents placed it. Respondents reported being satisfied with how much time they spend on 12 of 20 practices listed. Eight of the 12 were categorized as “More Traditional”. The only “Less Traditional” practices were *Playing by Ear* and *Composing with Technology* while *Using Peer Mentoring* and *Having a Chamber Music Program* were the only “Somewhat Traditional” practices on which participants would spend more time. In general, participants felt positive about change as well as the necessity of change for the survival and development of band. Participants disagreed that tradition is more important than change, and that change means more risk than rewards. There was general agreement that *things, which have always worked, do not need to be changed*.

(Jason Gossett, Oregon State University, Jason.Gossett@oregonstate.edu)

Dan Shevock, Penn State Altoona, djs541@psu.edu

Linda Thornton, Penn State Ict12@psu.edu

*Presented at the annual conference of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association
Hershey, PA April 19 - April 20, 2017*

Band Director Perceptions of Tradition and Change

Application to Practice

- Due to the generally positive responses regarding change, band directors may wish to have conversations about what kind of changes they would like to see in their schools, districts and regions without feeling they are the only ones interested in change.
- There seems to be interest in increasing time spent on playing by ear, composing with technology, peer mentoring and chamber music; professional development or peer interactions about how these could be increased in the band classroom could be of value to band directors.
- The majority of participants believed that change is necessary for the survival of band; therefore music education leaders and school administrators could consider ways to support areas of change that will help band survive, and hopefully thrive.

References

- Drzensky, F., Egold, N., & van Dick, R. (2012). Ready for a change? A longitudinal study of antecedents, consequences and contingencies of readiness for change. *Journal of Change Management, 12*(1), 95-111.
- Fonder, M (2014). No default or reset necessary - large ensembles enrich many. *Music Educators Journal, 101*(2) 89.
- Jorgensen, E. (2003). *Transforming music education*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Mantie, R. (2012). Bands and/as music education: Antinomies and the struggle for legitimacy. *Philosophy of Music Education Review, 20*(1), 63-81.

(Jason Gossett, Oregon State University, Jason.Gossett@oregonstate.edu)

Dan Shevock, Penn State Altoona, djs541@psu.edu

Linda Thornton, Penn State Ict12@psu.edu

*Presented at the annual conference of the Pennsylvania Music Educators Association
Hershey, PA April 19 - April 20, 2017*