

RESEARCH PROJECT PRESENTATIONS – SYNERGY 2023

Participants, Projects, and Abstracts

Sara Joy (University of Toronto)

How Can I Keep From Singing: A Phenomenological Study of the Experiences of Ontarian Choral Music Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This phenomenological study examines the experiences of choral music educators in Ontario during the COVID-19 pandemic. From a social constructivist perspective, this study conceptualizes the ways in which choral music educators were affected by the changes forced upon them by the pandemic because of how their understandings and enactments of music education and musicking are shaped by the institutions, traditions, and practices that formed their own education. Choral educators who were practicing during the pandemic were recruited by snowball sampling and data was collected through two rounds of semi-structured interviews during the 2022-23 school year. At the time of this research proposal, the data collection is ongoing, and the intention is to share the findings of this study in November. My study offers an opportunity for choral music educators to reflect on their experience through the three school years most heavily impacted by health and safety restrictions so that the wider music education community may also reflect and discover future directions in the music education profession.

Kendra Klages (Queen's University)

Let's Decolonize the Music Classroom

Music teachers go through extensive musical training often beginning at a young age. However, in Canada, this training is often based in the Western Art Music system (Bowman, 2007). This can be problematic because it limits teachers' knowledge of music that lays beyond Eurocentric tradition. One of the big problems that music educators are facing is how to teach music from diverse cultures without tokenism or cultural appropriation (Hess, 2019). I am specifically interested in how to incorporate Indigenous teachings and music into the elementary and high school curricula. Accordingly, I carried out an environmental scan of teaching resources that focus on Indigenous music across Turtle Island. My poster will provide an overview of a collection of available resources that I have curated for teachers. The resources include lessons that can be used in the classroom, relevant websites, and articles and books that

discuss Indigenization and Decolonization of music education and education in general. The resources can support teachers in understanding Indigenous cultures, music, and teachings, and guide them to meaningful engagement with Indigenous music in classroom contexts that celebrates Indigeneity while avoiding tokenism and cultural appropriation.

Sherryl Sewepagaham (University of British Columbia)

Dr. Danielle Sirek (Western University)

Nipîy (water song): Indigenous/settler artistic relationships, creative collaboration, and pedagogical reframing

Writing over 20 years ago, Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste (2000) asked, "How should schools be structured and content developed and delivered to offer equitable outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in Canada?" (p. 192) arguing that Indigenous persons "continue to be invisible" in Canadian education—while there may be increasing Indigenous presence in curricular materials, Indigenous knowledge systems and worldviews are still largely absent. Many scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have called for educators to decolonize their work. However, as Prest and Goble (2018) have pointed out, there are significant challenges to integrating Indigenous ways of knowing into music classes. Ministries of Education "ha[ve] not provided the means and support necessary for their successful implementation" (p. 192). This opens significant and serious opportunity for damaging educational experiences that can be traumatic for Indigenous students, teachers, and community members (Elder Theresa Sims, presentation/personal communication, 2019).

This project is a longitudinal project with the Canadian Chamber Choir (CCC) and Sherryl Sewepagaham (Cree/Dene). In Phase 1 (Where Waters Meet), the CCC and Sherryl explored Indigenization of music education and decolonization of choral practice in workshops and concerts in university and community settings. In Phase 2, they engaged in creative collaboration. Drawing from Indigenous methodologies, this research explores Indigenous/settler artistic relationships; and pedagogical reframing of artistic collaboration in relationship, to inform the development of curricular resources for use in university and school contexts. It has significance for teacher education; school music education; vocal/choral practice at professional and community levels; and future Indigenous/settler collaborative artistic work.

Dr. Juliet Hess (University of Michigan)

The Dangers of Predictable Learning Variability: Challenging the Imagining of Disability in the Universal Design for Learning in Music Education

In this research presentation, I offer a loving critique (Paris & Alim, 2014) of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) that focuses explicitly on its call to employ *predictable learning variability* in pedagogical preparation (Glass et al., 2013). I argue that predictable learning variability calls upon teachers to imagine disability and point to specific phenomena that may well occupy educators' imaginations in relation to disability. I first offer an introduction to UDL, including how UDL could function in music classes. Then I explicate the concept of predictable learning variability and problematize how this facet of UDL calls on educators to imagine disability. Drawing upon Toni Morrison (1990), Deborah Bradley (2003), and Erica Meiners (2001), I explore what imagination might do. Subsequently I examine how disability is represented in the public sphere and argue that phenomena such as *inspiration porn*, the narrative of the *supercrip*, *overdisclosure*, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) occupy the public imagination of disability. I suggest instead that educators direct their imaginations toward their pedagogy and hold high expectations in the classroom.

Dr. Vanessa Mio-Quiring (University of Windsor)

The String Academy model: An investigation of string students' well-being and self-efficacy

Sport participation includes experiential aspects related to inclusion and community integration including mastery, challenge, autonomy (choice), encouragement, meaning and belongingness. (Cragg, 2019, p. 1)

Unlike music, sport has been recognized as vital to our country and communities (Cragg, 2019). In 2002, the Government of Canada advanced these ideals to become the country's "single largest investor in its amateur sports system." I argue here that music could fulfill similar goals and objectives while targeting young and diverse constituencies within Canadian communities (Cogdill, 2015; Evans, 2016; Lee & Leung, 2020; Prichard, 2017). To be specific, the goal of this mixed method study was to examine a small, targeted group of young string students (ranging in age from 4—17) in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, who engaged in a specialized curriculum to determine cognitive and physiological reactions, and various social and emotional developments within a group context. Our research objectives were to (1) consider and assess how string education may fulfill social benefits, well-being, cultural identification, integration, and belonging. Additionally, the study hopes to (2) establish parameters to determine levels of musical awareness and engagement, introduce innovative pedagogies and skills in string performance, and establish a laboratory and model for continued research and training in the string arts in a Canadian context. Research questions for this study were: 1) How does the implementation of high-quality string instruction impact the cognitive and physiological reactions of children involved? 2) How does the String Academy model create a musical "community of practice" through social and behavioural benefits?

Bandura's (1989) social cognitive theory, and Kenny's (2016) communities of musical practice theory (CoMP) framed this mixed methods study. Preliminary results of the

semi-structured interviews, formal/informal observations, and standardized questionnaires will be shared pertaining to the following topics: perceptions of string education, social interactions, peer relationships, involvement in the arts, self-efficacy, learning challenges, and well-being. Through this mixed method study, the outcomes will determine through its data collection how string pedagogy cultivates and achieves personal and socio-emotional development, belonging, emotional awareness, teamwork, conflict resolution, and decision making among the participants, while strengthening connections between diverse families.

Dr. Gina Ryan (University of Quebec in Montreal)

Dr. Charlene Ryan (Toronto Metropolitan University)

Relationships on the podium: Research to Practice

Context

Positive relationships between teachers and their students have been shown to be beneficial on a variety of fronts, including student vitality, effectiveness of student learning and the ability of developing musical competencies (Blackwell, 2020; Blackwell, et al., 2020). In particular, positive conductor-student relationships appear to support student retention and attitudes (Price, 1983) and teacher self-perception (Dolloff, 1999; McClellan, 2014; Pellegrino, 2009). The body of literature is small, however, and tends to look at relationships somewhat tangentially by examining aspects such as leadership style, group mood (Boerner & von Streit, 2007), rehearsal strategies (Napoles, 2006; Montemayor & Silvey, 2019) and external factors (Hash, 2022).

Presentation

How do conductors and their student musicians build their relationships? Across many different personality types and pedagogical approaches, we see unique relationships form in ensemble settings. In this presentation, we will attempt to unravel and condense much of the research that has been done in this area and relate it directly to the practices of school-level conductors. By distilling the findings from a wide range of studies, we hope to get participants thinking and reflecting upon their own relationship-building practices. As part of a large-scale national study, we welcome feedback, perspectives, and experiences from Ontario educators.

Diane Murray-Charrett (University of Toronto)

Culturally responding in Canadian music education

It has been almost 30 years since Gloria Ladson-Billings brought forward *Culturally Response Teaching*, a pedagogical theory that seeks to consider the background, knowledge, and experience of students to better inform teacher methodology. Originating in the US, much of the literature regarding CRT is discussed through an American lens. Many scholars have been inspired by the work of Ladson-Billings and have developed similar terminologies to engage in the discussion of inclusivity in

education. These include culturally appropriate, culturally compatible, and culturally congruent teaching, curriculum, or education.

This literature review seeks to exam how the discussion of culturally responsive teaching manifests itself in the Canadian context. Themes in the literature will be examined to consider the significance of acknowledging and valuing diverse musical cultures, fostering student agency and empowerment, and promoting equity. The historical development, theoretical framework, and pedagogical strategies put forward by scholars will be examined in order to consider what research gaps exist in culturally responsive dialogue in Canada.

Lorenzo Sánchez-Gatt (Michigan State University)

Black joy and possibility in the music classroom

What does it mean to center Black joy and possibility in the music classroom? How can we, as music educators, help our children feel seen, cared for, and valuable? This philosophical research focuses on looking towards the future. This presentation begins with a reflection of music education's history through a Black critical theory (BlackCrit) framework. BlackCrit is an extension of critical race theory proposed by Michael Dumas and kihana ross that allows for a nuanced racial analysis, and invites Black liberatory fantasy. This analysis highlights that our field has functioned as a site of harm for racially minoritized students in the past, and currently. I then explore how music can act as sites of resistance, healing, and joy. I use the work of Janelle Monáe to search for these themes in their Afrofuturist work. I then propose an Afrofuturist praxis that allows for sites of curricular, environmental, and interpersonal affirmation for racially minoritized students. Attendees will then be provided with comprehensive starting points and considerations towards a future where music is relevant and healing for our students. This session is grounded in my Afrofuturist praxis research. The format will allow space for audience questions and participation, where lived experience and budding questions will coexist.