A Survey of Music Teachers' Working Conditions

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Abstract

For this study the researchers examined music teacher responses to survey items pertaining to their working conditions. Participants reported their satisfaction about factors related to music program funding, facilities, workload, professional development, and school culture. Responses were analyzed to detect possible differences in responses due to demographic factors of teachers, schools, and teaching assignments. Initial findings indicated that teachers were generally satisfied with their all aspects of their working conditions with the exception of professional development. A MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were any significant differences in responses based on participant demographics. While our study found no disparities in working conditions due to teacher factors, we did find a statistically significant link between the socioeconomic status of the school community and teacher perceptions of the funding, facilities, and culture within the school. This relationship was found to be moderated by the locale of the school, with greater differences in working conditions between low and high socioeconomically situated music programs in suburban and urban communities compared to their more rural peers. Open-ended responses from participants suggested that while disparities exist between music programs, teachers may judge their working conditions in comparison to their perceptions about other schools rather than the realities.

Background

What is known about the working conditions of music teachers, and why do working conditions matter? Ladd (2007) suggests that working conditions for teachers include "the physical features of the workplace, the organizational structure, and the sociological, political, psychological, and educational features of the work environment" (p. 237). These conditions can directly impact how teachers view their current jobs and abilities to deliver instruction to students (Buckley, Schneider, and Shang, 2005; Johnson et al., 2005; Ladd, 2007). In some cases, teachers decide to leave schools because they feel they lack skills, resources, and/or supports to meet students' needs (Johnson et al., 2005). Additional factors such as quality of facilities, teacher workload, and school community also impact teachers' career decisions (Buckley, Schneider, and Shang, 2005; Ladd, 2007), which in turn matter because teacher attrition presents a significant concern to the profession. Higher teacher turnover rates have been linked to decreases in student academic achievement and additional financial stress on school districts (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). While teachers' working conditions have been profiled in surveys and annual reports from the National Center for Education Statistics (Choy, 1996), these surveys are designed to sample teachers across all disciplines and may not address issues specific to music teachers.

Music educators and scholars may have good reason to be concerned about the current state of K – 12 music teacher working conditions as impacts of recent political and economic factors to music program funding may be placing additional stress on music programs (Burrack et al., 2014; Elpus, 2014; Gerrity, 2009). Due to the decentralized structure of American K – 12 schools, ramifications of these elements may have variable impacts on school music programs. As scholars have noted, not all school music programs enjoy equal means of support (Abril &

Bannerman, 2015; Major, 2013; Miksza, 2013). Though researchers have often commented on empirical and perceived differences between music programs based on locale and socioeconomic status of the surrounding community, the influence of these demographic facets on the music teacher working conditions has been seldom explored. While some scholars argue that rural music teachers have different experiences than urban teachers (Bates, 2011; Isbell, 2005), there appears to be little empirical evidence that any particular K – 12 music teaching situation has generally better or worse working conditions than another. The purpose of this study was to investigate if music teachers' perceptions of working conditions differed based on the demographic characteristics of teachers, their schools, or their teaching assignments.

Review of the Literature

Scholars addressing the working conditions of music teachers suggest that the working lives of music teachers differ from those of teachers of other subjects (Baker, 2007; Conway, 2003; Madsen & Hancock, 2002). For instance, music teachers are more likely to work in multiple buildings and are more likely to be part time (Gardner, 2010). Music teachers are also more likely to be isolated from their peers within a school community (Carter, 2003; Sindberg, 2011; 2013). In addition, duties such as recruiting students, planning concerts and trips, fundraising, and participating in musical competitions may be necessary for music teachers to maintain their programs (Baker, 2007; Conway, 2003). These additional responsibilities may lead music educators to have different priorities for classroom conditions and teacher support than their colleagues in other academic areas.

Music teachers are also often in a precarious position with regard to support from their school administrations. As music is a non-tested subject area, music teachers often find their programs' financial support and instructional time with students reduced to divert resources to

"higher-stakes" subject areas (Abril & Gualt, 2008; Elpus & Abril, 2011; Gerrity, 2009; Robinson, 2016). Support for music programs within schools is far from uniform (Abril & Bannerman, 2015), and according to Fitzpatrick (2011) large funding disparities can exist between school music programs within the same school district.

Abril and Bannerman (2015) examined general music teachers' perceptions of factors that impacted their teaching and found that teachers most frequently identified scheduling, facilities, administration, instructional time, and budget as the factors either positively or negatively impacting their music programs. They also found that a majority of teachers thought factors such as local voters, data-driven assessment, and school boards had no noticeable influence on their music teaching. In their analysis, Abril and Bannerman found that local factors, such as building administration, colleagues, facilities, scheduling, and students were more likely to be cited by music teachers as significant supports and/or detriments to their music programs than more distant factors at the district, state, or national level. They concluded that music teacher efforts to improve their programs would have the most impact by acting at the local level, as the current climate of site-based management means local level decision makers have influence over state and national policy implementation.

Matthews and Koner (2017) surveyed K – 12 music teachers about their professional backgrounds, teaching responsibilities, and job satisfaction. Their study of National Association for Music Education (NAfME) members included 7,463 participants who completed a researcher-developed survey instrument. Most of the survey respondents (89.4%) worked in public schools, while 8.1% worked in private schools, 2.2% worked in charter schools, and .3% worked in more than one type of school. Matthews and Koner found that 61.5% of teachers reported working in a school district that offered tenure, 24.2% reported their district did not

offer tenure, and 14.2% were unsure. A majority of participants stated that working with students was their favorite part of their job, while working with administrators, overall workload and time commitment, teacher evaluation and assessment policy changes, poor student behavior, and lack of financial support were identified as teachers' least favorite part of their jobs. Survey respondents also identified lack of support for music, loss of funding, and an emphasis on science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects as their primary concerns for the profession. Overall, the teachers surveyed by Matthews and Koner reported high levels of job satisfaction, though only 80.8% of teachers indicated they would choose to become music educators again. Of the teachers who said that given the chance they would not have chosen music education as their profession, issues such as educational policy changes, financial considerations, time commitment, and administration issues were commonly identified as detriments by participants. Additionally, teachers reported they were more likely to look for another job in music education job than to leave the profession.

Although there has been little research on the perceived working conditions of music teachers, the impact of working conditions on music educators has drawn more attention. Factors such as employment status, resources, administrative support, collegial relationships, and teacher isolation have been linked to teacher migration, attrition, retention and overall job satisfaction (Baker, 2007; Maltas, 2004; Ponce, 1994; Sindberg, 2011; 2014). Using nationally representative data collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, Gardner (2010) concluded that music teachers were more likely to leave their positions if they held negative perceptions of their working conditions and that younger, less experienced teachers were more likely to leave than their peers. While Hancock (2008) and Killian and Baker (2006) found that a significant number of music teachers had left the profession due to a lack of administrative

support, they also found that music teachers left the field to pursue alternative employment with better salaries and benefits. In a regional investigation, Russell (2010) reported that music teachers who intended to remain at their current school expressed greater satisfaction with their professional environment and students than their peers. Russell also found that a majority of music teachers sampled intended to move to different school within 5 years and a quarter of sampled teachers planned to leave the profession altogether within the same period, which he argued could indicate a future shortage of music teachers. Though music teacher shortages specific to rural and urban schools have been noted by scholars (Bates, 2011; Kalabza, 2007; Kimpton, 2005), there has been little inquiry comparing music teachers' perceptions of working conditions across different school settings and their impacts on job satisfaction and retention.

While previous studies examined single components of working conditions or did not address music teachers specifically, our study examined relationships among and interactions between multiple aspects of the working conditions of music teachers. Having a deeper understanding of these influences may provide the field with data to better address working conditions for music teachers and identify demographic factors which potentially impact music teacher job satisfaction and retention.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine how music teachers rate aspects of their working conditions and examine how teacher and school demographic factors influence teachers' ratings. Our primary research question was: How do K – 12 music teachers rate their working conditions? Four additional sub-questions further defined our work: (1) Are there significant differences in ratings of working conditions based on the teacher demographics such as gender, race, teaching experience, and degrees earned? (2) Are there significant differences in

ratings of working conditions based on school demographic factors such as locale, student population size, and free/reduced lunch program participation rates? (3) Are there significant differences in descriptions of working conditions based on grades taught and teaching area? and (4) Do open-ended responses clarify, qualify or expand on our understanding of teacher ratings of working conditions?

Method

The research team developed a survey designed to address the research questions that was modeled on several surveys related to teacher working conditions (e.g., Abril & Bannerman, 2015; NCES, 1996; Ponce, 1994; Russell, 2012). The first section of the survey inquired about the demographic characteristics of the participants (gender, race, years teaching, and degrees earned), the participants' primary school building (enrollment size, socioeconomic status, locale), and participants' teaching assignment (grade levels, teaching area, full-time status). Survey items about working conditions were presented as statements participants were asked to rate on a six-point Likert-type scale with the terms "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree" denoting the extremes. Survey items pertaining to working conditions were grouped into the following categories: *funding, facilities, workload, professional development,* and *school culture*. Three open-ended questions were developed for the survey instrument to allow for the collection of participant insights that may not have been addressed by closed-response survey items.

Sampling and Procedure

Participants for this study included K – 12 music educators at public and private schools in an upper Midwest state university. Participant contact information was obtained through an electronic mailing list compiled by the state music educators association. An online survey was distributed to the 2,281 individuals listed in the mailing list database. Potential participants were

sent an email cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey as well as potential risks and benefits. Within the email there was a direct link to the online survey. Two weeks after the initial invitation was sent, a reminder email was delivered to all potential participants who had not completed the online survey.

Findings

We received 521 completed surveys; however, three responses were removed after open-response answers revealed those individuals taught only private lessons at community music schools instead of in K – 12 public or private school settings. This brought the final number of respondents in the analysis to $N = 518$. Of these respondents, a majority (66%) were female and nearly all (99%) identified their race as white. All teachers surveyed had earned at least a Bachelor's degree, and a majority had earned a Master's degree (55%). There were some individuals who held additional education specialist certification (4%) or a doctoral degree (2%). Respondents ranged from having 1 to 51 years of teaching experience, and the mean length of teaching career was 18.9 years ($SD = 10.6$). Participants reported student enrollment in their primary school ranging from 33 students to 2,938 students, with a mean school enrollment of 753 students ($SD = 499$). A majority of respondents (73%) taught in only one building. Though participants reported teaching in as many as ten separate schools, on average teachers worked in one building ($M = 1.35$; $SD = 0.76$). Teachers reported their school locations with suburban (34%) and small city/town (34%) being the most frequent answers. Fewer teachers identified as teaching in rural (18%) or urban (14%) settings. A majority (76%) taught in schools with free and reduced-price lunch program enrollment rates of 50% or less.

Most of the participants reported full-time employment status (87%). The largest group of respondents (46%) taught some combination of general, choral, band, orchestra, and other

types of music classes (e.g. guitar, music theory). Of the music teachers who taught within a single area, 25% of respondents identified as band directors. General music teachers were the next largest group (19%), followed by choral (10%) and orchestra (5%). Participants were most likely to teach multiple grade levels; 21% of respondents taught K – 8, 15% taught 5 – 12, and 25% taught K – 12. Only 18% reported an elementary exclusively teaching assignment, while 10% taught middle school only and 11% taught high school only. We also found that 4% of the participants taught at least one non-music class.

Working Condition Survey Responses

Funding. Responses to survey items regarding funding are presented in Table 1. Teachers reported positive perceptions of financial support at their primary building for curricular materials, pianos, and other equipment. However, while participants tended to agree that their school owned a sufficient number of instruments, they did not agree that their administration provided enough support of instrument repair and purchase. In addition, many teachers did not believe that their school had an adequate long-term purchasing plan for major expenses. Respondents tended to agree that fundraising and advocacy were necessary to maintain their music program and that they had enough support to have a successful program.

Table 1

Participant Survey Responses Regarding Funding

	M	*SD*
I have sufficient financial support for…		
the purchase of curricular materials.	3.83	1.60
my program to be successful	3.78	1.48
the maintenance of musical instruments.	3.45	1.63
the purchase of musical instruments.	2.96	1.57
large purchases requiring long-term planning (e.g., piano)	2.75	1.58
The following materials are sufficiently provided by my primary school.		
Piano(s)	4.66	1.45

Music classroom equipment (chairs, stands, risers, folders, etc.)	4.36	1.46
Classroom technology (computer, projector, Smartboard, etc.)	4.30	1.58
Audio Technology (stereo, speakers)	3.98	1.59
School-owned student instruments	3.86	1.49
To meet the needs of my program, I must…		
persistently advocate for sufficient funding.	3.96	1.71
seek additional funding through fundraising.	3.67	1.80
borrow instruments and/or repertoire from other schools.	3.12	1.69

Note. 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 6 = *Strongly Agree*

Facilities. Participants generally agreed that their facilities were adequate for their needs (Table 2). Classroom facilities and storage were generally viewed as sufficient by participants, though climate control, performance facilities, and practice rooms/small ensemble spaces were frequently identified as problematic. Though responses to survey questions related to facilities were mostly positive, responses to an open-ended survey item about school facilities were primarily negative. Commonly cited complaints about facilities included inadequate storage space and classrooms that were too small for effective instruction. Some even felt that their teaching space posed a health risk for themselves and their students. One respondent stated:

> We have had pipes burst three times in the time I have been in this building. As a result, my area has been under water three times. We have no windows, we are below ground and ventilation is poor…we have found black mold beneath our instrument locker room sink.

Other responses related to facilities cited comparisons between rural and urban schools to suburban schools. In the words of one teacher, "I often am jealous of those large suburban high school facilities—something I most likely won't ever have." Within these comparisons, suburban schools were generally viewed as more ideal than rural or urban ones.

Table 2

Participant Survey Responses Regarding Facilities

	M	*SD*
The following characteristics of my school meet my teaching needs:		
Classroom Size	4.17	1.71
Classroom Acoustics	3.68	1.73
Music Library Storage	3.65	1.63
Instrument Storage	3.50	1.68
Climate Control	3.34	1.62
Performance Facilities	3.07	1.80
Practice Room/Small Ensemble Spaces	2.70	1.61
The facilities at my school hinder my music teaching.	3.09	1.52

Note. 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 6 = *Strongly Agree*

Workload. Participants' responses to items pertaining to their workload are presented in Table 3. Teachers on average reported their workload negatively impacted their ability to collaborate with colleagues and prepare for classes. However, most teachers reported that they did not feel pressured to take on additional obligations from administrators, colleagues, parents, students, or the community.

Table 3

Participant Responses Regarding Teaching Workload

	M	*SD*
My teaching workload **negatively** impacts my…		
ability to collaborate with other teachers.	4.09	1.66
class preparation.	3.60	1.69
overall teaching effectiveness.	3.30	1.68
ability to maintain my program.	3.26	1.59
I feel pressured to take on additional obligations requested by…		
my administration.	3.18	1.66
students.	2.72	1.50
the community.	2.58	1.49
parents.	2.57	1.49
my school faculty.	2.47	1.45
my music teaching peers.	2.35	1.41

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree

Professional Development. While participants were about evenly divided over whether required professional development experiences at their primary school were scheduled at convenient times (M = 3.58, SD = 1.50), the consensus regarding most other aspects was generally negative. Respondents typically disagreed that professional development experiences were well received by faculty (M = 3.11, SD = 1.30), were relevant to their teaching (M = 2.36, SD = 1.34), and were immediately applicable in the music classroom (M = 2.07, SD = 1.24). When asked to name music education specific professional development opportunities in which they had participated, respondents listed the following: (a) *state music educator conference* (79%), (b) *college/university workshops* (39%), (c) *regional music education workshops* (38%), (d) *graduate coursework* (38%), (e) *online (*9%), and (f) *other* (15%). Participants who selected *online* or *other* were invited to specify the activity. Examples of *online* responses included online graduate coursework, webinars, and social media. Individuals who indicated *other* reported conducting workshops, community music ensembles, and professional learning communities.

School Culture. Participants were mostly positive in their responses describing their school's culture (Table 4), including relationships with students, colleagues, administrators, parents/guardians, and the outside community. Teachers indicated they had positive working relationships inside and outside their classrooms and felt they could effectively teach in their school environment. Open-ended responses from participants suggested that school administration and leadership style had the largest impact on school culture. One respondent noted, "At my school, I have great creative freedom that I continually use which keeps my classroom teaching fresh, innovative and engaging for the students." Conversely, others perceived administrators as unresponsive to teachers. In the words of one respondent,

"administration doesn't care about the needs of teachers, only how they look to their bosses." Additionally, the number of comments associated with competition between school programs was striking, and a perceived conflict between music programs and athletics was widespread. Other respondents indicated that the competition for students with other subject areas was a limiting factor in the success of music programs. Funding issues were a specific component of this conflict, with one teacher writing, "As money grows tighter, competition for students increases between elective areas." While some teachers' accounts of their school culture indicated significant concerns, these individuals were in the minority.

Table 4

Participant Survey Responses Regarding School Culture

	M	*SD*
At my primary school…		
I have a colleague I can speak to if I am stressed or need ideas.	5.21	1.19
I have colleagues I consider friends.	5.09	1.17
administration supports the decisions I make for my program.	4.74	1.28
I collaborate with music teacher colleagues.	4.71	1.46
there is a culture of shared leadership between faculty & admin.	3.94	1.57
I collaborate with teachers outside of my department.	3.79	1.53
At my primary school, administrators, teachers, and staff agree on…		
embracing diversity.	4.68	1.26
serving the community.	4.62	1.24
student expectations.	4.22	1.44
school policies.	4.09	1.40
I have positive working relationships with…		
students.	5.60	0.62
colleagues.	5.28	0.88
parents/guardians.	5.27	0.81
the community.	5.18	0.89
administration.	4.95	1.17

At my primary school I feel…		
physically safe.	5.47	0.95
emotionally safe.	4.94	1.29
I can effectively teach my students.	5.13	0.93

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree

Validity and Reliability

Content validity was established by piloting the survey with assistance from a convenience sample of ten K – 12 music educators from five states outside the sample population who were former colleagues of the research team. Pilot participants were representative of band, orchestra, chorus, and general music teachers, as well as the demographic categories represented in our survey (e.g., school enrollment size, locale, grade level). Minor revisions to the final survey instrument were made based on results and feedback from the pilot. The Cronbach's alpha values for our 53 Likert-type survey items was .926, indicating high reliability. To organize the design of the survey and our analysis, we grouped the Likert-type survey items into five *a priori* categories of *funding, facilities, workload, professional development,* and *school culture*. Our Cronbach's alpha for each category ranged from .713 to .881.

MANOVA for Differences in Responses Between Demographic Groups

Dependent variables were calculated by taking a mean of survey item means within each working condition category included in the survey. For example, our dependent variable for *funding* ($M = 3.744$, $SD = .752$, $\alpha = .713$) included all 13 Likert-type survey items pertaining to funding. Using a similar process for each section of the survey, dependent variables were calculated for *facilities* ($M = 3.502$, $SD = 1.172$, $\alpha = .854$), *workload* ($M = 3.987$, $SD = 1.074$, α

= .875), *professional development* (M = 2.782, SD = 1.071, α = .804), and *school culture* (M = 4.829, SD = 0.691, α = .881).

Due to the number of participants and unequal distributions of responses, we realized that a single MANOVA of responses across demographic variables would not be possible due to low cell size for some factors. We decided to group our demographic independent variables under broader categories and run three separate MANOVAs using a Bonferroni adjustment. Our original null hypothesis was that there would be no statistically significant differences in responses within these five categories between demographic groups. To account for our separate MANOVA tests, we created three separate null hypotheses. The first null hypothesis we tested was that there would be no significant differences in responses to *funding, facilities, workload, professional development,* and *school culture* of teacher demographic factor groups. The second null hypothesis was that there would be no statistically significant differences between participant responses related to school setting demographic factors. Our final null hypothesis was that there would be no statistically significant differences between responses based on participants' reported teaching assignments.

The first MANOVA examined the independent variables of *gender, years of experience,* and *degrees earned* (teacher factors). While we had initially wanted to include a factor of race in our analysis, there were not enough respondents reporting anything other than *white* as race. This forced us to omit that factor in our analysis. Of the factors we were able to include, participants reported *gender* as either male (n = 177) or female (n = 341). Participants reported their teaching experience as a continuous number. To create the independent variable *years of experience* we binned responses into five-year increments, with all teachers with more than 30 years of experience being placed in a single group. Participants were distributed evenly across

years of experience: one to five years (n = 65); six through ten years (n = 69); eleven through fifteen years (n = 82); sixteen through twenty years (n = 81); twenty-one through twenty-five years (n = 63); twenty-six through thirty years, (n = 73); and thirty years or more (n = 85). Our variable for *degrees earned* was collapsed into two subgroups: those with a bachelor's degree (n = 206) and those with at least one graduate degree (n = 312). The results of a MANOVA examining participant responses to *funding, facilities, professional development, workload,* and *school culture* survey items revealed no statistically significant differences between teacher demographic groups.

The second MANOVA examined the independent variables of *locale*, *student free/reduced lunch rate,* and *student population size* (school factors). Our variable for *locale* included the four categories of *urban, suburban, small city/town,* and *rural,* which we based on the NCES locale classifications. The student free and reduced-price lunch rate was condensed into two groups: a *low* group of free-and-reduced price lunch enrollments below 50% (n = 396) and a *high* group of free-and-reduced price lunch enrollments above 50% (n = 122). In order to achieve comparably sized subgroups, the variable for *school size* was binned into three groups based on student population: 0 – 450 students (n = 155), 451 – 850 students (n = 200), and 850+ students (n = 163). We discovered a statistically significant difference between participant responses based on *free/reduced lunch rate*, $F(5, 490)$, $p = .002$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.962$, partial $\eta^2 = .038$ and an interaction between the main effect for *student free/reduced lunch rate* and *locale,* $F(15, 1353)$, $p < .001$, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.917$, partial $\eta^2 = .028$. Our post hoc analyses identified significant differences between participants' responses to survey questions about *funding, facilities*, and *school culture* based on *school free/reduced lunch rate* in (Table 6). For all three

dependent variables, participants teaching in schools with lower *free/reduced lunch rates* reported higher satisfaction with their music program *funding*, *facilities*, and *school* culture.

Table 5

Table of Means for Statistically Significant Main Effects (School Factors)

Dependent Variable	Group	Subgroup	M	SE
Funding	Free/Red. Lunch Rate	Low	3.826*	0.053
		High	3.519*	0.073
Facilities	Free/Red. Lunch Rate	Low	3.627*	0.083
		High	3.257*	0.114
School Culture	Free/Red. Lunch Rate	Low	4.922*	0.048
		High	4.635*	0.066

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree
* = $p <$. 017

Statistically significant differences between groups of teachers based on an interaction between *free/reduced lunch rate* and *school locale* were present in responses related to *funding* and *school culture* (Figure 1). In order to investigate this further, we isolated locale and free/reduced lunch rate in order to perform a one-way ANOVA. Tukey post-hoc analysis only allowed the investigation of a single dependent variable at a time, so we ran two separate analyses for the dependent variables *funding* and *school culture*. In responses related to *funding*, teachers in urban schools with high free/reduced lunch rate (M = 3.372, SE = .114) responded more negatively than their peers teaching in both urban, low free/reduced lunch rate schools (M = 4.133, SE = .137) and suburban, low free/reduced lunch rate schools (M = 3.847, SE = .059). The second ANOVA examining *school culture* showed significant differences between participants teaching in urban, low free/reduced lunch rate schools (M = 5.144, SE = .125) and both urban, high free/reduced lunch rate (M = 4.529, SE = .104) and suburban, high free/reduced lunch rate schools (M = 4.462, SE = .144). In addition, a significant difference in perceptions of

school culture was revealed between suburban, low free/reduced lunch rate (M = 4.952, SE = .054) and urban, high free/reduced lunch rate schools.

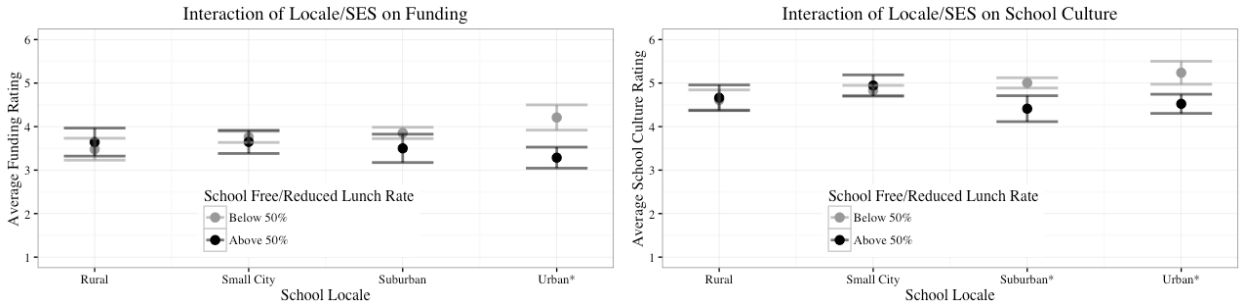

Figure 1. *Interactions between free/reduced lunch rate and school locale on participant responses.*

In a third MANOVA, we investigated the independent variables of *grades taught* and *teaching area* (assignment factors). Grades taught were organized into six categories according to common school building organization: K – 5 (elementary), 6 – 8 (middle school), 9 – 12 (high school), K – 8, 5 – 12, and K – 12 assignments. Teaching area was collapsed into two categories due to limited membership in some subgroups. Individuals with a single assignment in general music, band, choral, and orchestra were grouped together, and all individuals with multiple area assignments were grouped together. FTE status was omitted from analysis due to limited representation of part-time teachers. A statistically significant difference of perceptions of *workload* between groups of teachers depending on the *grade levels taught*, $F(25, 1866)$, p = .012, Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.918$, partial $\eta^2 = .017$ was uncovered. No other statistically significant main effects or two-way interactions were found when examining responses group by teaching assignment factors. Post hoc analysis identified the only statistically significant difference was between high school and middle school teachers, which respectively reported the least positive

and most positive perceptions about their workload compared to peers teaching other grade levels (Table 6).

Table 6

Table of Means for Significant Main Effects (Teaching Assignment Factors)

Dependent Variable	Group	Subgroup	M	SE
Workload	Grade Level Taught	Elementary	3.085	0.124
		Middle School	3.245*	0.166
		High School	2.673*	0.141
		K – 8	2.874	0.102
		5 – 12	3.034	0.132
		K – 12	3.215	0.094

Note. 1 = Strongly Disagree, 6 = Strongly Agree
* = $p < .017$

Discussion

Initial survey results indicated that participants across all demographic groups reported generally positive perceptions about their programs' funding, facilities, their own workload, and the school culture at their primary building. Our findings corroborate Matthews and Koner's (2017) finding that music teachers are generally satisfied with their jobs. One issue our results identified was that respondents often held less positive perceptions towards the professional development opportunities offered by their schools, which was consistent with the literature suggesting that music teachers often find professional development opportunities within their school to be of little relevance and applicability to their teaching (Bauer, 2007; Conway, 2003; Conway & Edgar, 2014). Though we found that music teachers generally believed they had sufficient funding for their program for curricular materials, they also reported inadequate support for long term financial planning to purchase instruments and other expensive items. This suggests that funding may become an increasing area of concern in the future as instruments and equipment age and deteriorate. As many music education researchers have noted a decline in

financial support afforded to school music programs due to recent economic and policy developments (Abril & Gault, 2006, 2008; Burrack et al., 2014), this raises the possibility that financial concerns of music teachers for their school programs may escalate in the future.

Our analysis revealed significant differences in perceptions of support for high quality teaching *funding*, *facilities*, and a positive *school culture* primarily based on the socio-economic status of the student population. Further examination revealed that the impacts of socioeconomic status were influenced by school locale, as a wider disparity in teacher responses was observed by teachers working in urban and suburban schools compared with small city and rural locales. Though Bates (2011) and Isbell (2005) believe that rural schools may not have the financial support of suburban programs, our findings indicate that music programs in rural locales are less impacted by socioeconomic status than urban ones. This may be due to differences in teacher and community expectations for the school music programs.

We also found a statistically significant difference in teachers' perceptions of their *workload* between groups based on the grade levels they taught, though this difference was only significant between teachers working exclusively at high school and middle school levels. While we speculate that high school teachers might have more extra-curricular duties and pressures for performance than their middle school peers, we found it curious that K – 12 and 5 – 12 teachers did not report similar perceptions as the high school group. It could be that commitments and expectations from high school specialist music teachers differ from those who teach split assignments. We found it interesting that the groups that would logically be more likely to teacher more classes and travel between buildings, elementary teachers and K – 12 teachers, reported the highest levels of satisfaction with their workload. These variations may be explained by differences in community expectations, the extracurricular involvement required of

many high school teachers, the difficulties associated with teaching in multiple buildings, or myriad other factors.

In comparing our quantitative survey results with the open-ended responses, we observed a schism between the reported working conditions of music teachers and what teachers believed to be the working conditions in other schools. Our open-ended responses supported Perrine's (2013) argument that suburban music programs are often considered ideal, though our survey results indicated no discernable difference between perceived working conditions of music teachers across locales once the socioeconomic status of the community was considered. While music teachers tended to idolize suburban music programs, we found suburban and urban working conditions to be the most sensitive to socioeconomic factors. By virtue of their locale, schools in urban and suburban areas tend to be in closer proximity to peer schools than their rural counterparts and may invite more frequent comparisons between schools by teachers, administrators, students, and community members. If urban schools within the same community serve students of widely varied socioeconomic backgrounds, they may be unfairly compared without accounting for these differences (Fitzpatrick, 2011). The particular isolation experienced by music teachers may be another factor contributing towards the perception of an idealized suburban music program. Music teachers are typically isolated within their own building(s), and often have little opportunity to meet with music teachers working elsewhere (Sindberg, 2011). With limited opportunities to interact with colleagues and learn about the inner workings of different schools, music teachers may rely more or more superficial means to compare music programs, such as ensemble size and contest ratings, to inform their perception of working conditions in other schools rather than other factors that are less overt.

We found no evidence suggesting that teacher characteristics such as gender, years of teaching experience, or degrees earned had an impact on perceptions of working conditions. Since an overwhelming majority of participants reported their race as white, we were unable to examine if teachers' perceptions of working conditions varied based on the reported race of the music teacher. Choy (1996) noted the significant overrepresentation of white teachers is endemic to the education profession in general, but we found that 99% of our survey participants reporting their race as white compared to only 80.6% of the state population alarming. While Elpus (2015) and Matthews and Koner (2017) also found music teachers in the United States to be disproportionally white compared to the general population, our results suggest that the general lack of diversity in the profession can be even more extreme at the regional level.

Limitations

The sampling of this survey may not be representative of all teachers due to issues of nonresponse and omission of music teachers who are not members of the state music educators association from the sample. Due to limitations in the survey mechanism, not all aspects of working conditions may have been adequately addressed within the survey. Our analysis only examined broad categories of working conditions. Future researchers may also want to examine particular variables of music teacher working conditions more in depth. Our attempt to categorize music teachers by grade level and area taught revealed that the realities of the profession are such that broad categories like K – 5, 6 – 8, and 9 – 12 or band, choir, general music, and orchestra do not accurately characterize the teaching assignments of a considerable number of music teachers. Though many music teachers reported working in multiple buildings, the scope of our survey was delimited to what we termed the working conditions of the

participants' "primary building." It would be worthwhile to examine if there were additional factors influencing itinerate music teachers' perceptions of working conditions.

Implications

Participants in this study held mostly positive perceptions of their working conditions, though our conclusions support the findings from Abril and Bannerman (2015) and Fitzpatrick (2011) that music teachers' working conditions can vary widely from school to school. It should be noted that the general working conditions of the field at large can have little bearing on music teachers' own individual experience. Though our study found music teachers held a generally roseate view of their working conditions, we only examined participants' perceptions of their working conditions rather than concrete empirical metrics. It may be that working conditions seem to be more taxing when the expectations of a music program are misaligned with the resources available. Further inquiry into the more objective measures of music teacher working conditions could help identify the degree to which perceptions of working conditions are influenced by program budgets, facility quality, time commitment, and other relevant empirical metrics. This would help inform comparisons between school music programs and potentially help music teachers in more trying circumstances better advocate for additional program support.

Music education researchers have noted deleterious effects of education policy initiatives and such as the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and the 2009 Race to the Top, and economic factors such as the recession of 2008 (Abril & Gault, 2006; 2008; Burrack et al, 2014; Gerrity, 2009; Robinson, 2016; Spohn, 2008; West, 2012). Despite this scholarship linking increased workloads, lost instructional time, and the diversion of resources to other academic areas on public policy decisions, it is hard to ascertain the effects of these factors on music teachers and their programs without a baseline from which to compare. More research is needed to determine

the effect large-scale policy decisions have on working conditions of individuals and their related effects on teacher retention and student achievement in music. Negative outcomes resulting from policy and administrative decisions can place additional stress on music teachers, which is more likely to encourage teachers to entertain thoughts of leaving the profession (Hancock, 2010; Killian & Baker, 2006). To better inform public policy discussion about music and arts education, continued study, particularly longitudinal designs, would help inform music education advocates and stakeholders about the impacts of policy on music teacher working conditions as well as effects on music program quality and music teacher retention.

A lack of meaningful professional development opportunities for music teachers has been a perennial concern in the profession. Our own findings corroborate those of Bauer (2007), Conway (2003), and Conway and Edgar (2014), who found music teachers generally view professional development opportunities at their schools as not particularly useful or relevant. Some have argued that music teachers face additional challenges in professional development due to isolation (Sindberg, 2007) and a reliance on short, disconnected workshops (Conway & Edgar, 2014). Though perceived shortcomings in professional development may not be unique to music educators (Gallo, 2015), the perception of inadequate opportunities for relevant professional development remains an important issue. In writing our own survey we were unable to develop a comprehensive list of professional development options for teachers due to the complex nature of this issue and the wide variation between schools. Further investigation is needed to identify potential solutions to this issue.

Despite statewide funding models that may theoretically reduce educational discrepancies, our results demonstrate that the socioeconomic status of a local student population may be a valid predictor of music teachers' perceptions of their working conditions. Future

research efforts should further examine the impact poverty has on music teaching. If music educators truly subscribe to the idea of "music for all," the working conditions of colleagues teaching in high poverty schools should be the concern of the entire profession. It is only through our collective effort and understanding that we can work towards a more equitable future for music education in the 21st Century.

While individual music teachers' perceptions of working conditions can vary considerably, our investigation found that teachers generally had positive perceptions of their working conditions. The socioeconomic status of a school was shown to have a statistically significant impact on music teacher working conditions—specifically music program funding, facilities, and school culture. As socioeconomic divides between communities continue to grow (Owens, Reardon, & Jencks, 2016), it may exacerbate these perceived differences in working conditions to the detriment of music programs and teachers in less economically advantaged areas. Increased teacher turnover in socioeconomically disadvantaged schools would only further weaken music programs and educational opportunities in already vulnerable communities. As music is now considered a "core" subject with the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, music education advocates would be well informed to continue monitoring these discrepancies between working conditions of schools across the socioeconomic spectrum.

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