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Factors Affecting Students' Interests to Continue to Participate in High School Marching Band

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Abstract

There are many factors that may influence students initially to choose to participate in music classes and ensembles. The purpose of this study was to examine different possible factors that affect students' interests to continue to participate in high school marching band given the categories of Parents, Band Director, Friends, and Activities (football games, contests, and trips, etc.). Participants ($N = 92$) consisted of ninth–twelfth graders students enrolled in high school marching band. Participants rated the influence of each factor using a 1-7 Likert scale, and wrote open-ended responses regarding any additional factors that may have influenced their decision to continue in the marching band.

Results revealed that Activity was rated as most influential, followed by Band Director, Friends and Parents. Activity was significantly higher than all categories except Band Director. Band Director and Friends were significantly higher than Parents. The influence of activity implied that students would remain active given more engaging activities or incentives and would most likely affect them to continue to participate. The results from open-ended responses indicated that students mentioned in frequency order: Love for Music, Myself, Instrument, Food, and Colorguard, as factors that influenced and inspired them to remain in marching band. Results are discussed in terms of implications for future research regarding ensemble retention.

Keywords : Factors, Affecting, Students' Decision

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Introduction

Many schools offer opportunities for the students to participate in music programs and ensembles such as choir, marching band and orchestra. The data compiled by the University of Michigan's "Monitoring the Future" study indicated that almost 40 percent of high school students enroll in music programs (Gorman, 2017). There are many factors that may influence students initially to choose to participate in music classes and ensembles. The research related to identifying factors that influence students to participate in music and continue in marching band have been of interest to several researchers (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998; Fredrickson, 1997; Neill, 1998; Sichivitsa, 2007; Stewart, 2005). Researchers have shown that parents and teachers influence and motivate students to begin and continue in music (Davidson, 1995; Macmillan, 2004; Sichivitsa, Barry & Guarino, 2002; Sichivitsa, 2007; Warnock, 2009; Zdzinski, 1992; Zdzinski, 1996). Some research has highlighted the influence of the band director (Albert, 2006; Chen & Howard, 2004), while other research has also indicated the influence of friends in music motivation (Bayley, 2000; Sichivitsa, 2007; Warnock, 2005). For example, Fredrickson (1997) studied the effect of social influence on student participation in music and found that peer groups motivated students to get involved in marching band.

Stewart (2005) studied the factors related to students' decisions to continue in marching band and indicated that the majority of the participants (83%) intended to continue participating in high school marching band. There were no significant relationships among students' decisions to continue in marching band and their perceptions of the quality of their playing or sight-reading skills. Findings in this study also indicated that students who had taken private music lessons, those who liked to participate, and those who liked to perform at outside school events were more likely to continue in high school

marching band (Stewart, 2005). Corenblum and Marshall (1998), in a study titled “Predicting students' intentions to continue studying music,” indicated that two factors, socioeconomic level and teacher evaluations, were most likely to influence students' intentions to continue in a high school marching band program. Findings in this study also indicated that there was no significant relationship between students' attitudes towards their current school marching band and their intentions to continue in marching band.

Moder (2013) studied the factors that influenced non-music majors' decisions to participate in collegiate marching bands. The results from open-ended responses indicated that love and enjoyment for music was reported more than any other influence. Analysis of the Likert-type responses revealed that overall, students rated “overall love/enjoyment for playing music” as the primary most influential factor. Second highest rated was “high school marching band experience” followed by “self-pride of membership in the marching band.” Fourth highest rated was “social aspects involved with being a member of the marching band,” and “the quality and reputation of the college marching band” was the lowest rated factor of influence on students' decision to continue playing in college marching bands. Findings in this study also suggested that for these students, motivation to continue in marching band started with enjoyment in beginning marching band, and continued throughout their high school marching band experiences.

Davidson (1995) examined the role of parents and teachers in the success and failure of instrumental learners and found that support by parents and teachers motivated initial music making. Over a period of time, the motivation became more intrinsic and self-sustaining (Davidson, 1995). Davidson's analysis also showed that a student who continued to play an instrument was able to distinguish between “personal” and “professional” qualities of teachers. Moreover, the students who received less support from parents and teachers did

not continue to play the instrument and had less ability to distinguish between teacher qualities (Davidson, 1995). It appears that parents' and teachers' support is very important to the success of instrumental learners.

Sichivitsa (2007) examined the influences of parents, teachers, peers and other factors on students' motivation in choral music. Analysis showed that students who had more musical experience and had higher levels of parental support in music had better self-concepts in music; therefore, they felt more comfortable with the academic and social aspects of the choral class. Students who valued music more had higher intentions to continue to participate in music in the future.

Delano and Royse (1987) conducted a study at Kent State University to determine factors leading to student lack of interest in participation in musical ensembles. The study highlights seven consistent factors among respondents who chose to participate in the college musical ensembles. Reasons included: high school band directors who had encouraged them to continue playing, they enjoyed their high school concert band experience, they felt they made significant contributions in their high school ensemble, they liked their high school band director, they had taken private lessons on their instruments, they participated in high school solo and ensemble festival, and they made the decision to continue playing while still in high school. Thus many previous researchers have examined factors that influence students to participate in music.

The current research was based on results of a qualitative study (Iadpum, 2015) in which the researcher interviewed a single family whose members ($N = 6$) had participated in the same high school marching band for three generations, and found that the participants, like those of earlier researchers (Sichivitsa 2007; Stewart, 2005), mentioned similar factors that influenced them to remain in the school marching band. The purpose of the current study was to extend these

findings to members of an entire marching band by surveying specific factors that influenced participants' decisions to remain in marching band. Based on the factors mentioned by the previous research (Iadpum, 2015) factors examined include: Parents, Band Director, Friends, and Activities. It is these factors from the earlier study that were used to develop the survey for the current research. Thus, I sought to use the same questions for a wider number of participants using quantitative means.

Purpose of study

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in the factors that affect students' interests to continue to participate in high school marching band given the categories of Parents, Band Director, Friends, and Activities (football games, contests, and trips, etc.).

Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in the factors that affect students' interests to continue to participate in the high school marching band via a survey instrument. The focus was on students' decisions as well as other factors that may have an influence on students' interests to participate in the high school marching band. The research question of this study is: What are the factors that affect students' interests to continue participation in the high school marching band programs?

1. Population and sampling

1.1 Population

Participants in this study were students ($N = 92$) from a small high school (single school in a rural community) in western Texas who were enrolled in the school marching band. These students included ninth-graders ($n = 31$), tenth-graders ($n = 26$), eleventh-graders ($n = 17$), and twelfth-graders ($n = 18$) comprised of males ($n = 37$), and females ($n = 55$).

2. Instrumentation

In order to examine the factors that affected students' interests to continue in high school marching band, the researcher designed a survey, asking students to rate on a 1-7 scale the importance of various factors. In this study, the researcher limited the factors to: Parents (Davidson, 1995; Macmillan, 2004; Moder, 2013; Sichivitsa, Barry & Guarino, 2002; Sichivitsa, 2007; Zdzinski, 1992;1996), Band Director (Corenblum, & Marshall, 1998; Davidson, 1995; Moder, 2013; Sichivitsa, 2007), Friends (Moder, 2013; Sichivitsa, 2007), and Activities (including football games, marching band contests, marching band trips, etc.) (Corenblum, & Marshall, 1998; Moder, 2013; Stewart, 2005). In an earlier study, Iadpum (2015) interviewed members of a single family who were former students in the same music band. Each mentioned similar factors to have influenced them to be in the school marching band, and these factors were family, band director and activities. In addition, the researcher informally interviewed a few members in the marching band about their experiences in the marching band and factors that may have contributed to their continued enrollment in the marching band. Some of the contributing factors these students mentioned were associated with their families, teachers, friends, and various school activities. Based on the findings of the informal interviews, the researcher created a survey to be used in the study. The survey required participants to rate the four factors that may have influenced them to continue in the school marching band. The survey was reviewed for wording, clarity of language, appropriateness of the question, and reliability by music education graduate students and experienced music educators ($N=10$). In addition, high school marching band students who were not involved in the study ($N=15$) volunteer to evaluate the survey for understandability. However, readers' comments were the bases for modification. The resulting survey appears in Table 1.

Table 1 Survey of Factors Affecting Students' Interests to Remain in Marching Band

Grade_____

Gender_____

Instrument_____

How long have you been in marching band? Including this year, circle the number of years you have been in marching band in high school and middle school.

1 year 2 years 3 years 4 years 5 years 6 years 7 years

Why do you continue in marching band? Please circle the number that indicates the importance of each factor that influences you to continue in the marching band.

1. Parents (not important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (very important)

2. Band director (not important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (very important)

3. Friends (not important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (very important)

4. Activities (not important) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (very important)

(Note: activities include: football games, marching band contests, marching band trips, etc.)

5. Others: (please list any other factors that influence you)

3. Data Collection

The study was conducted in the morning hours when participants were gathered in the music band hall. After a brief explanation of the purpose of the study, the researcher gave each participant a copy of the questionnaire to be completed individually. All protocols required for the protection of human subjects were followed. Participants were allowed to complete the survey within 10 minutes, after which all questionnaires were collected from the participants. On the survey, participants provided their demographic information, including grade, gender, instrument, and the number of years spent in the marching band. Participants rated each factor influencing their decision to remain in marching band using a Likert-scale 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). Additionally, participants were asked to write in a free responses section, any additional factors (other than those given) that may have influenced their participation in the marching band.

4.Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in the factors that affect students' interests to continue to participate in high school marching band in a single school district in a small city in western Texas. The results of the data collected through the survey are analyzed. The survey, asking students to rate on a 1-7 scale the importance of various factors. Data, consisting of ratings to each of four survey questions were analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis One Way Analysis of Variance to analyze the nonparametric data. For all tests used, statistical significance was established at $p < .05$.

Results

The results of this analysis showed that there was a significant difference in students' ratings of the factors that influenced them to participant in marching band. Kruskal-Wallis One Way Analysis of Variance indicated that there was a

significant difference among the four factors ($H_3, 92 = 30.13, p < 0.00010$). Overall, students rated “Activities” as the most influential factor ($M = 220.3$). Second highest rated was “Band Director” ($M = 203$) followed by “Friends” ($M = 174.7$). “Parents” was the lowest rated factor ($M = 140$).

Because of a significant result in the ratings, the researcher used a Mann Whitney U analysis as a post hoc test. Results indicated that students rated Band Director significantly higher than Parents, $U(1,92) = 5700, p < 0.0001$. Another post hoc test indicated a significant difference between Parents and Friends. In other words, students rated Friends as significantly more influential than Parents $U(1,92) = 5077, p < 0.0193$. Additional post hoc test showed a significant difference between Parents and Activities, indicating that students rated Activities significantly more influential than Parents $U(1,92) = 6015.5, p < 0.0001$. There was also a significant difference between Friends and Activities (students rated Activities significantly higher than Friends) $U(1,92) = 5315.3, p < 0.0023$. However, there was no significant difference between Band Director and Friends, $U(1,92) = 3566.5, p < 0.0658$, and no significant difference between Band Director and Activities $U(1,92) = 4661.5, p < 0.234$. The means of each factor are presented in Table 2: (Activities = 220.3; Band Director = 203; Friends = 174.7; Parents = 140)

Table 2 Result of Post Hoc Analysis of the Influence of Parents, Friends, Director and Activities

Activities	Band Director	Friends	Parents
220.3	203	174.7	140

Note: Underline indicates no significant difference at $p < .05$

Others factors

Students were given the opportunity to add additional factors that influenced their decision to remain in marching band in a free response section at the end of the survey. All responses are presented in their respective grade levels as shown in Table 6. The results appear below divided by grade in school.

Table 3 Summary of “Other Factors” for Grades 9-12

Factors	Frequency of Mention
Love for music	11
Myself	4
My instrument	4
Food	3
Colorguard	3
Family	2
Future career	2
College Scholarship	1
Music therapy	1
To get an athletic “credit”	1
I don’t like sports	1
To “prove” that I can	1

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine possible differences in the ratings of factors that affect students’ decision to continue in high school marching band given the categories of *Parents*, *Band director*, *Friends*, and *Activities*. The findings indicated that there were significant differences among the four factors. Overall, students rated “Activities” as the most influential factor. Second highest rated was “Band Director”, followed by “Friends” and “Parents.” Results indicated that Activities in this marching band such as football games, band contest, and marching band trips inspired students to continue to participant in music. Activities appeared to be the most influential factor for students continuing in marching band events when compared among

grade levels. These findings seemed to imply that engaging in activities had the strongest impact in student lives compared to other factors related to their decisions to remain in marching band. Activities outside school could be a vehicle for students to socialize. Students get to know each other during outside marching band practicing time in social events (Sara, 2016). However, results overall indicated a significant difference between Activities and Friends (with Activities being more influential) and a significant difference between Activities and Parents, but there was no significant difference between Activities and Band Director indicating the influential power of marching band activities and the individual band director in this particular high school.

These findings showed that the small differences between the Activities and Band Director might have happened by chance alone. Therefore, this study cannot conclude that Activities is the only factor that influences students to continue to participate in marching band, but also should include the band directors who seem to contribute motivation for students. These findings are similar to a previous study (Iadpum, 2015) where members of a single family were interviewed regarding their perceptions of the band director (same band director in the current study), in which they mentioned that the band director had high skills and knowledge, gave them support and inspired them to participate in the marching band. Similarly, Sichivitsas (2007) found that students' musical experiences were linked to a highly skilled, supportive, and knowledgeable director.

Parents were the least highly rated collectively and across each grade level. Overall students' ratings indicated a significant difference between: Parents and Friends, Parents and Band Director, and between Parents and Activities. These findings are different from those of the previous qualitative study which found that parents were the most important factor that influenced students to participate in marching band (Iadpum, 2015). Several factors could be

responsible for these different findings including the different generations of the participants and family background or the fact that data were collected in the presence of their peers.

Students also mentioned other factors that might have influenced them to continue in marching band. Some of the factors mentioned included their love for music, family, scholarship, academic requirements, future career, music therapy, and social reasons. See Table 6. The majority of students mentioned “Love for Music” as a factor that influenced and inspired them to be in the marching band. Both males and females tended to agree with this, although slightly more girls mentioned it than boys. Out of those students who mentioned “Love for Music” as an influencing factor were percussionists, euphonium, French horn, clarinet and saxophonists. Particularly, one female participant mentioned that the reason she joined band was because she wanted to “prove” to others that she could do it. These factors mentioned by students are important because they provide insights about the many things that potentially inspire students to join and continue in the various musical activities.

Conclusions

In this current research, the researcher primarily addressed only four factors (Parents, Friends, Band Director, and Activities). Other factors students mentioned were not fully explored or examined. Therefore, future researchers might consider examining the extent to which these “other factors” may impact students’ decisions to continue to participate in marching band or other music ensembles and classes. Needless to say, the factors of “band director” and “activities” which were the two most highly rated factors, appeared to play a significant role in students’ decision to participate in this marching band. It may be therefore necessary for music directors to consider and maintain the quality of outside school activities in which students engage. It seems that if students are engaged in activities they love and value, their participation in the marching

band will likely continue. More so, the band directors' social, professional, and personal behaviors with the students appear to be one of the major contributing factors in students' retention in the marching band. Even though results in this study may suggest things that could be done in school marching bands to achieve retention, these results should be generalized with caution.

Suggestions

Future researchers may need to replicate this study with a larger population, in ensembles other than marching band, with marching bands under the direction of different directors, and also possibly explore how other variables including gender, age, ethnicity and multiculturalism, among others, may contribute and/or affect students' retention in high school marching bands.

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