

Humphreys

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Expanding The Horizons Of Music Education History And Sociology¹

By Jere T. Humphreys
Arizona State University, Tempe

Philosophers and other researchers sometimes "talk past" each other, because philosophers deal with values (that is, what should or could be), whereas other researchers study what was, is, or will be. The distinctions are far from perfect, however. Quantitative, qualitative, historical, and sociological researchers make value judgments when they select topics and research methods. To a degree, they deal with what should or could be, in addition to what was, is, or will be. Similarly, philosophers like David Elliott (1995) discuss not only what should or could be, but also what is, or at least what they believe to be true. Elliott carefully describes what he believes are the outcomes of music practice, as well as the types of music education practices that would best lead to those outcomes in the schools. Other philosophers (e.g., Reimer, 1989) also describe what they believe are, or should be, the outcomes of various musical practices — such as aesthetic experiences — and the practices they believe lead to those outcomes.

One of my premises is that non-philosophical researchers should examine the validity of the assertions made by Elliott (1995) and other philosophers. In other words, philosophical assumptions could be treated as research questions or hypotheses

by other researchers. Clearly, philosophy and other types of research share overlapping areas of concern. For example, Elliott asserts that music practice and music education result in self-growth, self-knowledge, and, eventually, improved self-concept. Could and should his assertions be turned into testable hypotheses? Could and should the same be done for the outcomes hypothesized by proponents of music education as aesthetic education (MEAE)? In other words, could and should researchers measure the outcomes of music practice and music education?

As I understand it, Elliott's (1995) philosophy would bring music teaching and learning into closer alignment with actual music practice, which, according to Elliott, consists primarily of composing, arranging, performing, conducting, and listening. Elliott acknowledges that music education is a practice, and he celebrates many of the outcomes of music practice and music education that we all believe exist. He also places considerable emphasis on the personal and cultural aspects of music practice and education (Humphreys, 1996c). To the extent that his philosophy would legitimize more and different outcomes of music practice and education and would place music education into cultural contexts, it carries implications for expanding the horizons of research in music education as well.

Of course, non-philosophical researchers should not be bound by the writings of philosophers, but should attempt to examine everything that was, is, and will be, regardless of the assumptions and value judgments made by philosophers. Nevertheless, I be-

Jere Humphreys is Professor of Music in the School of Music at Arizona State University, Tempe. His research interests include historical and empirical research.

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lieve that music education philosophy implies a rich research agenda, and that Elliott's (1995) philosophy in particular offers considerable grist for the research mill.

Music education researchers have conducted countless studies of teaching strategies hypothesized to improve sight-reading ability, the ability to sing on pitch, and the like. Those who study such things believe implicitly in the worth of sight-singing and the ability to sing on pitch, but I am defining sight-singing and singing on pitch as enabling strategies, not final outcomes. By defining outcomes, Elliott (1995) and his fellow philosophers help other researchers frame research questions, who could examine the extent to which various enabling strategies contribute to those outcomes and the extent to which the hypothesized outcomes really occur.

My work on two projects in recent years — the chapter on music ensembles for the *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (Humphreys, May, & Nelson, 1992) and the arts education research compendium commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts (National Endowment for the Arts, 1995) — convinced me of the lack of research on the outcomes of music education. We have little solid data on how music participation and instruction change people's lives: on how individuals and societies profit from music education, and on which types of people and groups profit and in what ways. Is it possible to determine such things? I believe it is, at least in part, and I believe it is incumbent upon researchers to try. In other words, researchers should make a concerted effort to identify and, yes, measure more and different types of dependent variables and the related independent variables. Even if political realities did not force us into outcomes research, we should do it anyway because we need to assess the results of music education, both in relation

to the values set forth by philosophers and any other outcomes that may result from music education.

Within-Group Expansion

Music education historiography remains alive and well after several decades of success. The largest single body of research consists of more than 600 dissertations on the history of music education produced at American universities since 1923 (Heller, 1995; Humphreys, Bess, & Bergee, 1996). Unfortunately, dissertation writers have given little attention to the sociology of music education. Master's theses constitute the second largest body of historical research, but inadequate bibliographic tools limit access to this material (Heller & Wilson, 1992). The same is true for the relatively small body of sociologically-oriented master's theses.

A few scattered journal articles and book chapters on the history of music education appeared before the founding of the *Journal of Research in Music Education* (JRME) in 1953 (Heller, 1995). Since then, historical articles have appeared regularly in that and other journals. However, according to Yarbrough (1984), historical articles constituted only 17 percent of articles in the JRME through 1983, and Yarbrough's descriptive category includes only a few sociological articles. Sample's (1992) research suggests that no historical or sociological articles were cited 10 or more times in selected music education journals over a period of several decades. On the positive side, *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, founded and edited by George Heller, serves as an important specialized outlet for music education history, and *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (Hitchcock & Sadie, 1986) represents a significant improvement in the coverage of music education history over earlier music dictionaries and encyclopedias

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(Heller & Wilson, 1992). To date, there is no
journal devoted to the sociology of music
education comparable to *The Bulletin of His-
torical Research in Music Education*, or to
the sociology of music comparable to the
journal entitled *The Sociology of Education*.

Historians have contributed five book-
length historical surveys on American music
education. After Edward Birge's (1966) classic
first appeared in 1928, two books came out
in the 1970s (Sunderman, 1971; Tellstrom,
1971) and one each in the 1980s (Keene,
1982) and 1990s (Mark & Gary, 1992). There
are several other books on music education
history as well (see Heller, 1992). The major
book on the sociology of music, Farnsworth's
(1969) *The Social Psychology of Music*, is
more than 25 years old.

Two excellent conferences on the history
of music education in the United States held
during the last few years include A Sesqui-
centennial Celebration Symposium, which
marked the 150th anniversary of American
public school music education, and The
Ithaca Conference on American Music Educa-
tion, which commemorated a century of music
at Ithaca College (Fonder, 1992). One impor-
tant conference devoted to the sociology of
music education, called Symposium '95: The
Sociology of Music Education, took place in
1995 at the University of Oklahoma.

Finally, the History and Social Sciences
Special Research Interest Groups (SRIGs),
under the auspices of the Music Educators
National Conference (MENC), now make im-
portant contributions. Both SRIGs are large,
active, and well organized.

Beginning with Birge and continuing
through Allen Britton and their followers,
researchers have contributed enormously to
the knowledge base on the history of music
education. Most of the sociological research
related to music education has been com-
pleted by non-musician researchers in other
fields. Regardless, the field would benefit
from more studies that utilize traditional tech-
niques. For example, most historical disserta-
tions deal with the professional lives of indi-
viduals and with the histories of specific or-
ganizations and music programs. According
to a recent study (Humphreys, Bess, &
Bergee, 1996), historical dissertation topics

have remained consistent over time except
for biography, which has received a statisti-
cally significantly larger share of dissertation
writers' attention since the 1950s. Neverthe-
less, the lives of many important individuals
remain unchronicled. Similarly, researchers
have produced more than two dozen theses,
dissertations, and books on the histories of
various state-level music educator associations
(Biffle, 1991), which leaves approximately half
of these organizations with no written histo-
ries. I agree with Heller and Wilson (1992),
who wrote that "Gaps remain in the present
story of people, places, and ideas associated
with music teaching and learning" (p. 102).

Music education historians have produced
few macro-level works that synthesize the
results of existing smaller-scale studies. We
have no meta-analyses of the biographies of
leading music educators, and we know little
about the commonalities and differences
among state-level organizations because no
one has attempted to synthesize the results
of the existing studies. Similarly, there are no
synthesis studies of the extant histories of
local choral societies, histories of college mu-
sic departments, and the like.

So far, I have described traditional histori-
ography as it is practiced in music education
and noted a need for more of the same.
However, the revolution sweeping the wider
field of historiography, the so-called "new
history" that is turning modern historiography
on its head (e.g., Burke, 1991; Graff & Mo-
naco, 1980), has scarcely touched music edu-
cation. New research strands, including Black
and Gender Studies, and new political and
economic realities, such as the demise of
world colonialism and the advent of a global
economy, are resulting in widespread dissat-
isfaction with traditional historical research.
The roots of this dissatisfaction can be traced
far back, but it coalesced in the 1970s and
1980s and shows no signs of abating in the
1990s. Some dissidents now even reject the
findings of traditional historians, but most
scholars continue to value the contributions
of traditional historiography and would wel-
come more of the same. I agree with those
who value traditional historiography, but I
also believe that its findings remain incom-
plete — seriously incomplete.