



Sociological Foundations of Music Education



Nature vs. Nurture

(pp. 117-120)



- One of the oldest controversies in social sciences
 - **Nature:** Genetics/inborn characteristics affect children's development more than environment
 - **Nurture:** Child can be molded into anything with appropriate conditions
- Goddard, Watson, Skinner
- Debate in music:
 - Musical talent: is it family or training?

Nature vs. Nurture

- “Whatever the truth may be about the relative importance of nature and nurture in shaping human behavior, the obligation for teachers is clear: *Teach each student as much as possible*. Even if his or her parents are noticeably above (or below) average in mental ability, no one knows what a child’s potential is. Research data can only indicate tendencies and probabilities, which may not apply to a particular student. ... it should in no way affect the efforts teachers make in the classrooms on behalf of their students” (Abeles, 120).
- **Where do you fall in the nature/nurture debate? What experiences in the classroom have you had to support your stance?**

Socialization

(pp. 120-121)

- **Socialization:** “The process by which the young learn how to live in society. This process is essential for people to acquire the characteristics that mark them as human, which is a major reason for education” (Abeles, 143).
 - Isolation from other humans hinders intellectual and physical development



Socialization

- “The view that has sometimes been expressed that society and schools are forces that discourage individual uniqueness, and that a person develops best when given a minimum of guidance” (Abeles, 121).



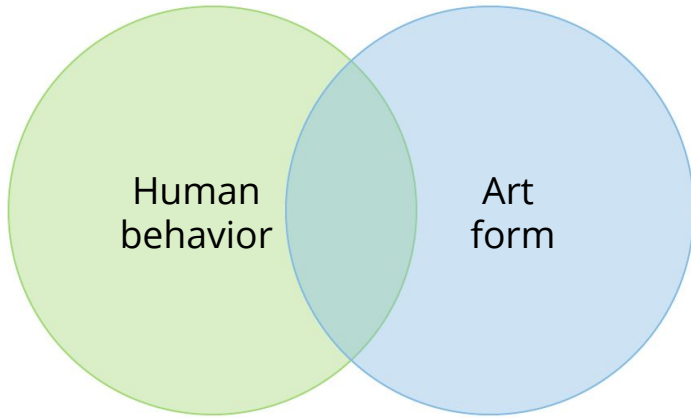
What are ways in which you already (or could potentially) encourage socialization and individuality in your music classroom?

Collective Free Music Improvisation as a Sociocommunicative Endeavor

Music as Human Behavior

(pp. 121-123)

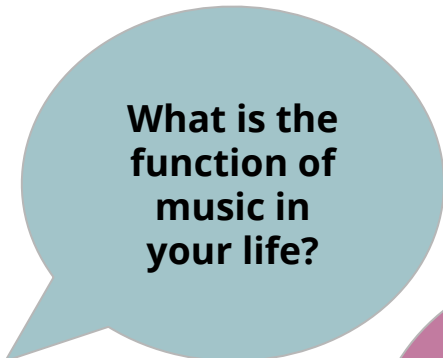
- “Music is a form of human behavior created by human beings for human beings” (Abeles, 121).
 - Learned behavior, social activity with traditional elements



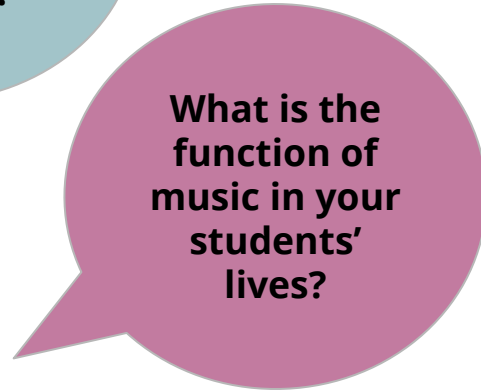
- “Describing music in that way seems to demean it as an art form” (Abeles, 122).
- **Do you view music as a human behavior, art form, or a little bit of both?**

Factors Affecting Musical Behavior

- Biological factors
- Social factors: *functions of music* (p. 123)
 - Emotional expression
 - Aesthetic enjoyment
 - Entertainment
 - Communication
 - Symbolic representation
 - Physical response
 - Enforcing conformity to social norms
 - Validation of social institutions and religious rituals
 - Contribution to the continuity and stability of culture
 - Contribution to the integration of society



**What is the
function of
music in
your life?**



**What is the
function of
music in your
students'
lives?**

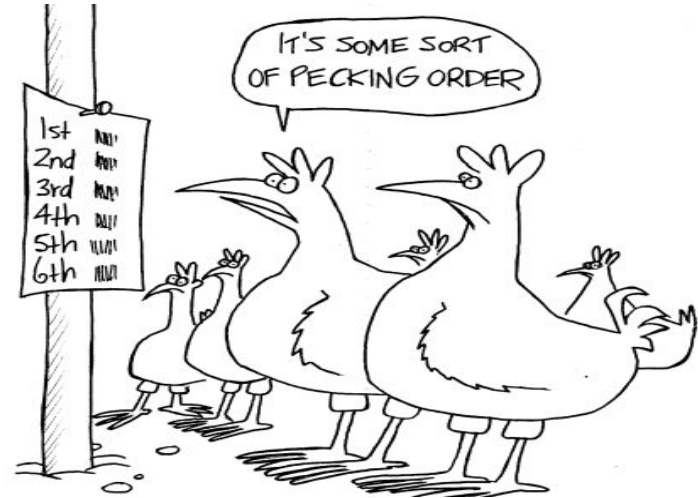
Factors Affecting Musical Behavior

(pp. 126-132)

- Age stratification
 - Music taste grows more like adult tastes as a young person matures.
- Social stratification
 - aka: Socioeconomic Status (SES)
 - aka: social class

Are there different levels of socioeconomic stratification (SES) present in music classrooms? How does it affect the way the classroom is taught?

Is there a social structure amongst music majors or different music professions?



Factors Affecting Musical Behavior

(pp. 132-135)

- **Ethnocentrism:**

- Universal tendency to think a person's culture/subculture is right, true → "the best way of life" (Sumner)
- "People understand their own culture and how to function in it, so *for them* it is superior" (Abeles, 133).
- Music teachers: **teach different listening attitudes and approaches for music**

- **Ethnic groups:**

- Differences in music preference/musical taste according to race and ethnic background

- **Pluralism:**

- American society is **pluralistic** (not a homogenous blend of one type of people) - is America a melting pot?



"There is not now, and will not be in the foreseeable future, one kind of music for all Americans" (Abeles, 134).



Music teachers must meet the need for diversity within unity

Cultural Factors: Cultural Standards

(pp. 135-137)

“People are not born with ideas about economics, religion and ethics, and the arts; such things are learned” (Abeles, 135).

Cultural Standards

- The difference between social-cultural phenomena and physical-science phenomena are enormous.
 - Tastes and preferences are established in a culture or subculture.
- *De gustibus non disputandum est* (There is no disputing tastes)

What important point is contained in the phrase:

“There is no disputing tastes”?

What are some implications of that point for music educators?

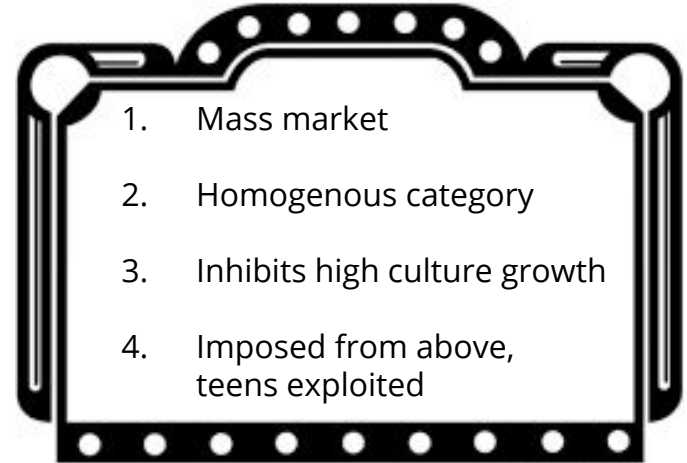


Cultural Factors: Mass Taste

(pp. 137-139)



MASS CULTURE



"Massification hypothesis" is the process of creating the popular culture, which lacks integrity.

Cultural Factors: Mass Taste



“Analysts and critics have failed to agree on whether the present public for the arts is mass or elite. Part of the reason for this disagreement is a matter of definition about what counts as art. Is it only what is seen in art galleries and heard in concert halls or does it include films, crafts and jazz? Also at issue is who is considered the public. Does it mean only the consistent consumers, or do persons who attend a pops concert once a year also count?” (Abeles, 138).

Technological Factors

(pp. 139-141)

“As technological knowledge of acoustics and mechanics increased, musical instruments also changed” (Abeles, 139).

- Listening expectations for recorded popular music vs. art music.

“The change from live to recorded music has greatly reduced public performances” (Abeles, 141).

Mass availability
of music



Technology: Implications for Teaching

(pp. 141-143)

Approaches toward listening to music

- Keen attention to and contemplation of the sounds
- Casual attention to the sounds
- Music teachers should encourage live music making
- Music teachers need to be imaginative in devising active techniques for presenting music

“Cultural, social stratification, ethnocentrism, and technological changes are all facts of life, and they influence what happens in music class and rehearsals” (Abeles, 143).

“Music educators can influence some sociological conditions and take them into consideration in their teaching” (Abeles, 143).

Music Listening Habits and Music Behaviors of Middle and High School Musicians

Summary

- Nature vs. nurture
- Socialization
- Music as human behavior
- Functions of music
- Social stratification
- Age stratification
- Ethnocentrism
- Pluralism
- Cultural standards
- Mass taste
- The effect of technology