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Ethical Dimensions of Peer Review for Practitioner Journals in Music Education

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Abstract

In this article, we extrapolate from writings addressing peer review in research journals, and general essays for all published writing, to consider the process of review in journals created for music education practitioners. We examine potential biases in recruiting review board members, the practices of reviewers, and the responsibilities of editors who shepherd the manuscript through the system. Further, questions arise concerning the ethics of transparency as manuscripts travel from hand to hand, pointing to dilemmas across an author-editor-reviewer triad embedded in systems of readership, publication, and profession. The review process may allow reviewers disproportionate power over what counts for knowledge in music education and how that knowledge should be communicated. Some critics suggest peer reviews should include more transparency to hold reviewers accountable. Given these and other concerns, we question how the review process for practitioner journals might be improved and make suggestions related to reviewer selection and training, the sponsoring organization's stated commitment to communicating innovative practitioner ideas, and the relationships between author, reviewer, and editor.

Keywords

Reviewer responsibilities, author-editor-reviewer dynamics, peer review challenges, transparency, and bias

Music education practitioner journals typically publish articles and columns on successful teaching strategies, information about materials and resources, and ideas for practice for the benefit of music teachers in primary, secondary, and tertiary settings. In this sense, a practitioner journal can represent the social construction of knowledge that benefits and furthers a whole community. Articles can help improve the practices of preservice, inservice, and retired music teachers and ensemble directors, as well as those in teacher education, music business, and community-based music programs. Further, articles in practitioner journals can challenge teacher assumptions and commonly-used teaching methods, and provide insightful ideas that practitioners might not otherwise encounter.

Readers of practitioner journals must rely upon the integrity of the publication process to provide writings that can advance the profession and the musical growth of students. Not unlike scholarly journals, many practitioner journals rely on the peer review process. However, as Cowley (2015), Drubin (2011), Graue (2006), Lipworth (2011), and others have pointed out, there are numerous issues within the review process concerning reviewing procedures, how reviews are written, and the structures that frame these interactions. Commentators on social media platforms, such as the popular "Reviewer 2 Must Be Stopped" Facebook group (with over 180,000 followers), call out reviewer behaviors, including bullying and overtly biased, obstructive, self-promoting, and/or disparaging comments. Given the importance of sharing practitioner knowledge and information across our profession and the potential for authors to withdraw manuscripts upon receiving disrespectful feedback, how might these and other concerns be addressed?

To situate ourselves on this topic, we have extensive experience as practitioners and with practitioner publications. Katy has authored practitioner articles and book chapters, served as a reviewer for two NAfME practitioner journals (*Music Educators Journal* and *Journal for General Music Education*), has been Chair and Academic Editor for *Music Educators Journal,* and has co-edited a book published by GIA Publications. Michele is the author of practitioner articles and book chapters, has served as a reviewer, Chair and Academic Editor for *Music Educator Journal*, has been the author/editor of several books published by Rowman & Littlefield and Oxford University Press (OUP), and has served as editor of an OUP handbook. We have had many experiences being reviewed, writing reviews, and

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negotiating the relationship between author and reviewer. We are also both similarly steeped in research writing and publication.

Ultimately, the job of a reviewer is to evaluate a manuscript's contents in relation to the focus and mission of the journal, including its writing and organizational conventions. The challenges reviewers face, and the beliefs about the relationship between reviewer and author can be explored in more depth by considering the ways that reviewers become reviewers, the perceptions that reviewers have concerning their responsibilities, the potential biases that reviewers bring to their work within systems that are also biased, and the limited transparency of the review process. This information is missing from the literature. In fact, we found no literature across all disciplines that addresses how to review manuscripts for practitioner journals or who should do the reviewing. Sometimes the only training provided to reviewers is a simple scoring template in the publisher's manuscript review platform. To better understand the challenges of (1) the reviewing process and (2) the people invited to become reviewers for practitioner journals, we drew from writings about reviewers and the review process for research journals and applied them to the particular needs of practitioner journals.

Responsibilities of the Editor toward Reviewers

We begin by outlining the responsibilities of a practitioner journal editor toward the journal, the author, and the reviewers. Many of these responsibilities are similar to that of editors of research journals. A practitioner journal editor is responsible for upholding the stated mission and scope of the journal and communicating this information to reviewers. This communication may occur during an initial training provided by the professional association or the publication house (e.g., Sage). Ideally, the editor should communicate with reviewers about any comments they may have provided to authors that are outside the stated journal's mission. This is sometimes where differences between research and practitioner journals appear, especially with reviewers more accustomed to reviewing for research journals.

Other responsibilities toward reviewers include assigning relatively equivalent numbers of manuscripts to each reviewer and onboarding reviewers into the review platform or management system. Not unlike a research journal editor, a prac-

titioner journal editor should select reviewers based on their knowledge and expertise, the number of manuscripts already assigned, and their stated availability at the time of assignment, as well as monitor the timeliness and appropriateness of reviews. Editors also have the power to replace reviewers for any manuscript and make final decisions regarding each manuscript, which may be challenging when reviewers differ in their evaluations.

The editor may choose to reconcile differences of opinion between reviewers or may leave such reconciliation for the author to untangle. An editor who believes that there have been ethical breaches of conduct by authors or reviewers is responsible for investigating and communicating this breach to the responsible party, rejecting the manuscript, or removing the review and assigning a new reviewer.

Challenges of Reviewing Manuscripts for a Practitioner Journal

Turning to the role of the reviewer, reviewing manuscripts for practitioner journals presents several challenges. These challenges range from the differences in priorities and perspectives of manuscript authors and reviewers, to reviewer expectations regarding appropriate writing skills and style of written communication, and the stance the reviewer may take in relation to the manuscript author.

The first challenge in reviewing manuscripts relates to how the priorities and perspectives of manuscript authors may differ from those of reviewers. Authors aim to share ideas and practices that have been successful in their classrooms. Many reviewers, by contrast, have been trained through graduate programs to read and critique content and writing style as educational researchers and scholars. Their training often includes reading published writings and having their writing efforts critiqued and edited by professors who were trained in the same manner (Labaree 2003). This is not to say that the interests and experiences of those trained in graduate programs are not pertinent to the field of music education, but rather, that learned writing conventions and perspectives may and often do (in our combined experience) influence how manuscripts are reviewed.

The perspectives and goals of reviewers, trained in research methods and writing conventions, may differ in important ways from the perspectives and goals of the target readership of PK–12 music teachers and preservice music teachers (and this readership as potential authors). Labaree (2003) articulated some of the dif-

ferences that he found in preparing graduate students in education to become researchers. A teaching practitioner, Labaree argues, focuses on the normative, the personal, the particular, and the experiential. By contrast, students studying to be researchers have to learn how to shift their focus to the analytical, the intellectual, the universal, and the theoretical to guide their research inquiries (16). The normative perspective of the practitioner leans on the day-to-day practice of teaching: doing what is best for students, developing compelling instructional content, and presenting it in ways to engage students behaviorally, intellectually, and emotionally. In comparison, an analytical perspective taught in graduate programs focuses on efforts to produce broader explanations for the "why," "how," and "for whom" of education. The objective of this perspective is to produce scholarship intended to further dialogue in the field. By contrast, practitioners focus on the ability to connect with students as an essential component of good teaching, so teaching is highly personal. The practitioner must also focus on each student's particular needs in the immediate classroom/rehearsal space. They attend to the complex mixture of individual, physical, intellectual, and social learning needs, school climate and rituals, community, and social expectations that make up their student body. The shift of perspective from the specific to the universal and theoretical involves connecting to abstract ideas, which prioritizes "interpreting evidence, making arguments, and establishing grounds for action" (Labaree 2003, 19).

The perspectives and normative, personal, particular, and experiential interests of the practitioner population (the target readership) suggest that the manuscripts that are the most beneficial provide innovative and practical solutions to practitioner challenges, along with materials and ideas to immediately benefit their utility in the classroom and rehearsal space. To create a broader impact, practitioners who experience success and develop innovative educational ideas should be encouraged to submit their ideas and strategies, along with the attending materials they have developed, to journals. The desirability of practitioner authors is just this—their perspectives and priorities are the same as the target readership and the mission of the journal. Again, this is not to say that those trained in research should not submit manuscripts providing in-depth topical analysis or that point out important issues faced by the profession. Instead, we argue that the target readership finds the innovative practices and solutions coming from the individual classroom to be of equal value to those ideas coming from scholarly inquiry.

The differences described above have important implications for how reviewers interact with manuscripts. For example, reviewers who have learned to prize specific writing conventions may not recognize the value of content written in a style that expresses normative and personal teaching experiences. Reviewers may vote to reject manuscripts with colloquial writing even when they contain content that would benefit teachers with similar experiences as the author. Alternatively, submitting practitioner authors may have limited experience putting their ideas into writing and may not be able to convey their ideas with perspicuity, thus spurring reviewers to adopt the role of gatekeeper. Reviewers often reject such manuscripts because of the writing style rather than recognizing that practitioner authors need different feedback to bring the wealth of their knowledge to publication.

McGill (2017) wrote that reviewers who adopt the role of a "gatekeeper" when evaluating a manuscript typically focus on determining what is of sufficient quality to advance (e.g., to move to the next round of review or publication). Conversely, reviewers adopting the role of a "wordsmith" may be comfortable with the ideas they encounter in the manuscript, offering advice concerning organization, typos, grammar, citations, and more, but may not provide meaningful commentary to help the author further develop their ideas. As McGill notes, both gatekeeper and wordsmith may fall short of genuinely helping authors to express valuable content in ways that would benefit the writer and, eventually, the readership.

Reviewers may also not recognize the value of ideas for a practitioner audience if those ideas do not match the training the reviewer received about what knowledge is and is not valuable. Some reviewers, mistaking the mission and readership of a practitioner journal for a research journal, may undervalue ideas from teacher experience or expressing personal and particular solutions to teaching challenges (Labaree 2003). Siler, Lee, and Bero (2015) similarly posited that peer reviews may often fail to recognize and promote excellence and/or innovation, rejecting innovative (even radically new) ideas if they can only think about the manuscript's topic more conventionally.

Another challenge of reviewing for a practitioner journal is the belief a reviewer may hold about the relationship between reviewer and author, a challenge that should undergird the convention of reviewing practitioner manuscripts. The current review system in practitioner journals suggests an imbalance in the power dynamic between the reviewers and the author of a submitted manuscript. Schiro's (2012) categorization of the "scholar academic ideology" curriculum philosophy

suggests that disciplinary knowledge is amassed and constructed by experts and shared with learners, so a practitioner journal review panel should comprise experts within that discipline (e.g., music education). From our experience as practitioner journal editors, we argue that the current system of review, including gatekeeping and feedback, both reflects and supports a power dynamic where reviewers believe themselves to be the experts over and above the expertise of authors: the author is cast as a learner while the reviewer takes the role as the more knowledgeable disciplinary expert. Reviewer feedback from this perspective is a one-way transmission of ideas from reviewer to author.

Education addressing how to review for a practitioner journal is an important and missing component of reviewer training. Those selected to be reviewers for practitioner journals are generally not trained to read and comment on manuscripts in a manner that would benefit the author, the target audience, or the organization that produces the practitioner journal.

The Role and Responsibilities of Reviewers

Reviewing a manuscript for a practitioner journal is an important contribution to the field that requires expertise, experience, time, recognition of the value of the knowledge that an author brings to the table, and empathy in providing feedback. Reviewers have an obligation to consider if they have a conflict of interest with a manuscript, if the topic is within their expertise, and if they have access to the information needed to conduct a thoughtful review. They also need to consider if they have the time to conduct an in-depth review in a manner that will result in respectful, empathetic, and constructive feedback to both the author and editor (Graue 2006).

The current, typical process of reviewing is as follows: a reviewer considers a manuscript's content, organization, and success in communication, hopefully, in relation to the stated goals and mission of the journal. In most cases, the identities of the author and reviewer are double-blinded to prevent professional favoritism, encourage frank critique, and protect against forms of social bias. The comments, questions, and suggestions the reviewer offers should confirm what the author has done well and invite them to reframe content that may mislead or confuse the reader. The reviewer's feedback also should prompt the author to improve upon

the manuscript's writing style, grammar, and organization to successfully improve access to its central ideas (Lovejoy et al. 2011).

In addition to these responsibilities to the author, reviewers also have a responsibility to the reader, the ultimate recipient of a journal article. Authors choose where they submit with an audience in mind (Tenopir et al. 2016), and those submitting to practitioner journals produced by professional educational associations hope that practitioners will read and use their ideas. Readers, responding to the journal's contents in this scenario, are actors with limited agency who have but four options when they find that a journal does not meet their needs: (1) relinquish their professional membership, (2) unsubscribe, (3) choose not to read their journals, or (4) write a letter to the editor expressing their concerns. It should be noted that this final option can also be met with gatekeeping. Journal editors and organization staff may read letters and determine what they will publish in a "letters to the editor" column. Therefore, it is the ultimate responsibility of reviewers to read and provide feedback to the author and editor with the needs and interests of readership in mind.

Reviewer Biases

Innovative ideas may be more likely to be published if reviewers are required to consider and expose their biases. Siler, Lee, and Bero (2015) examined manuscripts initially rejected and subsequently published in other scientific journals. They found that these articles were cited more frequently than manuscripts accepted in the first review and concluded that reviewer feedback with constructive criticism encouraging revision might be more beneficial to a journal than rejection.

Lipworth (2011) recommended that reviewers should "be made to declare biases and conflicts of interest because justice needs to be seen to be done and because power without responsibility should not be tolerated" (11). Reviewer biases may be related to the writing style, grammatical choices (e.g., code mixing), organization, content, or recommendations for practice. Reviewers' biases may obstruct innovative ideas, or topics they feel are politically charged or morally problematic (e.g., a reviewer who thinks that hip hop is evil). As Graue (2006) writes: "Reviews are responses that do not come out of a neutral black box of 'good research'—they are rendered by researchers who have particular histories, agendas, and needs. They reflect both the reviewer and the manuscript reviewed. It is therefore much

easier to 'read' them, to understand their meaning, if you have some sense of their origin" (39). In the absence of transparency about reviewer biases, the editor is responsible for recognizing and replacing the biased feedback.

In addition to biases stemming from research-focused educational training, reviewers bring all their past experiences, learning, and socialization to their work. These experiences include professional biases from their teaching and reading in the field of music education and the results of normative writing practices that have been shaped by the origins of the discipline and institutional precepts, including the act of publication (Hess 2021). Reviewers may also have cultural biases that impact their willingness to accept topics, practices, and writing styles, such as accepted conventions of whiteness that dictate the nature and value of music worth transmitting through teaching and the "correct" ways to communicate about music education (Hess 2021; Howard 2024). As such, the review process creates both the enabling and disabling provisos that authors, editors, and reviewers enact. These circumstances, in turn, can limit the ideas and practices to which readers have access. The biases shaping the review of manuscripts may inadvertently reinforce a sphericity that limits music education's evolution.

Reviewers may also constrain knowledge-making if they prompt authors to recursively reframe their ideas into what the reviewers consider acceptable knowledge claims and familiar written framings. Cowely (2015) notes that requiring the author to reorganize their manuscripts can lead to "relatively fixed (a) argument structure; (b) knowledge claims; (c) presentational style; and (d) choices of wordings" (11). For practitioner journals, these four qualities are not always the best way to communicate valuable knowledge on teaching and directing strategies, materials, relationships, and practices. Not all knowledge is best presented in the same way, but reviewers may be unable to let go of their beliefs about how an article should be written to see the value in alternative forms of presentation. The power that reviewers hold in determining whether a manuscript is published can pressure authors to alter their work in ways that shift its message and meaning.

The common process of "black-boxing" (Hirschauer 2010), in which communication between editors and reviewers is hidden from an author and the whole review process is hidden from the reader, can contribute to the issues discussed above. Black-boxing of peer review limits any attempt to identify, critique, and challenge biases, power dynamics, and problematic normative values that may hinder the sharing of ideas. It is difficult to fully assess the degree to which peer

review contributes to or hinders the social construction of knowledge in practitioner journals.

How Reviewers Become Reviewers

Practitioner journals serve as a place where knowledge about all facets of teaching music is socially constructed and transmitted. However, we have found that the reviewer selection process in the United States tends to favor those who are trained in research methods and writing conventions over those whose music teaching education and practice do not include such training. The "cloning" process of reviewer selection can keep some stakeholders from participating fully as leaders (reviewers and editors) in the very types of journals intended for them to read.

Membership on these practitioner journal editorial committees is commonly recruited through calls for applications that list criteria to prove an applicant's qualifications and materials to submit. The calls often are published in the seeking journal and may be sent out through social media or email listervs. Qualifications often include being a member of the organization that publishes or sponsors the journal. The process, from the point of application to an invitation to serve on a review panel, may be visible, as in the published by-laws for *Music Educators Journal*, or may be more mysterious.

The qualifications required for becoming a reviewer may exclude potential reviewers who have expertise as music teachers but no graduate level degree. For example, the most recent recruitment notice for the *Music Educators Journal* Editorial Board (*Music Educators Journal 2022–26 Call for Nominations*, n.d.) states that qualifications for this committee are:

- A record of membership in the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) and other professional arts organizations.
- Be an experienced active or former music educator with demonstrated excellence in teaching, pedagogy, administration, or scholarship.
- Terminal degree holder in music education or related field.
- Have a demonstrated record of publication in peer-reviewed journals or other established forums of music or arts education.
- Able to attend Editorial Committee meetings during biennial NAfME conferences or as needed (Virtual meetings are possible).

- Previous service on a formal editorial committee. Former *MEJ* Advisory Committee members are eligible to serve on the Editorial Committee.
- Able and willing to support the vision and values of NAfME's Strategic Plan vision, particularly regarding support for diversity, inclusion, and equity.

The phrase "terminal degree" itself may serve as a barrier that keeps PK–12 music practitioners from applying, because the phrase may be unknown or may be interpreted as "holding a doctorate." Further, as former editors of *Music Educators Journal*, we question whether a terminal degree in music education or a related field is, in fact, a valuable criterion for participation on an editorial committee or board. This requirement implies that only those with doctoral degrees are qualified to evaluate both content and writing. We argue that practitioners without doctorates can also bring a wealth of experience to bear as reviewers.

The 2024 membership of several national music education organizations' practitioner review panels is skewed toward university faculty, with only a few PK–12 music teachers. For example, *Music Educators Journal* currently had an Academic Editor and Associate Editor (both university faculty) and seventeen Editorial Board members, sixteen of whom taught at the university level. The other member taught in higher education but was teaching in an American PK–12 international school. The Advisory Committee members, who served as additional reviewers for the journal, had twenty-four members, all of whom were university faculty. The *Journal of General Music Education* had an Editor who taught at the university level but was an independent scholar, and nine review committee members, eight of whom taught at the university level; one member taught in a PK–12 setting. In 2024, the *Orff Echo* had an Editor who taught at a university and nine committee members, seven of whom taught in universities; two members were independent or taught in PK–12 schools. In 2024, the *Kodály Envoy* had a Copy Editor who taught in a PK–12 setting, an Associate Editor from a PK–12 setting, and four committee members, all of whom taught at the university level.

The preponderance of reviewers from higher education suggests that there may be several reasons why university faculty would pursue board membership and that the selection and election processes may be skewed toward self-replication. Work on editorial boards is typically unpaid. Ware (2008) stated that these

reasons may include interest in participating in one's professional community, improving one's reputation, progressing in one's career, learning more within one's profession or a specialized area of interest, or receiving benefits like a free subscription as payment-in-kind. Further, service such as reviewing for a journal may be required for academic promotion and tenure. Such service may or may not be supported or rewarded by practitioner employers or state accreditation bodies.

Additionally, the *Music Educators Journal* call for editorial board members states that to be a reviewer one must have a demonstrated record as a peer-reviewed author in that journal or other arts-related publication. This kind of requirement serves as a closed loop: only those who have learned writing conventions acceptable to reviewers schooled in research writing are allowed to publish and only those who publish can be reviewers. Indeed, this is borne out by examining recent articles in practitioner journals: of the thirty-eight named authors and co-authors in the last year of *Music Educators Journal* (Vol. 108, Issue 4 to Vol. 109, Issue 3), twenty-five were listed as teaching at the university level and eleven were doctoral students at the time of publication or held graduate-level degrees. Only two authors were were listed as listed as PK–12 practitioners whose biographies do not list their degree(s) (one was a co-author with a university professor). An examination of the *Choral Journal* revealed that the latest issue (Volume 65, Issue 7, 2025) had seven authors, all of whom hold doctorates. Volume 51 (2025) of the *Kodály Envoy* included articles by three authors with doctorates, three articles by authors holding master's degrees, and one article by an author whose level of education was unavailable.

One cannot speculate on all the possible causal connections between seeing a call for editorial committees, fulfilling qualifications, applying for membership, making choices as a reviewer, and authorship in published articles. However, to put the loop succinctly: graduate-level training precipitates interest and success in authorship, which allows one to apply to be on an editorial board, which may provide service that leads to promotion, which leads to the biases toward the writing style and content taught in graduate programs.

Actions to Foster Change

We believe that the organizations overseeing music education practitioner journals should reconsider the requirements for applications to serve on review boards and committees, inviting more practitioners to participate as reviewers. The expertise of practitioners with many years of teaching may prove just as useful for determining the relevance and innovativeness of ideas in submitted manuscripts as that of someone holding a terminal degree. Further, the organizations and publishers that produce music education practitioner journals (and earn money from their sales) should consider providing incentives to entice practitioners to apply to become reviewers. Since practitioners may not be professionally rewarded for service on a review board, monetary compensation might be provided in the form of payment to the practitioner or payment for a substitute to give the reviewer time to conduct reviews.

Authors who have published on the work done by research journal reviewers (Allen et al. 2019; Cowley 2015; Graue 2006; Hojat, Gonnella, and Calleigh 2003; Lipworth 2011; Siler, Lee, and Bero 2015) have recommended greater transparency in the review process. These writers recommend that all reviewers sign their name to their feedback. Obstructive or bullying behaviors, such as when a reviewer belittles an author's work or promotes their own writing, should have no place in the review process.

The challenges faced by authors, editors, and reviewers in the review and publication process suggest that improvement is not only needed, but necessary to ensure the value of the enterprise. Graue (2006) admonished editors and reviewers, writing that "reviewing is most powerful when it works to transform education and research, and that it can only do that by transforming the actors" (36). This transformation must be systemic.

We propose that the organizations producing practitioner journals should articulate what knowledge the organization believes is worth communicating, how that knowledge should be contextualized for the music education profession, and who they think should contribute to that body of knowledge. Reviewers should be educated about their journal's specific philosophical and value frames. Without such preparation, reviewers rely on individual beliefs drawn from their experience with other publications that may range from research writings to public and social media outlets, leaving them unmoored as they read practitioner manuscripts.

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One solution to this problem would be to take a social construct perspective (Berger and Luckmann 1967). This perspective suggests that the relationships between editor, reviewer, and author should be equalized, and the process of review made interconnected and dialogic. For example, manuscript authors are required by the "Guidelines for Authors" of several practitioner journals to situate their ideas in relation to prior writing in research or practitioner journals or in books. Practitioners who submit manuscripts may not be familiar with these conventions or may not have access to these materials, and may need guidance in shaping this aspect of their manuscripts. Rather than simply stating the names of published authors in reviews (as we have commonly seen in reviews), reviewers should not expect that authors have access to all forms of published scholarship. Rather, reviewers should assist the manuscript author by entering into a dialogue about published scholarship to assist the development of the author's ideas.

Publishers and editors should acknowledge that formal training and preparation is needed to help reviewers develop appropriate reviewing skills for a practitioner journal and that such training must be carefully designed to avoid reinforcing the institutional biases that result in reproducing one set of priorities and perspectives. As part of reviewer training, reviewers should see a model manuscript, feedback from reviewers and editor, and a revised version of the manuscript so they can learn to envision the entire process. New reviewers also need opportunities to practice reviewing under the watchful eye of mentors who can provide important guidance. Experienced reviewers, too, can benefit from ongoing training that can highlight biases and problematic behaviors and offer guidance about how to write reviews that truly benefit authors.

For some practitioner journals, reviewers are given access to all reviewer comments provided for a manuscript. On the one hand, this can be valuable because the ability to read other reviewers' encouragement and criticism can serve as a model for a novice reviewer. On the other hand, access to these comments could also foster a convergence of opinion rather than advancing the independent reviewer knowledge that would encourage an author to better understand how individual readers would encounter their manuscript.

Practitioner journals would benefit from making their policies, procedures, and practices more transparent so that authors and other stakeholders can better understand the process of review (Allen et al. 2019). Independent appeal panels for rejected articles would empower authors to express their concerns. Authors, at

all stages of the review process, need an avenue through which they can call "bullshit" when they believe that biases and normative behaviors are preventing the advancement of innovative ideas. While this may not fully resolve issues, an appeal panel may help draw attention to and address problems embedded in institutional practice. Schwartz and Zamboanga (2009) recommended that journals should provide an appeals process so authors whose manuscripts have been rejected may write to question the rejection. A committee not connected to either the author or journal editor should be created to review the appeal letter, the decision letter and the reviews. Because of the make-up of practitioner reviewer committees (again, trained as researchers) in comparison to target audience of practitioners, we argue that such a panel should be created from the journal readership rather than from the current reviewer board membership, to provide feedback more aligned with the target readership's perspectives and priorities. Such feedback may also help the journal to avoid innovative stagnation.

Given the challenges identified in this article, it is important to consider additional strategies for systemic change at the level of publisher, editor, reviewer, and music teacher educator. First, publishers can make information about a journal's goals, mission, and audience easier to access. This, coupled with transparent policies and procedures, would help authors appropriately frame and situate their work. Second, publishers and editors should work together to provide online, self-directed refreshers for reviewers wishing to improve their practice. Third, editors and their review committees might consider expanding the number of reviewers in service. Such expansion could decrease the workload of reviewers (who serve in a volunteer capacity) and potentially provide greater breadth of perspectives. Fourth, editors should invite experienced reviewers to partner with novice manuscript authors to assist them in refining their manuscripts. Fifth, music teacher educators should engage undergraduate students in learning how to author practitioner manuscripts and engage them in the skills of peer reviewing, rather than reserving this training for graduate classes. Such experiences could deepen the possible reviewer pool, allowing review boards to open membership to practicing teachers who represent the journal's primary readership.

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In addition to systemic considerations, the following questions may help individual reviewers to evaluate their work before submitting a review:

- Do I have a conflict of interest with the content of this manuscript?
    - reviewers may have professional or financial interests in alternative publications or those expressing different opinions
- Is this topic outside of my expertise and/or access to information needed to conduct a thoughtful review?
    - regardless of editing skill, a reviewer may not know enough about the content to provide useful feedback
- Do I have the time to provide an in-depth review of the manuscript? (Drubin 2011)
    - reviewers may need to excuse themselves from a review if they do not have enough time to consider all aspects of the manuscript
- Have I made assumptions after a cursory glance at this manuscript?
    - reviewers should commit to reading a manuscript several times before providing feedback
- Does every comment offered reflect respect, collegiality, and empathy (Graue, 2006)? And, have I executed my review in a manner that follows Drubin's (2011) policy: "review unto others as you would have them review unto you" (526)?
    - reviewers should take the time to read over their feedback with attention to their tone and the value of their thoughts
- Would I be willing to sign my name to my review?
    - we argue that reviewers should be willing to expose their identities, along with their perspectives and biases, to the manuscript author

Possibilities for Radical Change

While the suggestions above can bring about improvements in the review processes of practitioner journals, more dramatic change may be necessary. The process of review for practitioner journals in music education is currently very similar to that of research journals, yet the aims, intents, and audiences differ. Professional

associations should consider their beliefs about the ways that professional practitioner knowledge should be generated and shared to further their aims and purposes. This might lead them to consider a more appropriate system of review for the needs of their stakeholders. Qualifications for review committees should be changed to broaden the pool of potential reviewers. Reviewers should be recruited from outside the typical (university faculty) committee membership. Reviewer committees should even be dissolved to make ways for new approaches to generating and sharing knowledge. Whatever review process is selected, practitioner innovation should be supported by associations, their members, editors, and reviewers alike.

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