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Ethical Dilemmas of In-Service Music Educators

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Ethical Dilemmas of In-Service Music Educators



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Introduction

Like professionals in other disciplines, music educators are expected to observe certain behavioral standards. In addition to teaching musical skills, concepts, and context, music educators are also expected to protect the welfare of children, serve as trustworthy stewards of public property, and generally behave responsibly and professionally within the context of the school and local community. Despite these expectations, many music educators have engaged in unprofessional, unethical, or illegal conduct.

There are many reasons why human beings act unprofessionally or unethically. Regarding music educators, these reasons include the possibility that they are simply unprepared for the kinds of difficult situations encountered in their daily work. This may be due to inadequate preparation at the undergraduate or pre-service education level. Discussions of ethics within the context of pre-service teacher education programs are limited, and ethics education of any standardized or formalized nature is virtually nonexistent in music education. At both the pre-service stage and at the in-service level, the music education profession has yet to engage adequately in dialogue about issues of ethics and ethical decision-making.

Review of Literature

Most discussions of ethics in music education research literature have been limited to the philosophical realm. Music education writers have examined questions such as these: How can the music education profession take the lead in meaningful reform in education? (Jorgensen 2002, 2003) What is the role of music education in a democratic society? (Woodford 2005) How can music education address issues of multiculturalism? (Jorgensen 1990, Szego 2005, Volk 1998) How does the teacher-student relationship function within music teaching and learning contexts? (Bowman 2001, Flusser 2000, Nourse 2003) How can music education serve as a catalyst for social change? How can music education improve society and humanity? How might music education contribute to the development of ethical

thinking and character? (Bowman 2001, Elliott 1995, Jorgensen 1990, Jorgensen 2002, Lecroy 1992, Nourse 2003, Szego 2005, Volk 1998).

Relatively few music education researchers and writers have addressed descriptive ethics, the investigation of music educators' moral beliefs, or applied ethics, the philosophical examination of moral questions arising from issues in professional music education practice. Richmond (1996) called upon the music education profession to take steps toward addressing ethics in music education in a practical way. He asserted that the first steps in this process include "conversing" about ethics in music education practice, introducing these conversations and concepts in teacher education programs, and including the topic of ethics in music education textbooks.

Extant literature on practical ethical issues in music education is limited to very few articles and position papers on specific topics, such as the practice of merchants paying commissions, or "kickbacks," to music teachers (Barbieri 2002), copyright and fair use laws (MENC 2003), teaching competency concerns (Gregg 1997), and the prevention of sexual misconduct (Stuftt 1997). In a recent article, Simpson (2010) reported the results of a descriptive study of the relationship between teacher certification area and prevalence of sexual misconduct. These authors, in addition to providing guidance in solving ethical dilemmas, also expose certain problems within the profession. Getting these real-life issues out into the open is crucial, so the profession can begin a dialogue about the common problems, controversies, and dilemmas that many music educators face in their daily work.

In addition to the few practical articles on music education ethics, one book in music education is devoted entirely to the topic of applied ethics. *Case Studies in Music Education* (Abrahams and Head 2005) is a collection of examples of pedagogical issues and ethical dilemmas that music educators may face in the context of their teaching. The purpose of the book is to generate discussion in music education courses on the kinds of issues that students may face when they become in-service music educators. Each case study presents a problem, for which students then work to devise a plan of action for solving. In the forward of the book, the authors stress the importance of critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, active learning, consideration of multiple perspectives, and "process" over actual solutions. According to the authors, (Personal communications with Frank Abrahams 6/2006, and Paul Head 3/2006), the case studies in their book were not based on research findings.

Rather, the authors based their case studies on real-life scenarios that they or their students and colleagues had encountered in their experiences as music educators.

Literature on applied ethics in music education is scant, and this study is an attempt to begin a dialogue in applied ethics in music education by collecting critical incidents of ethical problems that occurred within the context of music education practitioners' work. Discussion of these incidents may be useful in professional clinic sessions, teacher education programs, and as a basis for further research. The current study is based on an extant study of ethical dilemmas encountered by members of the American Psychological Association (Pope and Vetter 1992), in which the researchers sought to design a Professional Code of Ethics for the APA by collecting critical and categorizing incidents or ethical dilemmas that practitioners faced in their daily work as psychologists and counselors.

With the exception of only a few articles on specific ethical problems in music education, there is little extant literature about unique concerns that music educators face in their teaching practice. Music education philosophers have explored important topics and ethical questions that in-service music educators should consider; however, formal inquiry in music education should also include the topics and ethical questions that in-service music educators *do* consider. The research questions that guided this study were broad: What kinds of incidents do in-service music educators find to be ethically challenging or troubling? What do music educators find to be the most common ethically challenging or troubling issues or problems? Finally, can the issues or problems within those incidents be organized into coherent broader categories? The purpose of this study was to collect from in-service music educators examples of "lived" experiences that they found to be ethically challenging and to then categorize those examples into more general topics that may then provide a framework for meaningful professional dialogue.

Method

A cover letter and survey form were developed to invite in-service music educators to provide examples of incidents they faced in their work that challenged or troubled them ethically. For the current study, I sent a cover letter and questionnaire to all music educators in two Midwestern states and asked to them provide standard demographic information such as age, sex, and race, as well as basic information about their current teaching assignment and total number of years of teaching experience. Finally, the questionnaire included space to

“describe in a few words, or in more detail, an incident that you or a colleague have faced in the past few years that was ethically challenging or troubling to you.”

The first steps of categorization included consultation with a small group of colleagues, who reviewed my decisions and challenged the criteria I used to determine the topics and categories for the incidents. As incidents were received, I organized them by specific topics. As data analysis progressed, these very specific topics began to organize themselves into even broader categories. I analyzed all of the incidents again to make the final determinations regarding into which category each should fall. Finally, to check the reliability of my decisions, a research assistant independently categorized all of the incidents (96.5% agreement). To determine the categories of the 19 disputed incidents, we discussed our criteria and made collaborative decisions for each case.

Results

Responses were received from 516 music educators, who shared a total of 550 examples of ethically troubling incidents in five general categories (see Table 1). After accounting for incorrect addresses and surveys that were returned as undeliverable, the return rate was 14%, slightly below the approximately 15% return rate that American Psychological Association researchers consider to be standard for “surveys that require subjects to respond with actual incidents of problems with ethics” (Golann 1969).

Because of the potentially sensitive nature of the research data, only descriptive statistics were used to report demographic data, and no comparisons were made between groups. Percentages are not given for demographic subgroups, because many of the respondents chose more than one option.

Of the 516 respondents, 65 percent were female ($n = 336$), and 35 percent were male ($n = 180$). The percentage of females to males in the respondent group was similar to the percentages in the population of potential respondents ($N = 3735$), in which approximately 63 percent were female and 37 percent were male. The ratio of females to males in the population was determined using “given names” on the mailing lists.

Although subjects were asked to choose only one “teaching assignment,” a number of respondents marked two or more choices from the following options: General Music Educator ($n = 153$); Band Director ($n = 108$); Choir Director ($n = 108$); Instrumental Music Educator ($n = 60$); Private/Applied Teacher ($n = 41$); Orchestra Director ($n = 35$); Music

Administrator ($n = 12$); and Other ($n = 55$). Respondents also indicated all grade levels included in their current teaching assignments: Preschool ($n = 29$); Elementary ($n = 202$); Middle School/Junior High ($n = 251$); High School ($n = 185$); College/University ($n = 59$); Adult/Community ($n = 45$).

Respondents' ages ranged from 23 to 80 years ($M = 45$, $SD = 10.7$), and years of teaching experience ranged from .5 to 57 years ($M = 20$, $SD = 10.6$). The majority of respondents identified themselves as White, Non-Hispanic ($n = 485$), and of the other race categories given on the questionnaire, ten respondents were Asian, eight were Hispanic, six were Black, and five were American Indian or Alaskan Native. No respondents chose the Pacific Islander category, and two did not answer this question.

Eighty-six music educators (approximately 17 percent of the respondents) reported that they had not encountered any ethically challenging or troubling incidents, as the following examples indicate:

To be honest, none. Either I am very lucky or ethical issues don't present a problem.

I am very pleased to say that in 27 years of teaching, I have not had one issue that has been ethically challenging to me.

Most of the respondents who reported no incidents wrote "none" or simply left the space blank; however, several of these subjects gave a reason, such as in these examples:

Because I teach at a Lutheran school, I have few ethically challenging situations. The majority of my students are of the same faith. In all challenging situations, we turn to God, applying Law and Gospel.

Living in a small community I haven't had any ethically challenging issues.

None I can think of. (I teach in a private Catholic school.)

Respondents who did give examples of ethically troubling incidents shared incidents that were representative of the following five categories: (a) pedagogy, (b) enforcement, (c) resource allocation, (d) relationships, and (e) diversity. The "Pedagogy" category encompassed incidents related directly to teaching ($n = 149$), such as what to teach, how to assess learning and achievement, meeting the needs of special learners, concerns regarding competency and qualifications, and performance venues for student musicians. Dilemmas included in the "Enforcement" category ($n = 117$) were about written or unwritten expectations and whether violations should be reported or enforced. In many of these

incidents, a current policy or law conflicted with some other duty or “good” that might have impacted the decision-making process or outcome of the incident. The “Resource Allocation” category included incidents or conflicts related to tangible or intangible resources ($n = 103$), such as money, time, influence, authority, or property. Incidents in the “Relationships” category ($n = 98$) related primarily to relationships between, and getting along with, people. Finally, the “Diversity” category described dilemmas or incidents of conflict, concern, or questions related to differences between people ($n = 83$). Almost all dilemmas in this category were about race, ethnicity, or religion.

Table 1

Categories of 550 Ethically Troubling Incidents

<i>Category</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Pedagogy	149	27
2. Enforcement	117	21
3. Resource Allocation	103	19
4. Relationships	98	18
5. Diversity	83	15

Discussion

The primary purpose for the following sections is to provide examples of critical incidents in each category. Critical incidents shared by in-service music educators were further reduced to more specific subcategories, which will also be clarified in this section. All of the examples that follow are presented in the respondents’ own words but with spelling errors corrected. In some examples, extraneous words have been omitted but are indicated by ellipses within the quotations. In the following sections, simple frequencies are used to refer to subsets of incidents within each of the five general categories.

Pedagogy

The most frequently described dilemmas involved pedagogy—what to teach, how to teach, and how to assess or evaluate student achievement. These incidents fell into these five subcategories: choosing music literature and other curricular materials; grading, assessment,

and auditions; students with special needs; questionable teaching practices and effectiveness; and performance venues.

Choosing Music Literature and Other Curricular Materials. The most frequently reported incidents related to choosing appropriate music literature and other curricular materials for the music classroom ($n = 68$). Of these, many were related to choosing music for the winter concert season.

We do holiday concerts where it's okay to include Kwanzaa, Chanukah, or other religions, but I need to get permission to use Christian music. Since most 'Christ' mas music is Christian, this seems a tad silly.

Problems with holiday vs. Christmas music. (Some are upset if all the music is secular, others threaten to sue if we include any Christmas music.)

MENC: The National Association for Music Education distributes on its web site a position paper regarding this topic (MENC 1996). Reacting to court decisions regarding the separation of church and state in schools, the MENC document provides guidance to music educators who are struggling with decisions related to music with a sacred text.

In addition to issues related to the use of religious music in schools, many respondents reported being troubled by contextual issues and mature themes in some music literature.

Songs that use words that are questionable, such as 'The Drunken Sailor.' I like the song, but is it OK to teach it?

I teach at a parochial school, so talking about some artists and their sexual orientation is taboo here. . .

Many music educators struggle with decisions related to the appropriateness of some curricular materials. Making the "wrong" decision may do lasting harm, not just to students, but to the teacher's reputation as well. This is a topic that deserves closer attention in pre-service and in-service programs.

Grading, Assessment, and Auditions. Other pedagogy-related incidents involved grading, assessment, and auditions ($n = 52$).

I did not give an obviously more talented student a solo or lead role in a production, opting to give the opportunity to a less talented student in order to focus on intellectual and emotional growth experience. Was I right to overlook talent & hard work? What will make the greatest difference to a child?

Grading challenges. How do you weigh daily performance in a grade vs. lesson attendance, concert attendance, and other requirements?

Students with Special Needs. Some respondents reported incidents related to how to appropriately serve the diverse needs of learners in the music classroom or program ($n = 13$). In particular, several music educators struggled with balancing the needs of one student with their responsibility to the rest of the music students or to the broader music program.

In reference to special needs students, I'm required to teach all students and yet have had no training in dealing with special needs students. One emotionally disturbed outspoken student can run the class and we must put up and cater to their needs instead of the average willing student.

As a band director, I struggle with 'inclusion' of special needs students. My heart says all kids should be able to choose to take band, but if the ensemble competes at any level, or even performs (which they all do) at what point are we crossing a line from the rights of the special need student to fairness to the performing group as a whole?

Questionable Teaching Practices and Effectiveness. Some incidents related to concerns with others' effectiveness, qualifications, or use of questionable teaching practices ($n= 13$). Also included in this category were general concerns regarding maintaining balance between the pursuit of performance excellence and appropriate teaching practices.

As a former band director I often saw some of my peers using their band for their own advancement/glory by concentrating on drilling students to the exclusion of teaching about the music and the enduring qualities of a comprehensive music education. In particular, one director would create a crisis, often focusing on a single student, and verbally beat him and the band into the ground in order to get complete obedience. He ruled by fear.

Other respondents were unsure about how to deal with the problem of having colleagues they believed were not qualified to teach in their current assignments.

A challenge I face daily is working with a colleague who, although licensed in our state to teach choir, has never had a class in voice and knows nothing of vocal technique. Because I am the only other person in the music department and the only one in school who knows about this, I can't rat her out to the State Department of Public Instruction. The students don't know any better and think we have a 'good' choral program. Administrators, parents and community are equally ignorant and think the same...

Accepting as adjudicators colleagues whom I feel are not qualified to evaluate student performances at solo & ensemble festivals, even though their credentials support their qualification. It is hard to keep students enthused about performing if judging is not high quality, and it is hard to justify to students comments that are made by unqualified adjudicators.

None of the respondents mentioned incidents related to their own lack of professional preparation or training, but described instead their perceived shortcomings of others. In fact, only one of the 550 total incidents included a personal concern of not having adequate preparation for teaching (see the first example in the previous section, “Students with Special Needs.”)

The topics of competence and professional standards, or the lack thereof, have received little attention in literature related to music teaching and learning. Although the problem may not be widespread, some music educators are teaching classes for which they are not adequately prepared. Some music educators may be highly qualified to teach in one musical content area but not in the area that they are currently teaching. In the context of “No Child Left Behind” legislation, discussion of fundamental competence in music teaching may pose a dilemma on a much larger scale than respondents of the current study realized.

Performance Venues. Although the only formal “code of ethics” specifically for music education delineates the performance jurisdictions of professional musicians and music education performances, this category included only a few critical incidents ($n = 3$). That there were so few incidents in this category may indicate that MENC’s *The Music Code of Ethics* (MENC 1947) provides ample guidance to music educators who face dilemmas related to performance venues. It is also possible that dilemmas related to this topic are simply less frequent or generally less likely to be troubling than other kinds of dilemmas. The following example illustrates the problem:

A common ethics question that I face is when community groups contact music teachers to ask for students to provide entertainment for events that are mainly social events for the community group. The question I have to ask is whether it's appropriate to send students to provide "free" entertainment. . . or is this a group or event that should be hiring and paying professional musicians?

Enforcement

The second most frequently reported incidents concerned written or unwritten guidelines for behavior and the interpretation or enforcement of those guidelines. Subcategories included the following: activities association, district, school, or union policies; copyright issues, teaching licensure and credentials; and students who break the law. Respondents struggled particularly with this question: When current policy or law conflicts with some other good or duty, how should a teacher proceed? Although some of these dilemmas may refer to

relationships (see the later section, “Relationships”), the primary concern is the interpretation or enforcement of law, policy, or rules.

Activities Association, School District, School, or Union Policies. Whether to enforce existing policies or rules was the primary topic of 46 incidents shared by music educators. In some cases, the teacher struggled with the question of whether it is in the students’ best interest to enforce, rather than ignore, a rule or policy:

Our state limits the number of events that a student can take to our district festival. I often have students who plan to pursue music as a career request to take more than ten events. I am torn between giving them the opportunity to learn as much as they want to learn and do, and also following our state's guidelines.

Both of my colleagues at our high school are smokers and smoke regularly in front of their students. I know for a fact that they smoke on school grounds. This is against school policy and state law. Our administration seems to ignore it. Both programs are highly successful and bring great recognition to the high school. It troubles me that these colleagues break the law and set such poor examples as role models to their students.

Copyright issues. Thirty-eight respondents reported incidents related to copyrighted materials. Some of these incidents included concerns about inadequate budgets (see the later section, “Budgets”), but the incident was assigned to this category if the primary “troubling” element of the incident concerned copyright laws. In particular, some respondents reported dilemmas in which a choice had to be made between providing students with printed music and following copyright laws:

For solo & ensemble festival, I make a student copy of the music, because there is not enough funding to cover more than one copy of song books. I feel bad about copying music.

...Some teachers I work with, who have considerably larger budgets, only purchase one set and copy parts [for the entire ensemble]... I have turned to arranging my own public domain music and composing music to teach a concept.

Other incidents in this category concerned the ethics of editing music for seemingly valid educational purposes:

I don’t want to break copyright laws, but sometimes in choir, in order to adapt to changing voices, music must be edited, but we’ve been told we can’t do that.

MENC: The National Association for Music Education distributes a document that describes copyright laws and provides practical guidance on the use of copyrighted materials in music education classrooms. The document, which is available on the MENC website, is

not copyrighted, and MENC encourages interested parties “to reproduce it in order to assure its widest possible circulation” (MENC 2003, <http://www.menc.org/resources/view/united-states-copyright-law-a-guide-for-music-educators>).

Teaching Licensure and Credentials. Another incident subcategory was current policy and law enforcement concerning teaching licensure and credentials ($n = 18$). Like previously reported teacher competency dilemmas, incidents such as the one that follows describe conflicts between maintaining the integrity of state teacher licensure policies and the integrity of the actual teaching process.

We had a student teacher a few years back who was weak in musicianship skills and very weak in leadership skills... The student teacher was quite reluctant to get up in front of a band to direct and felt intimidated by the students! ... How can you write a recommendation for someone who does not have the skills to be successful as a teacher or community leader for a music program?

Students Who Break the Law. Several incidents involved whether to hold a student accountable for breaking a law or rule, when doing so would jeopardize a musical group’s performance ($n = 15$):

My drum major was suspended because she smoked pot and was caught. I needed her to run the half time show we had been practicing for months and so I convinced administration that she had to participate in the half time show because it was part of my curriculum and part of her grade. I decided the other kids shouldn't be punished because of her idiocy so I worked hard to keep her in the show. In my heart, I would have preferred she not participate, but not at the expense of the other kids’ performance.

Several of these incidents related to students’ breaking the law while on field trips or during travel, as the following example illustrates:

[A student was caught shoplifting during the lunch break on a trip to a festival.] Do I leave her with the police, knowing her mother was coming to pick her up? This decision was a challenging one ...

Resource Allocation

Incidents and conflicts related to tangible and intangible resources, such as money, time, influence, and property constituted 19 percent ($n = 103$) of the total number of dilemmas collected. Subcategories related to resource allocation included equity issues, questionable use of fiscal authority and influence, and budgets.

Equity Issues. Critical incidents concerning fairness, equality, or balance between individuals or programs comprised half of the dilemmas in the “Resource Allocation” category ($n = 52$):

The different standards we apply to musicians and athletes. Athletes can practice (rehearse) on Sundays before playoffs or districts. Musicians and actors can not rehearse (practice) on Sunday before major performances or competitions.

Conflict between programs was not limited to music programs versus non-music programs. Another common theme within this category was troubling conflict or competition within music departments or between music programs:

We in the music department are forced to compete for the same students. There is great and blatant inequality in the resources given to the three departments. The orchestra program is treated like a footnote in the school music program.

Questionable use of Fiscal Authority and Influence. Twenty-seven incidents related to ethical decision-making in fiscal matters. Concerns related to misappropriation or misuse of funds and equipment also fell into this category. Music educators, such as the ones who shared the following incidents, seemed to recognize an obligation to make “right” choices with school money and property:

This year I have had students need repair on their instruments and could not afford to have it fixed. They don't have a lot of money at home so I spent some of my school budget for repairs to have it fixed. I know this is not fair to other students, but I want all my students to be able to participate on a good, working instrument in class.

The temptation to use materials for personal home use [such as] music equipment or CD's...

Other incidents referred to compensation for accompanists or private lessons:

If hiring friends who are guest musicians to accompany ensembles, how much to pay that person?

...to receive honors credit, students must study privately with a teacher of their instrument or voice. Our band director was giving lessons to students for honor credit and charging them a fee for this...

Budgets. Respondents shared 24 incidents related to budgets and other fiscal resources. Many of these incidents related to the problem of providing quality education in the midst of budget cuts, as the following example illustrates:

It costs money to be in band, and sometimes that prevents kids from joining... Schools, unfortunately, cannot keep a good enough supply of all instruments so that more [students] can afford to join. Budgets are shrinking.

Fiscal responsibility and ethics related to money and business are areas for which many music educators may not be adequately prepared, and yet most music educators will, at some time in their careers, manage a simple budget for the classes or programs they oversee. Many others will engage in music education related commerce (e.g., with music merchants, private studio teachers, travel agents) on a regular basis throughout their careers. Guidance on fiscal matters at both the pre-service and in-service stage could be most helpful to all music educators.

Relationships

This category comprised 18 percent of the total incidents collected. Although some of these dilemmas also related peripherally to the enforcement of policy and law, the primary element of incidents in this category was relationships between people. Subcategories included the conflicts with colleagues, administrators, or parents; professional boundaries with students; confidentiality; and honesty.

Conflicts with Colleagues, Administrators, or Parents. Nearly half the dilemmas in the “Relationships” category concerned conflicts with others ($n = 44$). In many of these dilemmas, the respondent struggled with whether to or how to communicate with a colleague about a controversial or difficult topic:

As I was about to knock on the door of an adjunct colleague, I overheard him recommending to a talented freshman student of mine that he should consider transferring. It was a dilemma both because of the lack of loyalty (and frankly misinformation) he provided, but also because I had eavesdropped in overhearing this. I decided not to confront the colleague, rather to provide counsel to the student, who ultimately stayed.

The most frequent ethical issue I have to deal with is when the student of another teacher comes to me requesting a studio change. It is important to me that the student have communicated clearly with his/her teacher about his/her concerns before making contact with a possible new teacher, but I find that the student is rarely confident in his/her ability to talk with the teacher about his/her dissatisfactions, for several reasons. The student almost never perceives it as an ethical responsibility to give the original teacher a chance to meet the students' needs/desires.

Several of the incidents referred to disagreements with administrators on “the right thing to do” in a given situation, as the following examples illustrate:

A school administrator changed my comments and grades on report cards to show more progress than what was made.

I wanted to pursue continuing education coursework this summer, but my Board of Ed said no. I struggled with thoughts of resigning, going against their wishes, arguing, or giving in. I gave in ...

Professional Boundaries with Students. Thirty-two incidents related to dual or conflicting relationships and the maintenance of clear, responsible, and professional boundaries between teachers and students. Most of the incidents in this category described complications that arose when teacher-student relationships became “too close.”

I had a colleague (we shared a room) who I felt ‘crossed the teacher/student line.’ She became very friendly to her students and allowed students to share things emotionally with her that were not appropriate. She had ‘gatherings’ in our back storage room, and I was not comfortable with the activities during these gatherings. Students saw her as a friend and not as a teacher.

Due to the closeness that we build with our students, frequently students divulge personal information to you as a mentor. I had to decide whether or not to contact a parent after the child had told me she had been involved in an abusive relationship...

In some cases, respondents were troubled by a romantic or sexual relationship between a teacher and student:

Just this week I had a colleague who was arrested because of a sexual relationship with a 17 year old student ...

This past summer a colleague was accused of sexual misconduct with a high school student. The student in question was a student whom all music staff members had taught over the past four years. We all felt very unsettled to know that we had been alone in a practice room with her, while she was sleeping with one of our colleagues during the same time period.

It is difficult to determine whether inappropriate relationships between music teachers and students are widespread, and to date there is only one descriptive study in music education on the prevalence of sexual misconduct by music educators (Simpson 2010). A handful of resources provide teachers and administrators with guidance for preventing sexual misconduct (Brandenburg 1997, Stein and Sjostrom 1994, Stufft 1997), but information specific to the unique challenges faced by music educators is greatly needed.

Confidentiality. Incidents related to confidentiality included concerns about gossiping with students, keeping confidences, and complaining in public about problems at school ($n = 16$).

I find it disturbing that teachers in my school talk about students, parents, etc. during their lunch break with the students in the same room. I know it's noisy and it's the only time they have time to 'blow off steam,' but it seems like an inappropriate place. I'm always worried that information that should be private could be overheard by students and repeated at home..."

It really troubles me how often teachers gossip/talk about students in front of other students. Even though I may not be participating, it sure looks like I am.

Honesty. Six incidents related to a teacher's struggle over whether to be honest regarding a student's performance or chances at a music career. The following example is typical of the incidents in this subcategory:

Is it ethical to allow a private student to continue to study music performance because they want to, when it is clear that they do not have the talent, work ethic, or overall aptitude to succeed in the music profession?

Diversity

The final category of critical incidents presented important, although somewhat complicated, results. Many of the earliest returned questionnaires included stories from music educators about problems they encountered working with Native American students:

Working with Native Americans you have to be careful how you approach certain subjects. We do pretty good when talking about folk songs and the word 'Indians.' Our families in this region are pretty open-minded...

I currently teach in an area where over 75% of the students are Native American. The thing that I find challenging is that if they don't feel like doing or participating in class they don't.

It became evident that some of the respondents misread the question. Despite the inclusion of the words "ethics" and "ethical" in the cover letter, it became clear to me that some respondents thought they had been asked to share "ethnic" dilemmas:

Not so much ethnically challenging, but I had a student say to me after class, 'Just so you know, I'm not a believer.' ... This child is an extremely gifted singer. He is going to be singing a great deal of sacred music during his school career. What a challenge to know that the literature I choose is offensive to him and to his family.

We don't have ethnic issues. Most of our kids are Caucasian. They accept each other well.

Although a few incidents related to sex/gender differences or sexual orientation ($n = 7$), an overwhelming number of the critical incidents in the "Diversity" category included issues related to race, ethnicity, or religion ($n = 76$). Unfortunately, it was not

possible to determine how many of the respondents were simply confused by the question, but it seems unlikely that all of them read the word “ethical” incorrectly. Perhaps issues of ethnicity are so close to the surface, it is the first thing that came to the minds of these music educators:

There are many Hispanic students moving into the area that I teach. I have only had two [Hispanic] students participate in the band program. . . Why are they not choosing music?

Many of our students see music education as ‘white privilege’ (we’re in a 93% black school) and we have to do a lot of convincing to get the kids to participate. . .

Although our school population is near 70% Native American, our Native American population in band is around 30%. Some people have questioned that. I say the class is elective. That usually ends the discussion.

Although this category may have been artificially large because of misunderstandings of the word “ethical,” many of the incidents related to race and ethnicity clearly represented challenging situations that music educators face in their daily work. Many undergraduate pre-service music education programs include required courses in regional and world cultures or diversity. However, considering the large number of troubling or disturbing incidents related to race in the current study, it seems that more dialogue and exposure to these topics is needed.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate the kinds of ethical problem-solving music educators face in their daily work and to begin a discussion about these matters. This collection of critical incidents may serve as a catalyst for discussions in undergraduate and graduate music education courses and in-service workshops and can provide a basis for continuing research in descriptive ethics. Further clarification may be necessary to determine stable categories for critical incidents of this kind, and future research will certainly be necessary to determine the prevalence of, and attitudes regarding, ethical dilemmas of in-service music educators. Music educators can find guidance from a variety of resources on many of the topics included in the current study. However, some issues that are troubling or disturbing to many music educators deserve more attention. In particular, in-service music educators may benefit from additional instruction and dialogue in the ethical use of fiscal and other school resources, professional relationships with students, and issues related to racial,

ethnic, and religious diversity. The results of this study may be useful in bringing discussions of applied ethics into undergraduate music education programs and professional in-service education, and toward the possible development of a professional code of ethics that addresses the daily work of music education practice.

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