
The influences of parents, teachers, peers and other factors on students' motivation in music

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Abstract

This study examined influences of: parental support of music, previous musical experience, self-concept in music, teachers and peers, academic and social integration in music classes, and value of music on college nonmusic majors' intentions to continue music participation. An author-developed Choir Participation Survey was administered to 130 choir members at a large public university in the United States. The proposed path analytical model fitted data well and explained 42% ($p < .01$) of variance in musical intentions. The analysis showed that students whose parents were involved in music and supportive of their children's musical participation developed better self-concepts in music, consequently felt more comfortable in choir academically and socially, valued music more, and as a result developed higher motivation to participate in various musical activities in the future. The strongest direct predictor of musical intentions was value of music ($\beta = .65, p < .01$).

Keywords: motivation; parent; teacher; sibling; persistence; music; achievement.

Introduction

Music motivation remains a central topic in music education research. Studies in psychology, sociology, and education have provided valuable information regarding the nature of students' motivation and persistence in various domains. Researchers have often investigated the influences of selected factors on students' motivation without placing their findings into the broader perspective of motivational theories. This study combined the findings of previous research, identified the external and internal factors that might contribute to shaping students' interest and persistence in music over time, and explored the nature of the relationships among these factors.

Literature review

Previous literature indicates that various internal and external factors influence students' motivation. External factors, such as support received from parents, teachers, and peers, strongly and positively influence students' persistence, and play an important role in shaping their self-concept of ability and task value (Davidson, Sloboda & Howe, 1995-96; Frome & Eccles, 1998; Howe & Sloboda, 1991; Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk & Eccles, 2001; Sichivitsa, 2002). Internal factors, such as task value and self-concept of ability, further influence students' achievement and persistence.

Research shows that young children depend mainly on extrinsic motivation (Zdzinski, 1996), yet intrinsic motivation, over time, becomes a stronger force influencing students' persistence (Asmus & Harrison, 1990; Davidson, et al., 1995-96). While many of the studies have focused on the effect of these factors on student motivation, there seems to be a lack of

understanding of the impact these factors have on each other. This study examines the interplay between external and internal factors and reveals their comprehensive effect on student motivation.

External factors

First, parental influence has been identified as an important external factor affecting student motivation and persistence. Early in their lives, specifically around the first or second grade (Wigfield, et al., 1997), children begin to evaluate their ability to perform various tasks. Children tend to base their evaluations on their own opinions and the feedback received from the significant adults in their lives. Parental assessment is more powerful than class grades in determining young children's self-perceptions of ability (Frome & Eccles, 1998). Moreover, mothers' feedback appears to wield greater influence over students' self-concepts of ability than the teachers' evaluations (Wigfield, et al., 1997). Hallam (2002) argues that even though a broad body of research suggests a particular importance of parental support in developing students' interest in music, such support may not always be necessary. Hallam, and Sichivitsa (2004), agree that students could develop an independent interest in music based on their own needs and aspirations, without any parental feedback. When parental support is present, however, it can have a significant positive affect on a child's motivation in music.

Second, music teachers occupy a unique place in students' lives because of the opportunities to create more meaningful musical learning for students by combining in-school and out-of-school musical experiences and by involving parents in music instruction. Macmillan (2004) states that teachers with greater pedagogical qualifications and with more experience and confidence in their teaching skills are more likely to involve parents in the music classroom. Within a classroom, students seem to be more motivated when they perceive their teacher to be supportive and cooperative (Brandstrom, 1995-96; Burnett, 1999; Pitts, 2004), able to explain material well (LeBlanc, 1992), able to provide clear directions for students' work, and able to give immediate constructive feedback in a positive manner (Price, 1983). Teachers' ability to understand and accommodate individual differences (Kvet & Watkins, 1993), as well as provide positive reinforcement and overall support appear to be similarly crucial for motivating students and helping them succeed (Greenberg, 1970; Pitts, 2004).

Third, peer support and peer tutoring may help students feel more comfortable in a classroom, and thus motivate them to actively engage in music making and performance (Burnard, 2002; Hall, 2005). Conversely, peers' refusal or failure to appreciate and recognize each other's accomplishments may create discomfort and hinder students' success in the classroom (Howe & Sloboda, 1992). Finnäs' study (1989) revealed that both actual and perceived peer pressure may change students' behavior. Adolescents reported lower preferences for classical and folk music when announcing their opinions in front of peers, and higher preferences when expressing their opinions privately. However, students' preferences for rock music remained equal when expressed both in front of peers and privately. In an earlier study, Finnäs (1987) found that students overestimated their peers' love for rock music, which may have influenced their behavior in front of peers.

Fourth, positive previous experiences tend to motivate students to participate in similar activities in the future (Kukla, 1978). In a study of high school students, Neill (1998) found that participants who enjoyed singing in choir in the past and who perceived their program as reputable were more likely to re-enroll in choir the following year. Chandler, Chiarella and Auria (1988) obtained similar results in a study of ninth grade instrumental students. High school students who enjoyed playing their instruments in the past were more likely to practice more often, to aspire to move up within their performance group, to attain higher levels of performance, to feel successful, and to intend to play their instruments longer in the future.

Internal factors

First, self-concept of ability appears to be an important internal factor influencing students' achievement (Eccles, et al., 1983), satisfaction with the learning environment (Sichivitsa, 2003, 2004), interest in the subject (Marsh, Trautwein, Ludtke, Koller & Baumert, 2005), and persistence (Bandura, 1993; Klinedinst, 1991). Eccles et al. and Bandura also point out that self-concept of ability is a crucial factor in determining students' task participation choices: previous experiences of success or failure in a task influence students' expectations for performance in similar tasks in the future, and consequently determine their participation decisions. Students tend to avoid tasks that have previously resulted in failure but are willing to engage in activities that have previously resulted in success, even when those activities appear to be challenging.

People may choose tasks in which they expect themselves to succeed because of the desire to appear capable to themselves and others (Kukla, 1978). Students who believe that music performance is a reflection and function of their talent rather than their practice efforts tend to avoid challenging tasks that may uncover their lack of talent (Smith, 2005). Generally speaking, students have a tendency to choose behaviors that help them avoid failure and protect their self-worth (Covington, 1984). Covington and Omelich (1985) distinguish between shame and guilt as two main feelings associated with failure. Students feel guilty when they put forth low effort and fail the task, yet they feel shame when their high effort still results in failure. Students are more likely to choose guilt over shame because guilt protects their self-worth with respect to the task performance, and therefore, they are unlikely to put significant effort into the tasks that are likely to result in failure.

Second, attributing personal significance or importance to a task, in other words, placing value on the task, may influence students' persistence (Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Students may value participation in a specific task for various internal or external reasons. Eccles et al. (1983) defined four components of the subjective task value construct: attainment (determination to do well in the task), interest (enjoyment from performing the task), utility or importance (usefulness of the task to achieving later goals), and cost (readiness to make sacrifices in order to participate in the task). Students may be motivated by one or more value components, and students' value of the task may shift with time from one component to another.

Eccles and colleagues (Eccles, 1983; Eccles, et al., 1983; Wigfield, Eccles & Rodriguez, 1998) have developed and validated the expectancy-value theory stating that a combination of competence beliefs and task values determines one's persistence and achievement on the task. Over time, mutual influence of students' expectancy of success and task value increases (Wigfield, et al., 1997). Students are more likely to value activities in which they feel successful, put more energy and time into those activities, and consequently reach even higher levels of performance (Durik, Vida & Eccles, 2006; Wigfield, Eccles, & Rodriguez, 1998; Wigfield, et al., 1997).

Toward a model of music motivation

Previous research in the area of motivation and achievement produced multiple theories, mainly focusing on one or two aspects of human behavior or cognition (Bandura, 1993; Eccles, et al., 1983; Weiner, 1979). Empirical studies produced evidence of the influence of selected factors on student motivation and persistence in music, but rarely integrated their findings into the greater theoretical framework. The purpose of this study was to incorporate the results of previous theoretical and empirical studies into a new theory of music motivation that explains how the interactions among selected external and internal factors gradually shape students' motivation to persist in music, and to test the theory through a path analytical model.

Tinto's theory of individual departure from institutions of higher education (1993) influenced the development of this study. Tinto has examined the ways in which selected factors shape college students' decisions to persist or drop out from college. Tinto's theory holds that

students' family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling influence their initial goals, commitments (external, institutional, and goal commitments), and intentions (educational and professional expectations and aspirations) before coming to college. While in college, students' academic integration (fulfillment of the educational goals and expectations) and social integration (satisfaction with the informal relations among students and faculty) shape their later goals and commitments, and consequently lead to persistence or withdrawal from college. According to Tinto, incongruence between students' needs, expectations, interests, and actual college experiences may decrease students' motivation to stay in college. Tinto emphasizes the importance of the learning community, stating that colleges may be able to improve retention by addressing the academic and social needs of their students.

The path analytical model in this study resembled Tinto's model (1993), beginning with the background characteristics, continuing through academic and social integration, and ending in the intentions for future music participation. This study re-defined variables introduced by Tinto to make them applicable to the field of music education. Additionally, this model incorporated Eccles et al. (1983) expectancy-value theory by introducing separate variables of self-concept and value of music.

Hallam (2002) developed a theory of music motivation that holds some similarities with Tinto's theory. Hallam proposed that music motivation depended on a complex interaction between the individual characteristics of the student and various environmental factors. While acknowledging the significance of the internal and external factors, Hallam did not attempt to measure their interactions, but rather pointed out the need for "research examining the way that these interact together to generate or reduce enthusiasm for and commitment to music" (Hallam, 2002, p. 239). The theory presented in this study attempted to evaluate and quantify the effect of the internal and external factors on each other, and ultimately on students' self-reported music motivation.

This theory hypothesizes that parental support of music and the amount of students' previous musical experience will influence students' self-concepts in music. Previous musical experience and parental support will also have a reciprocal effect on each other. Students' self-concepts in music will influence their academic and social integration in choir. Academic integration will impact social integration, and both will influence students' value of music, which, in turn, will impact students' self-reported future musical intentions.

This theory was tested through a longitudinal path analytical model (see Figure 1) that assessed the direct and indirect influences of two exogenous variables (parental support of music, and previous musical experience) and four endogenous variables (self-concept in music, academic integration, social integration, and value of music) on college nonmusic major choral students' intentions to continue music participation. Exogenous variables acted as predictors of other variables in the model, and, except for correlative relationships, were not influenced by any other variable. Endogenous variables functioned as dependent variables in at least one causal relationship in the model (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998).

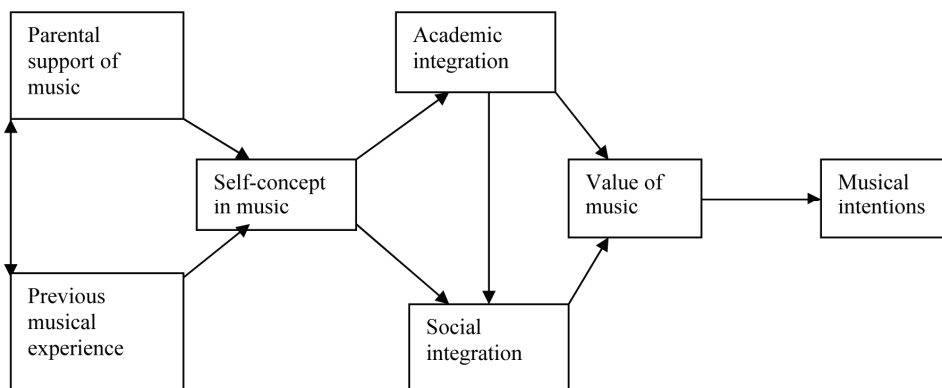


Figure 1. Proposed path-analytical model: Influence of parental support of music, previous musical experience, self-concept in music, academic integration, social integration, and value of music on musical intentions.

Definitions of variables

Parental support of music measured parental involvement in music (parents go to concerts with their children, play an instrument, enjoy singing and listening to music), and support of their children's musical involvement (parents go to their children's performances, talk about music with children, approve and encourage children's music studies).

Previous musical experience measured the total amount of students' (a) choral (church, school, community ensembles); (b) instrumental (marching band, symphonic band, solo instrumental); and (c) solo vocal experience in years.

Self-concept in music assessed students' perceptions of their own musical ability and of other adults' opinions of students' musical ability.

Academic integration measured students' satisfaction with the (a) opportunities for musical growth in class; (b) performance demands of the choral class; (c) musical repertoire; and (d) conductor's professionalism.

Social integration measured students' satisfaction with the informal interactions with other choral members and the conductor.

Value of music assessed students' perceptions of musical experiences as ones that provide opportunities for personal growth, enjoyment, and learning, as well as confirm positive characteristics of themselves.

Musical intentions measured students' intentions to participate in formal and informal musical activities in the future.

Methods

Instrument

Based on the review of the research literature, the author developed the initial version of the Choir Participation Survey and tested the instrument in a pilot project (Sichivitsa, 2002). Results of the pilot project showed that the parental support in music, self-efficacy, and musical intentions scales of the survey were not reliable ($\alpha = .74$, $\alpha = .68$, and $\alpha = .62$ respectively) and required revision. The author consulted a panel of four independent experts in music education,

choral music, and educational psychology regarding necessary modifications. The panel members evaluated the importance of each statement to the respective variables and struck the irrelevant statements from the survey. With the help of the experts, the author revised each scale, re-phrasing, eliminating, and adding a number of statements to improve the internal validity of the instrument. Upon further review of the literature, the author also added a new scale, value of music, to the survey and the model. The panel evaluated and approved the final version of the Choir Participation Survey.

The Choir Participation Survey contained two sections. The first section gathered demographic information on students, including gender, age, current education level, major, plans for re-enrollment in the same choral class (not included in the musical intentions scale during the analysis), class status (elective or required), and the amount of students' previous musical experience. The second section consisted of positive and negative statements that assessed seven variables in the study, the responses to which were measured on a Likert-type scale.

Participants and procedures

Participants in this study were 154 students (53 males and 101 females, mean age of 21.6 years) who were enrolled in three choirs at a large public university in the United States. A large number of students majored in liberal arts (33.8%), followed by business (17.7%), education (15.4%), engineering (13.1%), natural sciences (7.7%), human sciences (7.7%), architecture, design, and construction (3.1%), and nursing (1.5%). Choir was an elective class for all students.

The researcher distributed copies of the anonymous Choir Participation Survey to 158 students at the end of choir rehearsals. Students who were willing to participate in the study filled out the surveys and returned them to the researcher.

Results

One hundred and fifty four students returned their questionnaires, out of which 152 had complete information and were appropriate for the analysis. The focus of this study was nonmusic majors' intentions to continue music participation, and therefore 22 music majors were excluded from the analysis. The final sample included 130 students. Means, standard deviations, and internal consistency coefficients for each scale of the survey are reported in Table 1. The zero-order correlations among variables in the model are presented in Table 2.

Statement	M	SD	α
Parental support of music*	4.41	.48	.77
Previous musical experience (in years)*	5.21	2.52	-
Self-concept in music*	4.12	.51	.84
Academic integration*	4.07	.36	.76
Social integration*	4.23	.50	.84
Value of music*	4.39	.41	.82
Musical intentions*	4.07	.58	.84

Note: * Likert-type scales, where 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Undecided, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. An internal consistency of $\alpha > .75$ was considered acceptable.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and reliability alphas for the continuous measurements of the Choir Participation Survey ($N = 130$).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Parental support of music	-						
2. Previous musical experience		.37*					
3. Self-concept in music		.58*	.36*				
4. Value of music		.43*	.28*	.54*			
5. Academic integration		.26*	.13	.30*	.59*		
6. Social integration	.45*	.29*	.52*	.58*	.64*		
7. Musical intentions	.43*	.27*	.55*	.65*	.34*	.56*	

* $p < .01$

Table 2. Correlation matrix for path analysis ($N = 130$).

Path analysis indicated a good fit between the theory and data, $CFI = .98$ (see Figure 2). The chi-square test was significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 130) = 57, p < .05$, but it was not used as the only indicator of the model fit because of high sensitivity of the chi-square analysis to the sample size (Bentler, 1990). The analysis explained significant amount of variance in each endogenous variable, $p < .05$. All hypotheses were supported by data with beta coefficients ranging from $\beta = .16$ ($p < .05$) to $\beta = .65$ ($p < .01$).

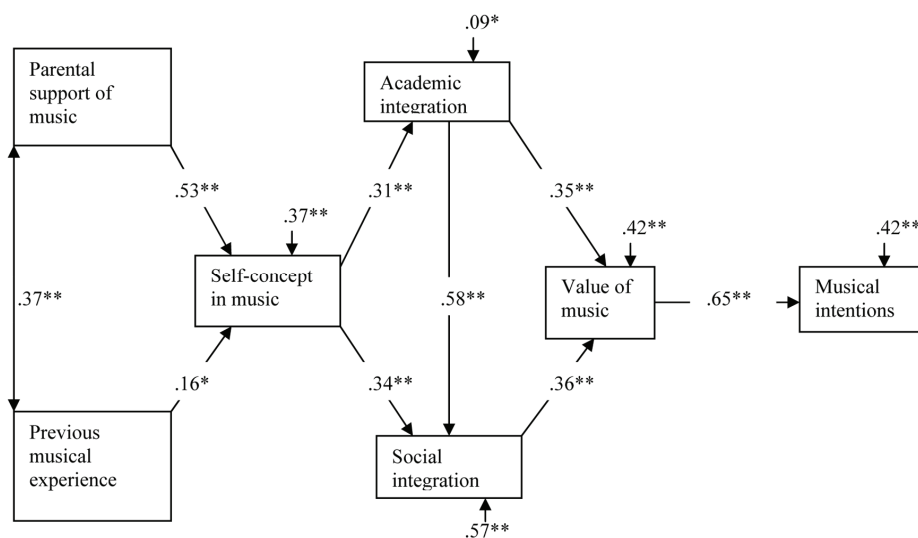


Figure 2. Results of the path-analytical model: Influence of parental support of music, previous musical experience, self-concept in music, academic integration, social integration, and value of music on musical intentions. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Parental support of music and previous musical experience explained 37% of variance in self-concept in music ($p < .01$). Students who had more previous musical experience ($\beta = .16, p < .05$) and reported higher levels of parental support of music ($\beta = .53, p < .01$) had better self-concepts in music.

Students who reported higher levels of parental support of music also had more previous musical experience ($r = .37, p < .01$).

Self-concept in music explained 9% of variance in academic integration ($p < .05$). Students who had better self-concepts in music ($\beta = .31, p < .01$) were more satisfied with the academic aspects of the choral class.

Self-concept in music and academic integration explained 57% of variance in social integration ($p < .01$). Students who had better self-concepts in music ($\beta = .34, p < .01$) and were more satisfied with the academic aspects of the choral class ($\beta = .58, p < .01$) were also more satisfied with the social aspects of the class.

Academic and social integration explained 42% of variance in value of music ($p < .01$). Students who felt more satisfied with the academic ($\beta = .35, p < .01$) and social ($\beta = .36, p < .01$) aspects of the choral class also valued music more.

Value of music explained 42% of variance in musical intentions ($p < .01$). Students who valued music more ($\beta = .65, p < .01$) had higher intentions to continue music participation in the future.

Discussion

Results of the model analysis

Results of this study validated the path analytical model (see Figure 2), explaining 42% of variance in college nonmusic majors' intentions to continue participation in various musical activities in the future. First, the mutually reinforcing factors of previous musical experience and parental support of music positively influenced students' self-concepts in music. Next, students with better self-concepts in music reported better academic and social integration in choir, both of which directly and positively affected the value students placed on music. Additionally, self-concept in music had an indirect positive affect on social integration through academic integration. Finally, students who placed greater value on music were more motivated to participate in music in the future.

Influences on self-concept

This study indicated that both parental support of music and the amount of previous musical experience had a significant positive impact on college students' self-concepts in music. Students were more confident in their own musical abilities when they thought that their parents not only enjoyed music personally, but were also supportive and encouraging of the students' musical pursuits. Students who spent more years singing or playing instruments also reported better self-concepts by claiming more confidence in their music skills, ability to improve their singing skills, and satisfaction with the current level of performance.

Correlation between the parental support of music and previous musical experience variables in the model suggested that parents and children could influence each other's attitudes toward music. Children's interest in music may inspire parents to support their children's musical endeavors, gradually get more involved in music, and begin to appreciate music (Hallam, 2002; Howe & Sloboda, 1991). Parents who see a particular musical interest or talent in their child may become more involved in musical activities and grow to value the role of music in their children's lives even if they have not been interested in or supportive of music before.

The relative importance of previous musical experience and parental support of music to the development of self-concept in music may vary depending on students' age. Past research indicated that young children based evaluations of their musical abilities largely on parental and teacher feedback, and that such feedback was more influential than children's actual level of musical performance or the amount of musical experience (Frome & Eccles, 1998; Sichivitsa, 2004; Wigfield, et al., 1997). This study indicated, however, that older students incorporated

feedback received from others along with self-evaluations of their performance when assessing their musical abilities.

Prolonged periods of music learning may lead older students to believe that they improved their musical skills over time and achieved higher levels of performance. This relationship can also work as a positive feedback mechanism. Students who are confident in their musical abilities may become more persistent in music learning, achieve higher levels of performance, improve their self-concepts in music, and become even more motivated to continue music participation (Chandler, Chiarella & Auria, 1988). The model presented in this study reflected such a circular relationship between self-concept and task choices (Eccles, 1994) by beginning from previous musical experiences, continuing with self-concept, ending with the intended future musical experiences, and implying continuation to the next stage of the development of the self-concept in music.

Influences on value of music

According to Eccles' expectancy-value theory (Eccles, et al., 1983), students' expectancy of success (similar to 'self-concept in music' in this study) and task value were correlated, and both influenced future achievement choices. This study showed that the relationship between self-concept and value was causal and indirect, mediated by students' current academic and social experiences in choir. Students who felt more confident in their musical abilities tended to be more satisfied with the academic aspects of the class, such as learning opportunities in choir, the performance level of the group, the music selections, and the conductor's professionalism. Moreover, students with better self-concepts in music reported greater satisfaction with the social interactions with other choir members and the director. Finally, students who experienced better academic and social integration in choir tended to value music to a greater extent.

Self-concept in music also had an indirect positive effect on students' social integration in choir through the academic integration. Choir members who believed in their high musical ability and were satisfied with the academic aspects of the choir class, consequently felt more comfortable to interact informally with other choir members and the conductor both in and outside of class. Such an indirect influence of self-concept on social integration may be due to the general nature of choirs. While students' poor achievement in academic classes may remain confidential, performance classes make achievement public. Choral students may experience pressure to perform well in class because all members of the group, including the conductor, can hear whether the choir members are making mistakes. Singers who think that they are performing well in class may feel more confident in class, and consequently may be more likely to relax and communicate positively with other choral members and their teacher.

Academic and social integration in choir had an almost equal positive strong effect on students' value of music. Previously, Sichivitsa (2004) found that social integration was not important for shaping elementary school students' music values, but with age the importance of social factors in forming students' perceptions of musical activities increased. Younger students valued music more when they thought that they were doing well in the music class and were living up to the expectations of the teacher. However, this study showed that college students placed equal importance on the social and academic aspects of the choir.

The results also indicated that teachers played a crucial role in improving both academic and social integration of their students. Participants in this study valued their musical experiences more if they thought that their choral director was a skilled, knowledgeable, supportive, and fair teacher who enjoyed working with students and allowed time after rehearsals for informal interactions. Similarly, adult students in Pitts' study (2004) felt more comfortable and productive in class when they received support from their teachers and peers. The students reported that a safe environment, in which they felt free to experiment with music and make mistakes,

significantly contributed to the positive experiences they had in a music program. Barrett (2006) also emphasized the importance of cooperation and collaboration between the teacher and the student, when the teacher not only provided constructive feedback but also gave a student emotional support and encouragement. This study presented empirical evidence that teachers who addressed both academic and social needs of students in their classrooms not only improved students' attitudes towards the class, but also enhanced students' value of music and overall motivation to continue music participation.

Peers played a significant role in shaping students' values and attitudes toward music. Although the majority of students did not join the choir for social reasons, positive social experiences in class increased the value students placed on music. Students enjoyed belonging to a choral group and felt more comfortable and motivated when peers supported and accepted them in choir. Even though students valued peer support, their friends' decisions to stay in choir did not influence their own plans for re-enrollment in the same choir class. Only 1.6% of students said that they were going to stay in choir because of the fellowship with other singers, which was consistent with Neill's (1998) findings. This study suggested that although peer support was not the only reason for continuing music participation for college students, when combined with other positive influences, it contributed to the improvement of students' values of music, and consequently, intentions to continue music participation.

Influences on musical intentions

Value that students placed on music was a direct predictor of their intentions to continue music participation, which supported previous research (Eccles, 1983; Hurley, 1992; Sichivitsa, 2004). Following Eccles' definitions, the interest value was the strongest motivational factor for choral members in this study. Students who perceived music as an important part of their intellectual and spiritual growth, loved singing, and enjoyed participating in choir felt more motivated to seek out opportunities for additional musical experiences in the future. Overall, participants in this study placed little importance on the utility value mostly because they did not receive long-term practical benefits from music participation. The only practical benefit of the participants' re-enrollment in choir was fulfilling the performing arts credit requirement at the university. However, not one student mentioned the credit requirement as a reason for current or future enrollment in choir.

Choir members in this study were more motivated by intrinsic than extrinsic factors. The majority of students (70%) reported their intentions to re-enroll in the same class the following semester, whereas only 5.4% did not expect to re-enroll. Consistent with previous research (Neill, 1998), students in this study reported their love for singing (45%) and enjoyment received from the choir (23.6%) as the main reasons for future re-enrollment in the same choral class. Students indicated scheduling conflicts as the main reasons for their inability to re-enroll in choir the following semester.

Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of this study was the definition of parental support of music. The author followed Tinto's model that defined background characteristics as a combination of family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling variables. In the future, distinguishing between parents' own musical involvement (playing music instruments, singing, listening to music at home, attending concerts) and parents' support of the children's music learning (providing finances and transportation for music lessons, attending children's concerts, assisting children in practice, encouraging continued music studies) may reveal more specific and nuanced relationships.

Generalizability of the results was another limitation of this study. Although the sample size was sufficient for this project, involving larger and more diverse groups of participants in

future studies would help strengthen the statistical analysis (Bentler, 1990) and generalizability of the results. For example, this model may be used to investigate instrumental music students' intentions to continue music participation. Replications of this study may also include students from different schools, public and private colleges, different geographical regions, and students with different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

The data collected in this study were based on the results of the researcher-administered survey. Students' answers might have been biased due to the nature of the study design, and their self-reported intentions to continue music participation might have been unrepresentative of their future actions. Follow-up studies tracking students' actual involvement in music would allow researchers to examine the nature of the relationship between students' intentions for future music participation and their actual music participation. Such follow-up studies may also indicate to what extent the proposed model predicts students' actual music involvement, and whether the model warrants further modification. Qualitative research is also needed in this area to help further understand the phenomenon of motivation in music.

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