SOCIOLOGICAL IMPEDIMENTS TO MUSIC PROGRAM ENROLLMENT IN
RURAL CENTRAL APPALACHIA:
A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MUSIC

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

2016
Abstract

Low enrollment is a significant issue for many music programs across the country. In rural Central Appalachia, it is one of the most prominent topics of discussion among music educators. The purpose of this project was to explore the literature on music program recruitment and retention as it might relate to sociological factors faced by music programs in rural Central Appalachia. Literature on the topics of socio-economic status, ethnocentrism, musical preferences, program enrollment, and their effects on recruitment and retention was reviewed. A number of strategies such as the inclusion of creative tasks, including composition and improvisation as well as alternative music curriculum strands, were suggested for generating appeal and maintaining student interest. Finally, I concluded this project with examples and suggestions of my own which have been informed by this review.

Keywords: recruitment, retention, rural Appalachia, socio-economic status, musical preferences
To Lovis Whitt, Glenna Johnson, and Dolly Ferrell.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mother for never giving up on me even when I was ready to throw in the towel. I owe my career to my high school band directors who inspired me to pursue music education. Thank you to Dr. Charles Priest for convincing me this project was a good idea and serving as an outside reader and to Dr. Richard Webb and Dr. John Duff for helping me bring the idea to fruition. Finally, thank you to Bryant Moxley and to Dr. Joey Trivette who after my senior trombone recital said “good job Joe, now go get a Masters.”
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Sociological Impediments to Music Program Enrollment in Rural Central Appalachia: A Review of Literature

Existing research suggests that the socio-economic conditions in rural Central Appalachia have had a negative impact on public school music program enrollment in the region (Elam, 2002; Jones, 2013; Thorne, Tickamyer, & Thorne, 2004). While there are some thriving music programs in rural Central Appalachia, many programs are struggling to maintain interest and enrollment. Educators in troubled or struggling music programs in rural areas like Central Appalachia often cite a lack of funding and poverty as contributors to the problem (Isbell, 2005). However, as discovered by North and Hargreaves (2007), people in rural areas, which are predominantly conservative and blue-collar, often prefer country and folk music over classical music or jazz. Sociological considerations like these are vast; however, conversations on the topic between music educators typically revolve around economic issues. Furthermore, much of the existing research has focused on economic issues as well as pedagogical strategies employed by music educators rather than sociological factors. It is important to consider the sociological factors in rural Appalachia that negatively influence student decisions about enrolling in music programs. While many economic issues may be out of the hands of music educators, the literature contains strategies that may allow educators to overcome issues related to social class, social identity, musical preference, and cultural issues such as ethnocentrism (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995; Bates, 2012). This compilation of research regarding the process of socialization, ethnocentrism, gender roles, and social identity may provide insight into such factors and help to generate strategies to alleviate the issue of low music-program enrollment in rural Appalachia.
Purpose and Rationale for the Project

The purpose of developing this literature review was twofold. First, this review presents much of the existing body of research regarding common sociological factors and their impact on public school music program enrollment. While these factors are present in all regions, this review will seek to isolate the specific implications of these factors in rural Central Appalachia. Second, this literature review contains research regarding pedagogical strategies in order to provide music educators in rural Appalachia with effective suggestions for alleviating the negative effects of the sociological factors examined.

Many music educators in the region, myself included, have identified curricular demands and economic hardship as the primary culprits. However, one cannot ignore the results of sociological factors. As a native Appalachian and music educator, I have observed a general disinterest in music courses by students virtually unaffected by curricular demands and economic issues. Therefore, my interest in examining sociological factors has been piqued.

This project is also a result of courses in the graduate program at the University of Florida. The Creative Thinking in Music course, designed by Dr. Peter Webster, allowed opportunities to study new pedagogical methods giving students the opportunity to experience music in a creative sense rather than in performance situations alone. Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) wrote that the personal interests of students should be taken into consideration and that more opportunities to create music should be afforded in music classrooms. Allowing students to pursue their own musical interests may lead to a deeper interest in music in general.
The *Foundations of Music Education* course, designed by Dr. Charles Hoffer, was also instrumental in my design of this project. The course placed particular emphasis on the sociological and psychological factors pertaining to musical interest, preference, and learning. The issue of social identity and grouping was examined heavily in this course and allowed me to discover several parallels with my own research. For example, Bates (2012) concluded that students often wish to take classes with members of their own social group. Social grouping and identity are linked to socialization as students seek to associate with like individuals. Therefore, the process of becoming an active member of society will certainly influence social identity, as it is through socialization that attitudes and preferences are formed (Abeles et al., 1995).

For the purposes of this review of literature, the term “rural Central Appalachia” refers to rural counties located in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia (Thorne et al., 2004).

**Review of Literature**

The literature reviewed includes research studies, articles, and other publications pertaining to a number of sociological factors and conditions that may negatively impact music program enrollment in rural Central Appalachia. Socio-economic status was found to affect both social networking and musical preference in ways that could result in decreased enrollment and increased attrition (Abeles et al., 1995; Bates, 2012; Elam, 2002; Jones, 2013). The development of individualism and fatalism in rural Central Appalachia have led to preferences of individual activities over group participation and the feeling that one’s socio-economic conditions cannot be improved (Elam, 2002; Kehrli, 2005). Therefore it is suggested that residents of the region may choose not to
participate in activities or programs that involve either group participation due to individualism, or those viewed as futile attempts to increase socio-economic status or conditions. Such sentiments have also had an effect on how residents of rural Central Appalachia view formal education, extracurricular activities, and fine arts programs. For example, Jones (2013) found that due to a lack of career opportunities and preferences for blue-collar or physical labor have led many students and parents to feel that such activities are irrelevant and instead choose to enroll in vocational programs. Southern pride and ethnocentrism were also found to have an effect as resistance to cultural change, pride in self-reliance and the fruits of physical labor, and ideals about what it means to be truly Southern often pose opposition to formal education, extracurricular activities, and fine arts programs in school (Jones, 2013; Kehrli, 2005). Finally, correlations were found between preference for popular music and various socio-economic conditions that exist in rural Central Appalachia, including but not limited to health conditions, low levels of education, preferences in non-cerebral leisure activities, and political conservatism (Elam, 2002; North & Hargreaves, 2007; Thorne et al., 2004). The following sections contain reviews of the literature regarding the aforementioned factors as well as strategies that may improve recruitment efforts and retention in rural Central Appalachia.

**Socioeconomic Status**

Abeles et al. (1995) explored topics pertaining to sociological and social psychological principles that affect music education. A brief review of these topics is important in order to understand said principles and their relevance to the topic of this review of literature. Abeles and his colleagues referred to social stratification as the
ranking of individuals into classes based upon their socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is determined largely by one’s income; however, other determining factors include occupation and education. In short, the higher one’s level of education and training, the better their chances of obtaining a “white collar” job and therefore a higher salary.

There are certain characteristics associated with social class that affect musical preference and subsequently one’s decision to pursue a musical education. The first of these is the deferred gratification pattern. Abeles et al. (1995) defined this as a pattern of behavior in which someone is willing to put off immediate gratification in order to pursue endeavors that will result in a more satisfying position later in life. In terms of music, those who are willing to postpone gratification are more likely to enjoy more complex works of music that delay expected musical tendencies. Those who desire immediate gratification typically enjoy music that is simple and fulfills expectations more quickly such as popular music. A second characteristic is the tendency of those in a particular class to listen to music that provides them with a level of comfort. This comfort is obtained by listening to the music that is most familiar. People in differing social classes often have specific tastes in music; therefore, children belonging to that particular social class will be more likely to enjoy the music most often associated with their social class as it has become a part of their social identity (Abeles et al., 1995; Bates, 2012). The final characteristic is ethnocentrism, which will be examined later in this review of literature.

Thorne et al. (2004) conducted a quantitative study regarding poverty and income in Appalachia. To complete the study, the authors used data from the 2000 Census as well as reports from the Appalachian Regional Commission from the fiscal years 2003 and 2004. The study included 410 counties from 13 states. These states are: Alabama,
Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. The states were further categorized into three subregions as designated by the Appalachian Regional Commission. The central subregion including West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee contains the most rural counties and data indicated this region has been the most affected by poverty.

According to the authors, “Appalachians who live in the Central sub-region are by far the most likely to be burdened with the deepest poverty,” and suffer from “rural isolation and uneven development” (p. 342). Furthermore, Thorne et al. (2004) found that rural counties in Central Appalachia suffer from the highest poverty rates. In fact, the poverty rates in nonmetropolitan areas of Central Appalachia are twice that of metropolitan areas. Appalachia in general has long been associated with poverty rates that are persistently high. While the data from the study indicated a slight decrease between 1990 and 2000, the poverty rate in rural Appalachia remains higher than the national average. The authors found that one-fifth of those living in rural subregions live in poverty compared to 12.4 percent nationwide. The individual categories of poverty contain data that are quite staggering. The data indicated that in the central sub-region 22.1 percent of individuals, 31.4 percent of children under 6 years of age, 18 percent of individuals over the age of 65, and 18.1 percent of families live below the poverty line. The percentages are even higher in those counties classified as being economically distressed. These Central Appalachian counties have an average poverty rate of 28.7 percent. However, these figures do not represent those who are considered low income but do not meet the criteria to be classified as impoverished. The average income in rural
and Central Appalachia at the time of the study was $34,699 annually as compared to $44,407 annually in metropolitan areas.

Efforts to provide assistance to impoverished areas have yielded mixed results. The Appalachian Regional Commission was created to foster economic development in the region; however, attempts have experienced only limited success (Thorne et al., 2004). Federal funding has been allocated to the region but has primarily focused on creating low-paying jobs repairing infrastructure. If a particular area is not considered a center for potential growth, it is not considered a good investment. Therefore, economic development in the region is underfunded thus allowing for the continuation of income disparity. Income disparity and poverty have a significant sociological impact as income is a major factor in social stratification. The data indicated that in rural Central Appalachia nearly 30 percent of individuals are living below the poverty line. This combined with median incomes below the national average and limited motivation for improvement have created a society dominated by what are considered lower class families.

In an article by Bates (2012), three dimensions of social class and their effects on school music programs were discussed. The dimensions were financial resources, cultural practices, and social networks. While the focus of this literature review does not specifically include economic factors such as household income and school budgets, financial resources are a contributing factor to the stratification of groups of people into social classes. Bates (2012) stated that social class plays a role in music program participation because school systems unintentionally favor wealth by their very design. This is particularly apparent in school music programs as “the markers for success in
music education—participation in select ensembles, first-chair placements, leading roles, high scores at festival—will be reserved for middle class and affluent students” (p. 34). If equal opportunities are not provided for lower income students, enrollment in music programs will continue to be dominated by middle class and wealthy students thus limiting the talent pool from which students are recruited.

Bates (2012) also claimed that cultural practices have a major impact on school music programs. Many positive characteristics such as hard work and humility are often overlooked in lower income students in favor of a more stereotypical view including such characteristics as disorganization, dishonesty, and carelessness. This view becomes particularly problematic as “dominant groups develop standards based on their own characteristics and customs and expect others to emulate their styles and assimilate to their customs” (p. 34). As a result, cultural bias can be found in school music curriculums. In American schools, emphasis is placed on larger ensembles designed to emulate Western art music traditions. In general music courses, music listening is often dominated by what teachers consider to be masterworks from Western art music tradition. When musical preferences are ignored, fewer students will be interested in enrolling in school music programs. Studies have shown that lower income students often prefer musical styles such as country, heavy metal, or rap. Therefore, if Western art music dominates the music curriculum in an effort to “rehabilitate” the musical tastes of lower income students, music courses will be avoided by those targeted for “rehabilitation.”

Bates (2012) also claimed that social class has a significant influence on social networks. A number of obstacles faced by those attempting to move to a higher social
class were identified. First, moving to a higher social class involves movement away from familiar people thus creating the potential for feelings of disconnection or alienation. School music programs are often dominated by middle-class and wealthy students; therefore, upward social mobility could prove undesirable for lower-income students who wish to retain their current social identity. The formation of social identity is a part of socialization in general and students often do not wish to detach from their familiar social groups. The second obstacle facing these students is the need to look and act the part. Students considered lower class may not have the resources necessary to dress like those in another social class. Therefore, participation in a music program filled with middle- and upper-class students may lead to further alienation and create a situation in which the student is in limbo between their former social class and their newly desired social class.

Abril and Gault (2008) conducted a mixed-methods study in order to survey the state of secondary school music as seen by high school principals. The survey included an open-ended question allowing the participants to list and describe the factors they believed had the most significant impact on music-program enrollment. Two of the most commonly cited factors were socioeconomic status and scheduling issues as they relate to social networks. Socioeconomic status plays a major role in the development of social networks as students tend to associate with those of the same social class. Therefore, class scheduling was shown to be an issue as students desire to take classes with members of their social network. While 98 percent of the participants indicated that music courses were offered, only 34 percent of the participants indicated that music courses were required at their schools. The data indicated that in schools where music
classes are not required, the majority of students taking the courses were from higher social classes. Therefore, lower-class students who may be interested in music often opt out of music courses in order to take classes with other members of their social network.

The literature suggests that socioeconomic status has a significant influence on music-program enrollment in rural Central Appalachia. While poverty is not the focus of this review of literature, income is a vital determining factor of social class and therefore has a vicarious sociological impact (Abeles et al., 1995; Abril & Gault, 2008). It is clear from the literature that a large amount of the Central Appalachian population suffers from poverty and an even larger number would be classified as lower class. Therefore, there are several implications related to the social stratification of the Central Appalachian population. Abeles et al. (1995) spoke of the deferred gratification pattern. This pattern not only affects the amount of time individuals are willing to invest in order to obtain higher-paying jobs, but also the amount of time they are willing to invest to achieve gratification within a number of contexts, including music. If a large majority of Central Appalachians are lower class, the literature suggests they would be less willing to invest the amount of time required to learn an instrument, develop the voice, or pursue other formal music training. This pattern would also affect their musical preferences as they would be less likely to enjoy the styles of music typically studied in music courses and ensembles as Western art music typically does not fulfill expectations immediately. Furthermore, if popular music, which provides more immediate gratification, receives little attention or is omitted from the curriculum, students will be less likely to develop interest (Bates, 2012).
Finally, the desire to remain within one’s own social network may act as a deterrent for enrolling in school music programs as students will be forced to listen to music that is outside their comfort zone and create a situation in which they must intermingle with students of a different social class thus leading to feelings of isolation or alienation. Feelings of isolation may be exacerbated in regions like rural Central Appalachia where lower class students may have to leave the majority in order to participate in school music courses and ensembles.

**Individualism and Fatalism**

According to Elam (2002), poverty and subsistence living have been a part of Appalachian life for an extended period of time and have permeated many aspects of life such as culture, social structure, and education. An independent and “closed door” culture in Appalachia led to the development of strong individualism and the idea that the “private good” was more important than the “public good.” As a result of the development of such individualism, many in Appalachia have become more concerned with existing rather than improving their condition. Individualism and pride developed in part from strong bonds of kinship and love of the land. Elam (2002) stated that “Little value was placed on book learning, thus a fundamentalist and fatalistic religious faith developed that comforted, as well as encouraged the acceptance of poverty and hardship as one’s lot in life” (p. 11). Thus many residents of the region see little need in attempting to improve their socioeconomic conditions because they feel their attempt will be futile.

Elam (2002) offered a discussion of Appalachia within the context of the cultural difference model was provided. This model developed by Hofstede (1980) explains how values and norms are passed through generations by means of socialization. Elam
concluded that young people in Appalachia appear to be unable to accommodate changing conditions in a manner that will allow them to capitalize on opportunities for improvement. There is also staunch resistance to change largely attributed to local ties to land and reliance on extended family. As a result, many Appalachians find change to be unacceptable because it does not conform with their long-lasting values and norms. The article concluded by describing an “analgesic subculture” in Appalachia in which fatalism, traditionalism, and religious fundamentalism provide psychological relief from the socio-economic conditions that have plagued the region for generations.

Many of these ideas were echoed by Kehrli (2005) in a thesis regarding Appalachian life and values. Kehrli discussed several Appalachian characteristics which support the writings of Elam (2012) and the idea that music-program enrollment in the region could be suffering due to sociological reasons. The first was the tendency of Appalachian people to favor independence and self-reliance. While they are not considered antisocial, many Appalachians were found to prefer individual activities rather than group activities (Kehrli, 2005). These residents were found to value doing things for themselves even if there are easier means, showing their appreciation for meeting their material means through hard labor.

The literature pertaining to individualism and fatalism suggests that an aversion to group activities and feelings regarding the permanency of conditions would have a negative impact on school music program enrollment. Ensemble courses are group-oriented activities in which members must work together to achieve ensemble blend, balance, and intonation. The group or team effort required for a successful school music ensemble is contradictory to the preference for self-reliance and individual independence
(Kehrli, 2005). Fatalism in Appalachia has led many residents to believe there is no hope for improvement and some do not desire improvement (Elam, 2002). Such sentiments have a negative impact on education in general as individuals do not see the value in formal education because they feel they have no chance of rising above their current social or economic status. Therefore, participation in extracurricular activities and the pursuit of higher education are not a priority because some do not want to improve and others consider improvement to be impossible.

**Practicality of Education**

Elam (2002) identified poverty as the most consistent factor influencing education in Appalachia. There has long been an aversion in Appalachia to leaving the region as people seem to fear leaving the security and comfort they associate with the mountain lifestyle. Options at home are limited as education is often low priority and jobs are scarce. Therefore, many in Appalachia do not feel the need to continue their education as they find little practicality in doing so. These cultural and economic conditions combined with a fatalistic view of life have led many in Appalachia to give priority to the status quo and subsistence living rather than education and improvement.

A qualitative study by Jones (2013) examined various factors that affect education in Central Appalachia and how the results have fostered disdain for formal education by many of the region’s inhabitants. A survey was completed by a sample of Central Appalachian residents and yielded many significant findings and conclusions. The results showed an average high school dropout rate of 27 percent with some areas of reaching as high as 40 percent. Data also indicated that only 25 percent of Central Appalachian
residents had attended college, a figure that is half the national average. Furthermore, only 13 percent of working-age residents had obtained a Bachelor’s degree.

Jones (2013) identified a number of reasons for these educational trends including: unique cultural traditions, strong familial bonds, fierce independence, geographic isolation, and a distinct pattern of socialization. Perpetuated gender roles, particularly those pertaining to employment, were cited as a major influence on the decision not to pursue formal education. A significant number of women forgo education, marry early, and take on the traditional role of homemaker. Many men turn to coalmining, pipeline work, or construction because they are seen as the only financially rewarding professions in the region. There is also the feeling that the only jobs worth doing are those that are physically demanding rather than intellectually demanding (Jones, 2013). Many students remaining in high school will often choose vocational training over extracurricular activities in order to prepare for the jobs available in the region. A number of reasons were found to be the cause of these ideas. First, religious beliefs in the region teach that rewards will come in the afterlife and pursuing wealth in this life is worldly. Therefore, many Appalachians will choose physically demanding, lower-paying jobs due to the belief that wealth in this life is unnecessary. Second, due to geographic isolation and limited occupational possibilities, many in Central Appalachia believe book knowledge is far less important than practical knowledge. As such, many parents in the region see little value in extracurricular activities or the pursuit of a college education due to the aforementioned idea that book knowledge is irrelevant as opposed to practical knowledge. North and Hargreaves (2007) found that people with lower levels of education and who work blue-collar jobs often prefer popular music such as country and
rock over more artistic forms. Therefore, the comparatively low level of education and large number of lower-class or blue-collar workers in the region could result in lower enrollment figures in public school music programs.

Jones (2013) also found that fierce independence and feelings of pride in a blue-collar, Southern upbringing create the feeling among residents that formal education is irrelevant to their lives. While many from outside Appalachia use the term “redneck” in a derogatory way, many men in Appalachia have developed a sense of pride in the term; a sentiment that is passed on to their male children through the process of socialization. One of the defining characteristics of the social identity these children develop is the idea that “real men” should work physically demanding jobs not requiring formal education. The survey responses also indicated that these men and children are often careful to avoid activities that do not represent behavior characteristic of “real men.” Therefore, these Central Appalachian residents often choose leisure activities that are less intellectual and often high risk such as fighting and manual labor. This supports the conclusions of North and Hargreaves (2007) pertaining to preferences in leisure activities. If Central Appalachian males prefer less intellectual activities, physical labor, and general activity conducive to the image of a “real man,” it would seem logical that enrollment in music programs by these individuals would be low. Music courses and general musicianship are extracurricular activities requiring a higher level of cerebral involvement and formal educational training; therefore, many Appalachian males would most likely view such courses as impractical and in opposition to their conception of what constitutes a “real man.” Likewise, similar patterns of socialization have led to the idea among many young Appalachian women that they should pursue a life as a homemaker therefore rendering
higher education irrelevant to their futures (Jones, 2013). Furthermore, these trends when compared with the conclusions of North & Hargreaves (2007) would suggest that many Central Appalachian residents would prefer forms of music often absent from public-school music programs such as country, rap, and rock.

Haas (2008) also revealed information about Central Appalachia that has significant connections to the aforementioned studies. Her study regarding the political economy of Appalachia included background information that could be useful when attempting to understand the value system of the region. While coal is certainly not the only important industry in Appalachia, it is one of the most influential along with the extraction of other nonrenewable energy sources. “Mining trends are embedded in the local context, the culture, history, and geography of Appalachia” (p. 56). Coal was the first major industry in Appalachia and it has become a large part of the regional identity and culture. This has influenced the development of a politically conservative population. When comparing this information with the study by North and Hargreaves (2007), one would expect to find a large preference for popular styles of music such as country. Therefore, music programs in Central Appalachia that do not include popular music may see little interest from students in the region. The study by Haas (2008) also supports the ideas found in Jones (2013) that men in Appalachia prefer jobs that are physically demanding rather than intellectually demanding. The strong desire in Appalachia to enter into the coal industry is the product of both years of tradition and a lack of career options. If careers are largely limited to those not requiring formal education, it is understandable that many in the region do not value formal education or extracurricular activities that do not teach what the residents consider to be practical skills.
The literature suggests that feelings regarding the practicality of formal education have a negative impact on school music program enrollment. The idea that there is no hope for improvement, few career opportunities, and blue-collar pride have led many in Central Appalachia to drop out of high school due to their belief that formal education is irrelevant to their lives (Elam, 2002; Jones, 2013). As school enrollment declines, the number of students available for recruitment into school music programs declines as well. Additionally, many in Central Appalachia prefer occupations that are physically demanding rather than intellectually demanding. As a result, many drop out of school to peruse unskilled labor. Those that remain in high school have shown a preference for vocational courses rather than extracurricular activities or fine arts programs (Jones, 2013). Many students and parents see participation in such activities to be a waste of time, as they do not teach skills that will prepare students for jobs requiring physical labor. Furthermore, the conceptualization of what constitutes a “real man” or pride in being a “red neck” have been ingrained in many Central Appalachian males through the process of socialization (Jones, 2013). These individuals often believe that in order to be truly masculine or to fit the stereotype of a true Southern male, one must engage only in traditional occupations such as coalmining or construction. Such occupations do not require formal education or participation in fine arts programs; therefore, such programs are not considered practical or useful.

Not only do the feelings about the practicality of formal education have a negative impact on music-program enrollment, they also reflect feelings of fatalism and help perpetuate the existence of a lower-class majority (Elam, 2002). Therefore, the literature suggests a cycle in which lower-class children forgo formal educational training to pursue
employment in low-paying occupations, thus increasing the number of lower-class citizens in the region. As the number of citizens harboring these sentiments increases, so does the number of people who view formal education, extracurricular activities, and fine arts programs as being irrelevant.

**Ethnocentrism**

Ethnocentrism was defined by Abeles, et al. (1995) as the universal tendency of those belonging to various cultures and subcultures to believe that their way of life is “right, true, and good” (p. 132). Due to ethnocentrism, children growing up within a particular culture will learn to regard their culture’s values, norms, and preferences as being the best way of life. One of the preferences passed down through generations to these children is preference in music.

Kehrli (2005) found ethnocentrism to be a characteristic of the region. Not only do many Appalachians consider their ways and means to be the best, they also have a strong desire to remain in the mountains rather than enter a less geographically isolated area. The Appalachian people take pride in their own methods of raising children, planting fields, telling stories, and how they vote in elections. What outsiders may perceive as being backward is actually a reflection of individuality and cultural pride. While many outsiders might stereotypically regard Appalachian mountaineers to be ignorant, many are not “of the world” because they have seen the ways of life outside the mountains and after careful reflection have rejected them in favor of their own. Many cultural patterns located outside the mountains have found their way into Appalachian culture; however, the residents typically only accept those that somehow fit with their established practices. This can be seen in the way many Appalachians make their own
musical instruments and teach traditional music to their children rather than have them enroll in formal music courses in school (Kehrli, 2005).

The literature suggests that ethnocentrism in rural Central Appalachia has a negative impact on school music program enrollment for a number of reasons. Many Appalachians prefer to teach their children traditional music at home. Western art music is a product of the “outside world” and may not fit within the cultural norms of the region (Kehrli, 2005). If parents prefer to teach music at home, school music programs may be viewed as irrelevant. As noted, many cultural elements from outside Appalachia have been experienced, considered, and rejected by the region’s inhabitants. If cultural elements differ from the region’s norms, they may be rejected due to resistance to change or feelings regarding the superiority of one’s own culture. Therefore, recruiting students from the region into school music programs with curriculums revolving around Western art music may prove difficult. It is also suggested that ethnocentrism would help perpetuate other trends such as a preference for blue-collar jobs, beliefs about the practicality of formal education, and the conceptualization of what constitutes a “true” Southern man or woman (Jones, 2013).

Health Issues

The study by Jones (2013) also yielded important conclusions regarding drug use and education in Central Appalachia. Data indicated that opiate dependency has been an increasingly large problem in the region. The study found that the rate of abuse of prescription opiate painkillers or “hillbilly heroin” in Central Appalachia is considerably higher than the national average. Many Central Appalachian laborers sustain injuries while working in coal mines or other high-risk industries and are treated with prescription
painkillers. Children often see the results of drug dependencies or even develop those dependencies themselves. This trend contributes to the culture of learned helplessness or fatalism and adds another health issue to the already existing health problems such as diabetes and obesity that are particularly problematic for the region. North and Hargreaves (2007) found a correlation between poor health and preference for popular music over less-artistic forms. The health issues in Central Appalachia highlighted by Jones (2013) were also examined in a study by Herath, Brown, and Hill (2013). According to this study, Appalachia suffers from an epidemic of diabetes and obesity. The data showed that 44 percent of Appalachian residents suffer from obesity and many Appalachian counties had the highest rates of diabetes. The research also indicated that these health issues are exacerbated by low income, unemployment, lack of health insurance, and drug use. North and Hargreaves (2007) found a correlation between the preference for popular-music genres over opera, classical, and jazz among those with poor or declining health. Their research would suggest that with such a large number of Appalachian residents suffering from health issues many would mostly likely favor popular-music genres such as country, rock, or pop over opera, classical, or jazz. Such a trend in musical preference would have a negative influence on music program enrollment if those programs do not include popular-music studies or practice what Bates (2012) called “rehabilitation” of musical preferences by excluding popular music from the curriculum.

Musical Preference

North and Hargreaves (2007) conducted a three-part study relating to the correlations that exist between musical preference and various characteristics of one’s
lifestyle. The purpose of these quantitative studies was to collect data related to social, economic, and cultural factors and their connections with musical preference. The results were published in three separate studies and sought to explain the data using the social interaction theory. The theory states that people associate with members of the same social, economic, and cultural groups, and these groups often fit with stereotypes assigned to various musical genres. Over twenty-five hundred (2500) participants responded to a questionnaire that asked questions pertaining to musical preference and various aspects of their lifestyle. In the first study data pertaining to their relationships, living arrangements, beliefs, and crime was explored. With regard to personal relationships, the data indicated that children identifying themselves as outgoing and having a larger number of friends preferred vernacular or popular music over musicals, classical, opera, and jazz. In terms of living arrangements, the data indicated that a large proportion of individuals preferring country, rap, and other forms of vernacular music were raised outside a two-parent household. Individuals that indicated a preference for country music also indicated conservative political beliefs such as the continued use of fossil fuels as a primary energy source. Conversely, fans of classical and opera indicated held liberal political beliefs such as the increase of taxation to pay for public services and the exploitation of alternative energy sources. These findings are particularly significant as the Central Appalachian economy is largely dependent upon coal and natural gas. Finally, the data indicated a correlation between drug-related crime and musical preference. A significant percentage of those who indicated a preference for such popular music genres as dance, soul, rap, and DJ-based music also indicated a history of drug use
or drug-related crimes. However, less than five participants who indicated a preference for opera, classical, and musicals indicated a history of drug use or drug-related crimes.

The second part of the study by North and Hargreaves (2007) examined data pertaining to musical preferences and their correlations with the media preferences, leisure interests, and usage of music of the participants. For this review of literature, the focus was the correlations with media preferences and leisure interests. With regard to news media preferences, the data indicated that fans of classical and opera were more likely to subscribe to magazines, listen to radio talk shows, and read multiple newspapers weekly such as The Times, Daily Telegraph, and the Guardian. These participants also indicated a left-of-center political belief system consistent with the findings of the first part of the study. Fans of popular-music genres indicated a preference for tabloid newspapers considered to be “low-culture” as compared to the “high-culture” news media of classical and opera fans. Within the realm of communications fans of classical music indicated infrequent usage of the Internet and mobile phones while fans of popular music indicated the opposite. The participants were also asked to use Likert-type scales to rate their preferences for various types of television programming. Fans of classical, opera, and jazz indicated a strong preference for what the authors termed “intellectual” programs such as documentaries and programs dealing with current affairs or the arts. Fans of popular music indicated a preference for “escapist” and “sedentary” programs such as soap operas, game shows, comedies, and sitcoms.

North and Hargreaves (2007) asked their participants to use Likert-type scales to rate their preference for various types of leisure activities. The activities were categorized into four groups: indoor entertainment, open-air cerebral, creative, and pets. The data
showed that fans of popular-music genres including rap, dance, and DJ-based music prefer intellectually undemanding activities and indoor entertainment such as watching television or the patronization of pubs and bars. Fans of classical and opera indicated a preference for open-air cerebral and creative activities such as visiting historical sites, writing, and arts and crafts.

The final part of the study examined the correlations between musical preference and factors including education, employment, and health. The data indicated that “fans with the greatest proportion of PhD/master’s degrees were those of opera, jazz, classical, and blues, which with the exception of the latter, is consistent with the higher putative social status of these fans” (p. 483). Conversely, fans of country, pop, and other popular music had fewer if any educational qualifications. Consistent with their lack of educational qualifications, fans of popular-music genres were also found to be those most likely to be unemployed, “and again this is consistent with the putative low social status of these fans” (p. 486). Finally, with regard to health, fans of popular music genres indicated more frequent visits to the doctor and were found to be more likely to smoke or drink alcohol than those fans of classical music.

The idea that one’s sociological environment influences musical preference was also examined by Ginocchio (2006). His mixed-methods study was designed to determine the popularity of seven styles of popular music in addition to jazz and Romantic classical among fifth-grade school children and college non-music majors. The participants ranked various types of music after listening to recordings and listing their own preferences. While the two age groups ranked the musical styles differently, both indicated a strong preference for pop and rock music. It was concluded that variables such as environment
of upbringing, gender, and age influenced musical preferences in differing ways. However, despite these differences the results strongly suggested that popular styles of music such as pop and rock are the most preferred.

The literature presents a number of implications regarding the sociological correlates of musical preference and their relation to rural Central Appalachian society. It is important to note that familiarity with a specific style of music was shown to have a strong correlation with musical preference (Ginocchio, 2006). Participants often ranked the music styles with which they were the most familiar or with which they had the most experience higher than other styles. This supports the conclusions by Abeles, et al. (1995) that people seek comfort even in musical styles. Students will often favor the types of music to which they have been exposed throughout their childhood and those most closely associated with their own culture or subculture. Furthermore, as students undergo the process of socialization they begin to form a social identity. Bates (2012) noted the importance young people place on associating with people of the same social status and who share common interests including musical preferences.

The literature suggests that the political climate in rural Central Appalachia is largely conservative. North and Hargreaves (2007) found a correlation between political conservatism and preference for popular-music genres such as country and rock. If a majority of the population prefers such styles of music rather than classical, opera, or jazz it could be difficult to convince children in the region to enroll in music programs in which the curriculum is dominated by Western art music. The studies also indicated a preference for nonintellectual activities and media among those preferring country and rock as opposed to a preference for intellectual activities and media among those
preferring more artistic styles (North & Hargreaves, 2007). These preferences have also been linked to social class (Abeles et al., 1995). Therefore, the literature suggests that if the majority of rural Central Appalachian residents are considered lower class, their preferences in leisure activities, occupations and media would be of the nonintellectual variety further suggesting a preference for popular-music styles such as country and rock over those studied by most school music programs.

These correlations are also seen with regards to health and education. Studies have shown that drug use, diabetes, and obesity are significant issues in Appalachia and these health issues have also been linked to a preference for popular-music styles (Herath et al., 2013; North & Hargreaves, 2007). These health issues combined with fatalism, ethnocentrism, and others were found to have a negative impact on education resulting in high dropout rates and the pursuit of higher education by a low percentage of the region’s population (Elam, 2002; Jones, 2013). A correlation was found between preference for popular music and those with lower levels of education (North & Hargreaves, 2007). Therefore, it is suggested that a large proportion of the rural Central Appalachian population would prefer country, rock, and other popular styles rather than Western art music due in part to a lack of formal or higher education.

The literature suggests a number of sociological factors that have a negative impact on school music program enrollment and that many of those factors have a particularly significant influence in rural areas of Central Appalachia. Socioeconomic status was said to influence the amount of time an individual is willing to invest in order to achieve goals, social networking, and musical preferences. Those belonging to a lower social class were said to prefer pursuits that yield more immediate gratification (Abeles et
Central Appalachia was found to have a majority of lower-class residents which suggests that children in the region would be less likely to pursue musical training as the rewards are not instant. Musical preference is also affected by this pattern of behavior as those belonging to the lower class would be less likely to enjoy the Western art music that dominates the school music curriculum as it does not offer immediate fulfillment of musical expectations in the same manner as popular music. Finally, according to Abril and Gault (2008) and Bates (2012), individuals typically prefer to associate with members of the same social class. Therefore, lower-class students may choose not to take music courses frequented by students of another social class in order to remain with members of their own social network.

The literature regarding individualism, fatalism, and the practicality of formal education suggests that the inhabitants of rural Central Appalachia forgo opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities, fine arts programs, or even drop out of high school as they do not consider such educational ventures to be of relevance to their lives. Elam (2002) and Kehrli (2005) wrote that individualism in Appalachia has led to a preference for self-reliance. Also, many in Appalachia have come to believe that poverty and a lack of career opportunities are a part of Appalachian life and cannot be changed. Therefore, many do not pursue improvement as it is seen as impossible. Jones (2013) wrote that a preference for physical labor has led to disinterest in extracurricular activities, fine arts programs, and formal education as they are not seen as practical or useful. In addition to these findings, Haas (2008) noted a continued desire for jobs in the coal industry and other nonrenewable energy fields. As such, many Appalachian
residents prefer vocational programs over those considered to be more cerebral, leaving music programs among others to suffer from decreased enrollment.

The literature on the topic of musical preference holds a number of implications for school music program enrollment in rural Central Appalachia. North and Hargreaves (2007) found that those who are politically conservative suffer from poor health, prefer non-intellectual activities and media, or have a low level of education prefer popular music genres such as country and rock. The literature suggests that rural Central Appalachian society is dominated by individuals belonging to one or more of these categories. Therefore, recruiting students into school music programs could be difficult as such programs typically cater to styles such as classical and jazz. Furthermore, if music teachers practice what Bates (2012) referred to as an attempt to “rehabilitate” musical tastes, students may be more reluctant to enroll in music courses.

While these issues pose significant problems for music-program recruitment, enrollment, and retention, there are other implications as well. The literature suggests a cycle of behavior, fueled by ethnocentrism, that could be problematic for school music programs. Elam (2002) and Thorne et al. (2004) highlighted the existence and significance of generational poverty in rural Central Appalachia. Poverty and a lack of higher-income job opportunities have created a society that is predominantly lower class. Fatalism and resistance to change have resulted in the widespread belief that the socio-economic conditions in the region are permanent and cannot be escaped. These conditions and ideas along with blue-collar pride and a preference for self-reliance have led to the belief among many in the region that formal education, extracurricular activities, and fine arts programs are irrelevant to their lives as they do not prepare them
for a future of physical labor and subsistence living. The literature indicates that these conditions have been perpetuated by ethnocentrism and the process of socialization. These ideas and beliefs have become a part of the rural Central Appalachian culture. Kehrli (2005) wrote that ethnocentrism was a characteristic of the region; therefore, it is suggested that these beliefs are passed down from generation to generation through the process of socialization as a result of cultural pride. Therefore, future generations may harbor the same beliefs regarding their socio-economic conditions and education. If so, music programs in the region may continue to suffer as they are not viewed as a practical part of preparation for adult life in rural Central Appalachia.

Attempts by music teachers to change cultural norms in order to benefit their programs would likely prove impossible and may be unethical. Counteracting the sociological impediments to music programs in rural Central Appalachia is no easy task. However, part two of this review of literature will explore methods and make suggestions informed by research for pre-service and in-service music educators in the region.

**Recruitment**

Schuler (2011) discussed issues regarding music program recruitment and enrollment. He wrote of the need to make music programs more inclusive so that all students have the opportunity to experience and explore music. One method of doing so is to establish alternative curriculum strands. Performance ensembles and general music classes have dominated school music programs throughout the past. However, by introducing courses revolving around traditional music from local cultures, music technology classes in which students may use computer software to study and compose music, and by creating ensembles such as indie rock groups, bluegrass groups, or steel
Pan bands can make music courses more inclusive by appealing to more students and audiences alike. Furthermore, such ensembles may allow students to make a personal connection to the music and help ensure their involvement in music after graduation. Another issue discussed by Schuler (2011) was “arts-unfriendly” counseling. In other words, guidance counselors in some schools discourage students from taking music classes and instead advise them to take electives in other fields. Music teachers need to form positive relationships with faculty members, administrators, and guidance counselors to ensure that their programs are being advertised to students in a positive way.

Williams (2011) also advocated for alternative curriculum strands. The point was made that nearly all students are interested in music in some form or fashion; however, only a select few are interested in music courses under the traditional model. This model was described as being heavily dependent upon studying music in large performance ensembles where group success is more important than the development of individual musicianship. The author suggested a number of alternative curriculum strands that could generate more interest and increase enrollment. The first of these was the creation of alternative curriculum strands in music. Other literature in this review suggested these as well; however, this article went into greater detail. By developing smaller classes where students have some choices in music and instruments, students may become more engaged in their musical education. Such ensembles would allow students to study instruments outside the typical “school music” instruments such as banjo, electric keyboard, or guitar. By allowing students to have more choice and selecting music and instruments that are a part of their culture, students may feel that their musical education
is more relevant to their lives. Not only would this increase enrollment, but it would also help students view music as something they want to continue after graduation. Other alternative courses included the development of iPad ensembles, music technology courses, and internet based courses. Such courses may generate interest among those who do not value large performance ensembles thus increasing music program enrollment.

Lehmann, Sloboda, and Woody (2007) wrote about the influence of childhood experiences on a person’s choice to continue musical involvement. While a child may or may not receive musical instruction prior to their public school music courses, most have musical experiences of some form at home. Lehmann et al. (2007) also wrote that many people who go on to study music or become musicians reported having many musical experiences at home during their childhood. Many of these individuals reported having active participation in music through playing, singing, and experimentation. Furthermore, individuals who went on to become musicians also had opportunities to attend live musical performances early in life.

Campbell and Scott-Kassner (1995) wrote that children have their first musical experiences at home under the guidance of their parents. However, these experiences are nurtured and enriched in the music classroom. Effective music teachers know their students and carefully select music and activities that appeal to their skills, interests, and prior experiences with music. By doing so, the learning experiences in the music classroom will have a deeper meaning. Finally, the authors wrote of the vast changes in society including technological advances, global awareness, and multiculturalism which increase the need to provide students with multiple musical expressions.
With regard to the importance of early childhood musical experiences, the literature suggests that exposure to various styles of music through live performances, singing, and playing will increase the likelihood that a child will want to continue studying music in school and perhaps beyond. Such exposure would allow varying styles to become a part of the musical comfort zone of each child as discussed by Abeles et al. (1995). Abeles and colleagues also wrote about ethnocentrism and how cultural norms are often passed down by parents. As such, the literature suggests that the musical preferences of children are heavily influenced by the preferences and musical experiences parents provide. Thus, it is suggested that music teachers should work not only to expose children to various styles of music, but also work to include the study of music from local traditions and culture. By doing so, students may see music courses as being more meaningful and relevant to their own lives thus increasing the appeal of school music programs to those who may otherwise believe such programs to have little value.

The literature suggests many strategies that may assist music teachers in rural Central Appalachia in their quest to increase enrollment. Residents of the region have a strong sense of pride in their history and culture (Jones, 2013; Kehrli, 2005). A music program focusing only on Western art music may have little appeal; however, by including music courses that focus on local traditions such as bluegrass or other forms of mountain music, students may be more compelled to enroll. These courses could include both performance and compositional classes. Such courses could be part of a broader alternative curriculum strand including courses involving music technology, composition, or instrumental studies all of which give students the opportunity to study music typical of their own culture. Studying music in this manner may also allow students to become
intrinsically motivated to expand their musical studies to include more traditional school music courses such as band or choir.

However, as the literature suggests, an increase in the variety of music courses offered may not be enough. Teachers were encouraged to develop positive relationships with school counselors, faculty, and administrators in order to prevent “arts unfriendly” counseling (Schuler, 2011). It was suggested that by forming said relationships and engaging in frequent and active dialogue, counselors will be less likely to discourage students from taking courses in the fine arts. As such, students interested in the courses will be more likely to enroll as they will receive encouragement not only from the music teacher but also from a wide variety of individuals within the school.

Finally, one of the conclusions in a study by Zamboni (2011) was that public perception of a music program, particularly ensembles, had a significant influence on both recruitment and retention. If performing ensembles are of good quality, perform a variety of music, and are generally seen in a positive light, more support will be earned from the community, parents, students, and administrators. It is also important to advertise and publicize performances and accomplishments throughout the school and community. If students see that an ensemble is successful, they will be more likely to join in order to share in that success. However, if accomplishments are not advertised, no one outside the program will be aware of the ensemble’s successes.

**Retention**

Sandene (1994) offered a number of suggestions for keeping students interested and enrolled in school music programs. It is essential to keep parents involved in their child’s musical education. Earning parental support may aid in retention as parents will
be more likely to encourage students to continue studying music if they support the program and teacher. Therefore, it is important to reach out to parents at the beginning of the school year and keep them updated with frequent progress reports. It is also important to earn the support and cooperation of school faculty and administrators. Getting to know your fellow educators is an excellent way to strengthen a music program as teachers will be more likely to encourage students to participate in music courses and ensembles. Also, it is important to develop a positive relationship with administrators and solicit their cooperation with scheduling and course offerings. Sandene (1994) also stated that the primary reason students drop out of music programs is the loss of interest. Scheduling performances early in the school year, varying the daily classroom routine, and setting realistic short-term goals will keep things interesting, less predictable, and allow students to achieve new goals frequently.

In his article regarding the challenges rural school music programs face, Isbell (2005) also wrote about the importance of developing positive relationships with school administrators in order to gain support for the music program and help resolve scheduling conflicts that may prevent interested students from participating in music courses. The author also encouraged music teachers to involve parents as often as possible through fundraising, chaperoning trips, and concert duties. Additional methods were given that may assist music teachers in maintaining student engagement. By asking older students to assist with beginning ensemble classes, young students will see the skills and abilities they are learning used by more experienced musicians. Also, older students will enjoy the opportunity to showcase their skills and the respect they will receive from younger students. Isbell (2005) also encouraged teachers to include a variety of music including
popular genres in their curriculums. For regions like Appalachia where traditional mountain music and bluegrass are popular, the author suggested the formation of small ensembles to perform such music at concerts and other live events. Finally, teachers were encouraged to schedule trips to music festivals and competitions. In addition to providing students with opportunities to travel, these events also provide students with opportunities to socialize with the group, a level of performance that is motivational, and gives students a chance to receive feedback from outside professionals (Isbell, 2005).

Harrison (2013) conducted a qualitative study in which the teachers of four large music programs were interviewed regarding the factors that contribute to recruitment and retention. He found that many of the students that choose not to continue music courses do so due to parental influence. The data indicated that many students would have continued taking music courses had their parents allowed them to do so. Many indicated that their parents did not believe music courses would prepare them for the future and forced them to enroll in other courses as a result. Jones (2013) would seem to support Harrison’s claim, noting that many parents in Appalachia do not support extracurricular activities or fine arts programs because they are seen as irrelevant to their child’s future as they do not prepare them for jobs requiring physical labor. All of the teachers interviewed by Harrison (2013) agreed that frequent communication with parents via phone calls, email, progress reports, holiday cards, or newsletters will help build support for a music program and help decrease the number of students lost due to being removed by their parents. One teacher in the study said that a simple note praising a student for their successes sent home to a parent can positively influence that parent’s feelings toward the music program. The participants in the study also encouraged teachers to
develop positive relationships with other faculty members and solicit their help in providing parents with information regarding the benefits of music education.

Zamboni (2011) identified four primary needs of music students the fulfillment of which can significantly increase the likelihood of retention. The first of these is the development of a positive relationship between students and teachers so that students will trust that their teacher will help them learn. Second, they need to have ample performance opportunities to look forward to as they create motivation and excitement. Third, students need to feel as if they are part of a group and that being in that group is worth their time. Finally, students need to feel that they are making progress. Zamboni (2011) also stated that public perception of the music program was also cited as an important factor influencing retention. The public is typically concerned with the quality of the program; however, they often do not understand that a growing or developing program needs time. If the quality of a program comes into question it may lose community support, which in turn may lead to students being discouraged from continuing to take music courses. Students themselves often make decisions about continuing in music programs based on both quantity and quality. Thus it is important to meet student needs and develop positive relationships with administrators and school board members to earn support for programs in order to counteract scheduling conflicts and other factors that may lead to attrition. Zamboni (2011) also claimed that positive relationships help prevent music programs from being given subservient status within the context of curriculum. If such status is given, students and parents may become discouraged and the natural course will be increased attrition.
A teacher’s self-perception also plays an important role in the fight against attrition. Maltas (2004) conducted a study in which rural music teachers completed a quantitative survey. Individuals were then selected from the respondent pool to participate in an interview regarding their specific experiences. The data indicated that music teachers in rural areas often perceive their positions to be less prestigious than those in suburban or urban school districts. While music teachers in more urban areas may have one or two specific duties, many rural area music teachers are responsible for many more. In addition to duties at school, rural area music teachers are often one of the leading sources of culture in their communities and are thus called upon to direct community choirs, orchestras, and other events leaving them feeling overworked. This combined with comparatively lower salaries may lead to frustrations that the teacher vocalizes. When students become aware that their teacher is unhappy with the program, salary, or community, they often become discouraged and attrition increases. Many of these teachers also leave their positions after only a short time due to undesirable conditions, leaving their students to adapt to a “revolving door” of music educators. As such, it becomes difficult for students and teachers to develop a positive and trusting relationship in which students feel they can learn.

Isbell (2005) also discussed the many roles rural teachers may play in a music department. “The typical rural music teacher is just that, a music teacher” (p. 30). These teachers often find themselves in charge of band, choir, music appreciation, and a plethora of other music-related subjects. Several strategies were suggested to help rural teachers cope with their workload that may prevent the development of a negative perception of their positions. These suggestions included the encouragement of older
students to assist as mentors, private instructors, or by conducting rehearsals of younger ensembles. This provides younger students with a variety and alleviates stress on the part of the teacher. Combining smaller performing groups together for concerts was also suggested as it reduces the number of ensembles and performances the teacher must organize and will also improve instrumentation or voicing.

Another important factor pertaining to retention is the teacher’s ability to maintain student interest. Randles (2010) wrote that more and more students are losing interest in traditional music courses. Thus it was suggested that teachers employ the use of creative assignments such as improvisation and composition to allow students to explore their own creative identity in music. The results of this study indicated that music students with the highest degree of self-efficacy were those with compositional experience. The creative process was described as a “meaning-making enterprise” where students are able to explore their creative identity and cultural identity.

According to Webster (1990), many music teachers do not include creative-thinking activities and assignments in their curriculums due to issues related to time constraints or misconceptions that lead to the belief that participation in an ensemble is creative thinking. Also, many administrators frown upon creative activities in music class as they may seem disruptive and unproductive. Hickey and Webster (2001) sought to define creativity and made suggestions about the implementation of creative-thinking activities in the music classroom. Among those suggestions is the early introduction of creative assignments and activities. For example, instrumental teachers may prefer to have students learn music fundamentals before attempting to create. As a result, weeks or even months may go by before students are asked to engage in creative thinking. Instead,
it is suggested that music teachers give students opportunities to create early on. Teachers were also encouraged to include listening activities in which students write or discuss what they hear from multiple perspectives.

Moore (1990) wrote that secondary students should be given creative assignments that are goal oriented and lead to a musical product. It is also important to avoid references to elementary approaches as older students may find them to be childish. Many students will want to continue making music even after they reach an age at which they can purchase recordings that satisfy their musical needs. These students should be given an environment where skill development and demands are more meaningful and therefore more real. “By providing musical situations that require the use of students’ imaginations, decision-making capacities, and interpretive abilities, the teacher fosters a more direct involvement in the musical experience” (p. 41). It was suggested that teachers design activities that require a more in-depth use of musical concepts, give students specific applications for their work to be used outside of class, and consider developing a course in composition. Moore concluded by saying that including composition and improvisation in the classroom, students have the opportunity to explore and experience music in more personal ways which lead to self-expression and a more personal understanding of music.

The primary issues regarding retention contained in the literature are lack of parental support, lack of support from administrators and faculty, a negative public perception of the music program, a negative self-perception of the position by the teacher, and most importantly loss of student interest. The literature suggests that positive relationships should be developed between teachers and parents and lines of
communication should be kept open (Isbell, 2005; Zamboni, 2011). Teachers were encouraged to contact parents early in the school year, send home frequent progress reports, make phone calls, and even send departmental holiday cards to parents. Similar lines of communication should be maintained with administrators and faculty members so students will be encouraged to continue taking music courses by multiple individuals and to ensure that those courses are given a degree of priority preventing them from being hindered by scheduling conflicts. Teachers were encouraged to maintain a quality program in which public perception is positive as public support is important. Students will often make decisions about continuing in music based upon what their friends, families, and other members of the community say about the program (Zamboni, 2011). Teachers should also refrain from expressing any complaints or dissatisfaction they have with their position to their students or coworkers as students may become discouraged if they believe their teacher is not giving their all (Maltas, 2004). Important suggestions for maintaining student interest were made as well. Teachers were encouraged to have older students serve as mentors and guest conductors in order to allow young students to get a glimpse of where they will be in the future (Isbell, 2005). This will also allow for a break in the daily routine thus keeping class time interesting. In order to cater to cultural and local traditions, it was suggested that small ensembles be formed to perform traditional music at concerts (Isbell, 2005; Williams, 2011). Furthermore, teachers were encouraged to include a variety of music in the classroom such as pop and rock along with classical and jazz.

Much of the literature also suggested that teachers use creative-thinking strategies, creative assignments such as composition and improvisation, and cultural-
specific music to allow students to develop a personal connection to the material and maintain interest (Hickey & Webster 2001; Williams, 2011). In areas like rural Central Appalachia where ethnocentrism and cultural pride are such important themes, allowing students to experience, create, and perform traditional mountain music could allow a sense of usefulness to permeate the atmosphere which could increase retention (Isbell, 2005; Kehrli, 2005; Williams, 2011). Creative assignments in which students experience music aesthetically, write about what they hear, and create meaningful musical products of their own will allow a deeper, more personal understanding to develop. Teachers were encouraged to give students opportunities to showcase their products through real-world applications outside of class in order to build public support and self-efficacy (Moore, 1990).

It is clear that the literature suggests there are numerous strategies for both recruitment and retention. The literature suggests that there are also numerous ways in which these strategies may be used by music teachers in rural Central Appalachia. First, the literature identified many conditions which have resulted in a large number of students considered to be lower class in the region (Elam, 2002; Thorne et al., 2004). These students, even when interested in studying music, may choose not to do so in order to remain in classes with members of their own social class (Abril & Gault, 2008). However, it is suggested that through the use of music courses and ensembles studying music from local and cultural traditions, more students may become interested thus providing an opportunity to study music without being forced to take classes without their friends (Abril & Gault, 2008; Isbell, 2005; Moore, 1990; Williams, 2011). Second, the literature suggested a preference for popular music genres such as country and rock in
the region. Therefore, by including more popular music in the curriculum, teachers may find that their numbers increase as they are providing students with opportunity to study music they feel is more relevant to their lives. By increasing numbers, teachers may then be able to expose students to more styles of music thus broadening their preferences and encouraging more participation in traditional music courses such as band or choir (Campbell & Scott-Kassner, 1995; Williams, 2011). Third, the use of alternative curriculum strands which allow the use of music technology, composition courses, nontraditional ensembles focusing on instruments like banjo, guitar, or others, may allow students to feel that music courses are in fact practical. Studying such music and instruments may encourage students to continue making music after graduation as they can participate in musical experiences common in the region (Randles, 2010). It was also suggested that students be given ample opportunities to create and to showcase their creations and accomplishments (Hickey & Webster, 2001; Moore, 1990). By providing students with a low-risk creative environment, setting small goals, and allowing opportunities for practical application of their skills, students and parents may begin to see music education as being more relevant to their lives.

The strategies do not focus on instruction alone. The literature also suggested that teachers form positive relationships with parents, faculty, and administrators. Through frequent communication with these individuals, teachers can build support for their programs and decrease the negative effect and prevalence of “arts unfriendly” counseling by which students are discouraged from taking music courses. Many students in rural Central Appalachia were found to prefer vocational training courses over other electives in fields like fine arts (Jones, 2013). However, positive relationships with officials
throughout the school may result in students being encouraged to pursue a wider variety of fields including music.

Finally, teachers were encouraged to build public support for programs by working diligently to maintain quality musical ensembles and by advertising musical events, performances, and the accomplishments of their students as frequently as possible (Isbell, 2005; Zamboni, 2011). Many parents in the region were found to be unsupportive of extracurricular programs and fine arts programs due to the belief that they are not practical and have no relevance to their child’s future. However, perhaps through increased communication, increased involvement, and diligent advertisement of successes parents in the region will become more aware of the benefits and joys of music education thus encouraging their children to participate.

Summary

In the first section of this review of literature a number of sociological factors with potentially harmful effects on music program enrollment and retention in rural Central Appalachia were identified. Socio-economic conditions in the region have resulted in a population consisting predominantly of those considered to be lower class (Elam, 2002; Thorne et al., 2004). Those of lower-class status typically indicated a preference for music genres such as country or rock in which musical expectations are fulfilled more quickly; therefore, many have little interest in music courses focusing primarily on Western art music (Abeles et al., 1995). This coupled with the desire to remain within a social network consisting of members of the same social class were found to have a negative impact on music program enrollment as students may choose not to enroll in music programs even when interested in order to take courses with
members of their social network (Abril & Gault, 2008; Bates, 2012). Fatalism and a preference for blue-collar jobs have led many in the region to see little hope or need for improvement upon their socioeconomic conditions thus leaving many feeling that formal education, extracurricular activities, or fine arts programs are irrelevant to their lives (Elam, 2002; Haas, 2008; Jones, 2013). Ethnocentrism was found to be an important sociological factor as residents of rural Central Appalachia are resistant to change and have developed a sense of pride in their “red neck” lifestyle which they pass on to their children (Jones, 2013; Kehrli 2005). Finally, many correlations between sociological factors in the region and a preference for popular music styles such as country or rock were found to have a negative impact on enrollment and retention as many music programs focus primarily on Western art music and “rehabilitating” student musical preferences (Bates, 2012; North & Hargreaves, 2007).

The second section of this review of literature focused on research studies, articles, and other publications containing suggested strategies for recruitment and increased retention. One of the most prevalent suggestions was the inclusion of alternative music curriculum strands and more opportunities to create their own music (Hickey & Webster, 2001; Isbell, 2005; Randles, 2010; Williams, 2011). The literature suggests that the inclusion of small performing ensembles focusing on bluegrass and other traditional mountain music could benefit music programs in rural Central Appalachia. Such courses may allow students to view the study of music as being more relevant to their lives and encourage music making beyond graduation (Schuler, 2011; Williams, 2011). Music teachers were encouraged to form positive relationships and engage in frequent communication with parents, administrators, and guidance counselors.
to garner support for music programs and to prevent students from being discouraged from taking music courses. These relationships are particularly important as “arts-unfriendly” counseling and the belief by many parents in rural Central Appalachia that fine arts programs are irrelevant to the lives of their children have a negative impact on music program enrollment and retention (Harrison, 2013; Jones, 2013; Sandene, 1994).

Finally, music teachers were encouraged to give their students real-life applications for their musical training and musical creativity, advertise student successes and accomplishments, and refrain from voicing job dissatisfaction in order to gain and maintain a positive perception of music programs and their relevance by the student body and community (Maltas, 2004; Moore, 1990; Zamboni, 2011).

In the final section, I will provide some suggestions and lesson plans which have been informed by my research. These suggestions and lesson ideas have proven to be successful in my own rural Central Appalachian music program and it is my hope they will be successful for others teaching in the region as well.

**Suggestions for Practice**

In this section, I will provide examples of strategies I have used which were informed by my review of the literature on topics of recruitment and retention. The first of these is the development of a bluegrass music course encompassing both composition and performance. Bluegrass music is a significant part of Appalachian heritage. Therefore, I chose to form this program in hopes of increasing interest among those students who felt that traditional band and choir classes were irrelevant to their lives. This group of students meets weekly after school to study various instruments associated with traditional bluegrass. In addition to providing students with systematic instruction in
playing banjo, guitar, fiddle, and upright bass, the class also allows students to compose their own music, and perform public concerts. The results have been phenomenal. Parents previously expressing unwillingness to pay for traditional band instruments chose to enroll in rental programs to procure bluegrass instruments for their children. The program has been very popular and student interest is steadily increasing. School and public performances have attracted large audiences and many parents and members of the community have volunteered to help in various ways. The program has also generated interest among members in studying other forms of music as many have chosen to enroll in our high school beginner band class in order to someday join the concert and marching bands. The program is becoming so popular that the school administration is currently considering the possibility of offering it as a class on the daily schedule and awarding a fine arts credit toward graduation for all who enroll.

One source of Southern pride in Appalachia is the role of the region in the American Civil War. In an effort to generate more interest in my concert band program, I chose to do an entirely Civil War themed concert. The concert repertoire included: *Civil War Suite* by Harold Walters and arrangements of Civil War classics such as *When Johnny Comes Marching Home*, and *Bonnie Blue Flag*. Throughout the concert, various students would come to the podium and provide background information to the audience regarding each piece as general history regarding the Civil War. The concert was well received by both the student body and the community. After a standing ovation, many parents and students stated they were unaware that such music could be studied in band class. The program was so successful that the marching band will be continuing the Civil
War Theme with a field show production. After the announcement of the theme, many students who had previously dropped band have expressed a desire to return.

As some of the literature suggested, exposure to various styles of music at an early age can influence a child’s decision to take music courses in later years. The choir program at my school has been suffering from low numbers for an extended period of time. The elementary choral program had been suspended due to a lack of interest. Many students stated that they were not interested in singing music by “old dead guys.” After negotiations with the elementary administrations I was able to form a children’s choir consisting of students from all the feeder schools. Advertisements for the children’s choir stated that the group would be performing a wide variety of music including popular genres such as country, rock, and pop. Many students expressed interest in the program because the music chosen was familiar. We began having rehearsals on Monday nights after school for two hours. Enrollment in the choir began increasing after every rehearsal until the size of the ensemble had doubled. After a series of public performances many of the rising eighth graders informed me they had chosen to take choir in high school. Reports from the guidance department indicate a 30 percent-increase in choir enrollment for the coming school year. Furthermore, enrollment in the children’s choir has increased by nearly 50 percent as rising fifth graders have expressed a strong interest in joining. Finally, the program has garnered support from the community and school board.

As was indicated by literature, there is a strong preference for country music in rural Central Appalachia. The most popular radio station in my area is an AM radio station playing classic country and bluegrass music. In the interest of advertisement, I was able to secure a deal with the radio station in which some of the performances by the
choir, band, and bluegrass band are broadcast on the station. In addition to these performances, ranking members of my ensembles have given interviews about their experiences in the music courses at our school. These interviews and performances have generated more interest in the community and among the student body. Many students have stated that they have become interested in our program due to listening to the radio broadcasts. In addition to increased interest, these broadcasts have also led to an increase in band-booster participation and donations from businesses in the community.

The following example is a sample lesson plan from a general music course I teach. After completing a section on jazz music, I wanted to show my students that there are many similarities between jazz and the traditional music of the Appalachian culture. I chose to do this as I discovered through student interviews that many believed the music typically studied in music courses had no similarities with their preferred musical styles. Therefore, I began connecting each type of music studied with popular and traditional styles from the local culture. Jones (2013) stated that many parents and students in rural Central Appalachia believe fine arts programs are irrelevant to their lives. My intent in designing this lesson was to allow students to see that there are many parallels between music from their cultural traditions and other music styles. In this lesson, students were to use the listening skills they had developed throughout the course to aurally identify similarities in musical form between jazz and three bluegrass recordings. In addition to the similarities in form, the students learned that the historical background of the styles held similarities as well. The lesson was quite popular and many students considered it to be eye opening. As a result, I was able to develop additional lessons linking various forms of music such as classical and jazz with popular genres such as country, rock, and
pop. An additional benefit was the generation of interest by word of mouth. I received many reports from other teachers that students had been speaking positively about the lessons and many students chose to sign up for the class. It is my belief that lessons such as these in conjunction with alternative ensemble classes like my aforementioned bluegrass group, will lead to increased interest in the music program at my school thus increasing enrollment and retention (Figure 1).

In addition to the idea that many students and parents feel that fine arts programs are irrelevant, many students may have little interest in music courses in which their favorite styles of music are ignored (Bates, 2012; Jones, 2013). Much of the literature suggests the use of creative assignments in music class both to emphasize creative thinking and to maintain student interest in course content (Hickey & Webster, 2001; Randles, 2010; Williams; 2011). In order to address these issues I have designed and implemented lessons in which students write their own songs including lyrics to which they can make a personal connection (Figure 2). My students have responded very well to such lessons and have been inspired to study the motivation behind works by composers such as Beethoven and Chopin in addition to seeking personal meaning in works from various music styles.

The literature suggests that many students may feel out of place in some music classes if their classmates are members of another social class or social network (Abeles, Hoffer, & Klotman, 1995; Abril & Gault, 2008; Bates, 2012). My final example (Figure 3) is the last in a series of lessons I designed to allow students from various social networks to find common ground with each other. The lesson allows students to showcase their talents, hobbies, and musical interests with their classmates. As a result of
the lesson, my students often find that while they may be from differing social classes or backgrounds, they may not be as different as initially believed. Not only have such lessons had a positive impact on retention, they have also benefited my recruitment efforts. The literature suggests that teachers should advertise their music programs and the successes their students experience (Isbell, 2005; Zamboni, 2011). My students have advertised lessons like the following example by word of mouth so often that many new students have begun to enroll in general music courses.
Lesson Objectives

Virginia SOLs:

HG.6: The student will explore historical and cultural aspects of music by
1. describing distinguishing characteristics of musical forms and styles from a variety of

HG.9: The student will analyze music by:
1. describing music styles and forms through listening

Summary of Tasks / Actions:

The teacher will play a recording of Blue Moon of Kentucky by Bill Monroe playing as the students enter the classroom.

The teacher will begin the lesson with a review of previous lessons regarding the origins, development, and musical forms of jazz.

Upon completion of the review section the teacher will explain to the class that many musical styles have significant similarities between them. The teacher will then play 3 bluegrass recordings for the class. Students will be asked to aurally identify similarities regarding musical form between the jazz selections previously studied and the recordings they hear in class. The recordings will include: Banjo In the Hills by The Stanley Brothers, Foggy Mountain Breakdown by Flatt and Scruggs, and Blue Moon of Kentucky by Bill Monroe. After listening to the recordings, the teacher will moderate a class discussion regarding the similarities the students identify regarding musical form.

Following the discussion, the teacher will provide students with a short lecture regarding the origins and development of bluegrass music. Emphasis will be placed throughout the lecture on similarities between the development of bluegrass and jazz.

Immediately following the lecture, students will be asked to write a paragraph briefly explaining some of the historical similarities identified.

Materials / Equipment:

- Paper / Pencil
- Stereo Recordings
- Computer
- Projector
- Powerpoint Presentation

Differentiation:

Students performing below grade level may work with other students to write their paragraphs. All accommodations will be provided according to student IEP and 504 plans.

Take Home Tasks:

For homework: students will be asked to listen to a jazz recording and a bluegrass recording both of their choosing. Afterwards, students will identify similarities between the recordings in terms of musical form. Students will be asked to present their findings to the class during the next class period.

Figure 1. This lesson was designed to show students the similarities between bluegrass and jazz in terms of historical background, development, and musical form.
## Music and Catharsis

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<th>General Music</th>
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<tr>
<td>Topic:</td>
<td>Music as a Source of Catharsis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade Level:</td>
<td>9 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Duration:</td>
<td>50 Minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Lesson Objectives

**Virginia SOLs:**

**HG.1:** The student will read and notate music, including
- notating original musical ideas on the treble and bass staves
- using contemporary technology

**HG.11:** The student will investigate aesthetic concepts related to music by
- explaining how the context of a musical work’s creation may influence its meaning and value
- analyzing and justifying personal responses to works of music
- explaining the value of music to the community and society

### Summary of Tasks / Actions:

Class will begin with a review of the previous lesson involving the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato regarding the nature and function of music. The teacher will moderate a brief class discussion regarding the use of music as a source of catharsis. Students will also be asked to think of examples of popular songs that may have served as a source of catharsis for the lyricist or composer.

The students will then be asked to think about a situation or event in their lives (or society in general) for which catharsis would be beneficial. After words, they will be given time to write a short lyrical excerpt reflecting the situation.

In addition to writing lyrics, the students will be asked to write a short paragraph explaining how the lyrics they have written could provide catharsis.

To close the lesson, students will read their lyrics for the class.

### Materials / Equipment:

- Paper / Pencil
- Stereo
- Recordings
- Computer

### Differentiation:

Students performing below grade level may work with other students to write their paragraphs / lyrics. All accommodations will be provided according to student IEP and 504 plans.

### Take Home Tasks:

For homework, students will be asked to compose a simple melody using computer music notation software or a musical instrument that will be combined with their lyrics as part of a longer song writing project.

*Figure 2.* This lesson was designed to allow students to see the benefits of music as a form of personal expression.
Personal Music Profile

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<tbody>
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<td>Grade Level:</td>
<td>9 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Duration:</td>
<td>50 Minutes</td>
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</table>

Lesson Objectives

Virginia SOLs:

HG.1: The student will read and notate music, including
   1. notating original musical ideas on the treble and bass staves
   2. using contemporary technology

HG.8: The student will demonstrate concert etiquette at musical performances by
   1. exhibiting acceptable behavior as an active listener
   2. showing respect for the contributions of others within performance settings
   3. explaining the value of music to the community and society

Summary of Tasks / Actions:

During the previous 3 class periods, students have used computer software to create slideshow presentations containing pictures which represent their personal interests, hobbies, and lifestyles. Upon completing these slideshows, students were provided with instruction regarding the use of Audacity. Students then used Audacity to create a soundtrack to accompany their slideshows. The soundtracks include excerpts from some of their favorite songs and songs which they feel represent them as individuals.

In today’s class, students will begin sharing their presentations with the class. Students will give a brief oral introduction to their presentation before sharing it with the class.

Students will be asked to take note of interests, hobbies, and musical preferences they find in common with their classmates through viewing the presentations.

To conclude the class, the teacher will moderate a discussion in which students describe the interests, hobbies, and musical preferences they found in common with their classmates. Students will be asked to elaborate upon any “surprise” commonalities they discovered.

Materials / Equipment:

Computer
Projector
Student Flash Drives
Paper / Pencil

Differentiation:

All accommodations will be provided according to student IEP and 504 plans.

Take Home Tasks:

For homework, students will write a paragraph or two describing the connections they found with other students in more detail.

Figure 3. This lesson was designed to allow students to discover connections they may have with their classmates regardless of social background.
Conclusion

Rural Central Appalachia is not the only region of the United States in which attrition in music programs is an issue. However, it was important to review literature pertaining to sociological issues affecting recruitment and retention as such issues may be particularly prevalent in rural Central Appalachia (Elam, 2002; Kehrli, 2005; Thorne et al., 2004). This topic is of particular importance to me as I have lived and worked in rural Central Appalachia my entire life and have therefore witnessed the struggle for numbers and waning student interest in music courses firsthand. Through completing this project, I have learned many lessons that have been and will continue to be beneficial to my career. I learned that music courses do not exist only to produce performing ensembles. Music has many functions in society and it is important to allow students to explore the musical functions in which they are most interested regardless of whether those interests are within performance, composition, music technology or other musical fields. Students should be given opportunities to create and explore their own musical interests so that they will be able to find personal meaning. By giving students a wider variety of music courses from which to choose, allowing them to have opportunities to create, and providing them with opportunities to perform music from a variety of styles teachers will be able to appeal to students from all social classes, backgrounds, cultures, and traditions (Isbell, 2005; Randles 2010; Williams, 2011). Also, I have learned that it is important for music teachers to connect with parents, the community, and colleagues in order to garner support for their programs. I have applied many of these strategies in my own program and will continue to do so as I have experienced great success. It is my hope that music teachers in rural Central Appalachia will find this project and the suggestions for practice
useful in their own recruitment and retention efforts. Finally, while this review of
literature focused on rural Central Appalachia, the lessons learned regarding the effects of
sociological factors and strategies for recruitment and retention could potentially be
applied to any region. While there will be differing cultural and sociological variables
from region to region, music teachers could apply this and similar research to their own
programs in hopes of strengthening and improving music programs across the nation.
References


Harrison, S. (2013). *Factors contributing to recruitment and retention of high school music students: A study of four large music programs* (Masters thesis). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Full Text. (Order No. MS00088)


Appendix

Biographical Sketch

Joseph W. Whitt earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and Social Science from Emory and Henry College in 2004. Immediately after graduating he began taking classes to receive an additional teaching endorsement in Instrumental Music PreK-12. Upon completion of the endorsement Mr. Whitt served as interim director of bands at Tazewell High School in Tazewell County, Virginia. In 2006 Mr. Whitt became the director of bands and choirs at Honaker High School in Russell County, Virginia. He left the position in 2010 in order to finish his music degree. Mr. Whitt graduated from Bluefield College in 2014 with a Bachelor of Arts in Music and immediately accepted the position of general music teacher at Council High School in Buchanan County, Virginia where he served for one year. He began pursuing his Master of Music in Music Education in 2014 with research interests including advanced music theory and music program recruitment and retention. Joseph is currently the director of bands and choirs at Patrick County High School in Patrick County, Virginia.