**Secondary Student’ Preferences for Various Learning Conditions and Music Courses: A Comparison of School Music, Out-of-School Music, and Nonmusic Participants**

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In the research article *Secondary Students’ Preferences for Various Learning Conditions and Music Courses: A Comparison of School Music, Out-of-School Music, and Nonmusic Participants* Pendergast and Robinson (2020) found that there were four levels of interest in the types of music courses offered in-school and out-of-school. These levels included offerings such as piano and guitar classes, music composition and technology, popular music groups, and music theory or music history. There were only two types of groups for which the in-school and out-of-school music groups differed in ranking. That was between large group ensembles and world music classes. The differences were due primarily to class size and personal preference in music selection.

Pendergast and Robinson (2020) report that the data showed a decrease in high school enrollment in large ensemble classes. However, further study showed data that suggested that the decrease was merely an exaggeration. Large ensemble classes such as band, choir, and orchestra tend to be the most popular in the nation. However, most secondary students do not enroll in school music classes. The disparities in enrollment are partly due to racial, socioeconomic, and academic lines. In many cases, the students who enrolled in school music courses were white, and from highly educated families. The students with low socioeconomic status were underrepresented in school music courses.

Pendergast and Robinson (2020), along with other scholars, believe that school music (secondary music curriculum) is mismatched for those who participate out of school. Reasons suggested including the way in which music selections are chosen, how instruction is primarily teacher-driven, how individuals view their own musical ability, and social influences. Thus, the lack of student interest in secondary music classes can be a deterrent for enrollment.

Many people make decisions based on situational and individual interests (citation goes here). These interests drive behavior that may or may not lead them to participate. Pendergast and Robinson found three factors that cause focus-changing behavior: setting of the class or group, the way the teacher and the group interact, and the topics that are addressed. If participants are to engage, interact, or register for something, commonalities must be present or identifiable. Although interaction differs significantly from one person to the next, the three behavioral drivers remain common ground.

The study used random sampling to select its participants (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020). This sampling was completed in conjunction with the music instructors, and the participants came from one low SES (socioeconomic status) middle school and high school and one high SES middle school and high school. Upon the selection of these schools, the purpose of the study was then explained and presented to the building administrators to determine which processes and procedures would be used. The study was quantitative in nature, using a compilation of numbers, tables, and graphs to interpret the data. The data were calculated using Multivariate analysis of variance or MANOVA.

The study was driven by four questions asking about the mode or the type of instruction preferred, which course options were of most interest to the students, which preferences for learning were based on socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and of those who participate in school music courses, and why some students chose not to enroll in school music courses at all (Pendergast & Robinson, 2020). The results for each were different. The mode of instruction that was most preferential was that of independent learning where the teacher only instructed when necessary, or self-lead instruction. The types of course that were offered were the classes where the students had the option to learn instruments such as the piano or guitar. The learning conditions in the classes and where the participants were allowed to choose the music rather than the teacher choosing the music or collaborating with the teacher. The other group of those who were already in school music classes preferred classes where the teacher chose or teacher-student collaboration in music selection. The final of the four questions asked why some students chose not to participate in school music classes. The responses were commonalities such as the students not having enough time, do not have any interest in participating, or the families not having the money to rent an instrument for participation.

Pendergast and Robinson (2020) suggest that if schools were to change their course offerings to allow for more students to participate and have access to things that were of interest to each, then enrollment may increase. Research in this study suggests that most of those students who do not participate in school music classes report that they sing, play piano, guitar, or ukulele frequently outside of school.

**References**

Pendergast, & Robinson, N. R. (2020). Secondary Students’ Preferences for Various Learning Conditions and Music Courses: A Comparison of School Music, Out-of-School Music, and Nonmusic Participants. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *68*(3), 264–285. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429420931826