

Creative Musical Activities in Ensemble Rehearsals

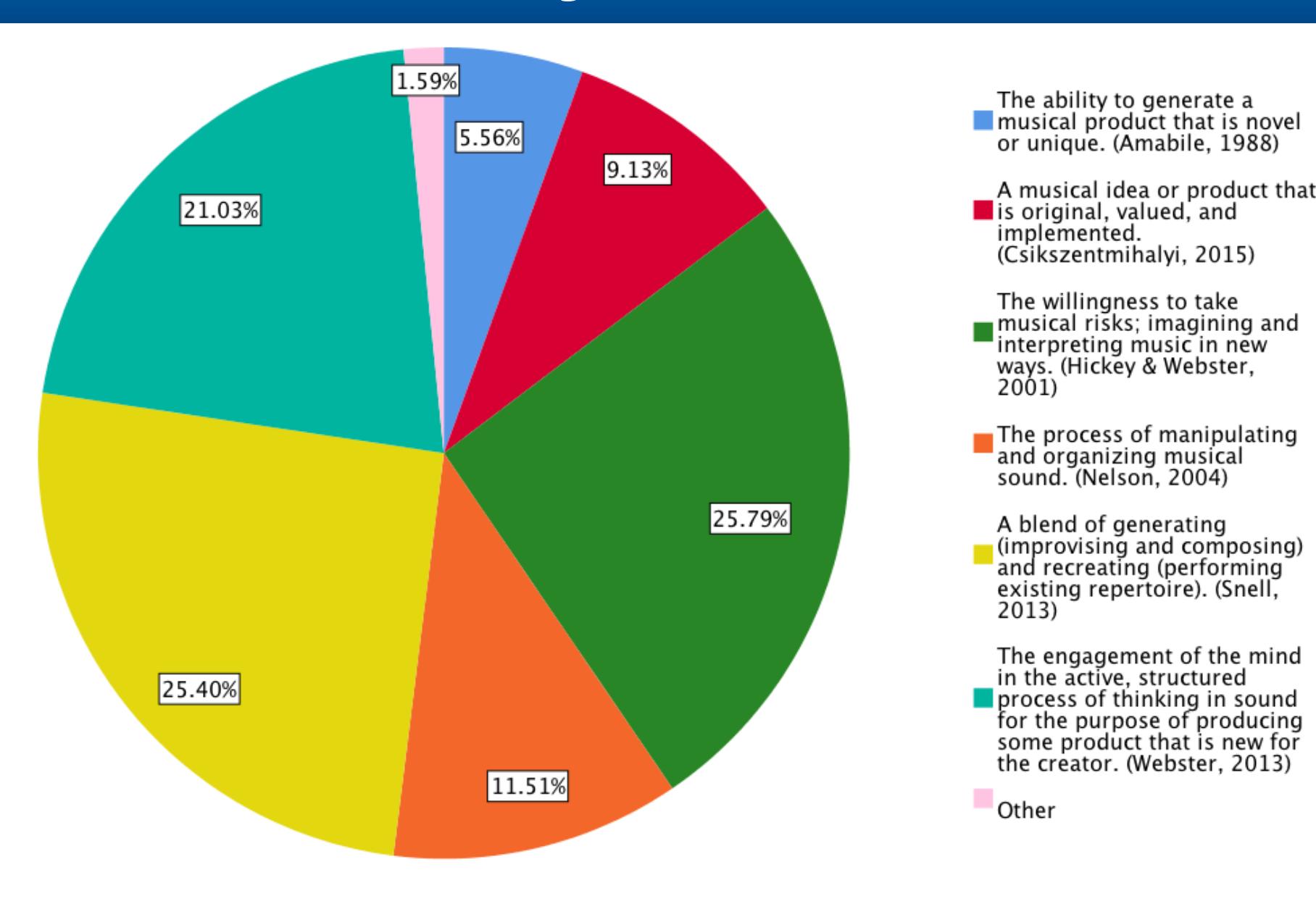
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Introduction

Creative musical activities (CMAs), specifically composition and improvisation, are rarely included in public school music curricula (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). Researchers indicate that while music teachers generally perceive CMAs to be important to the curriculum (Fairfield, 2010; Koops, 2009; Snell, 2013), few music teachers regularly include CMAs in their instruction (Schopp, 2006; Strand, 2006), "citing lack of time, resources, and physical teaching space as significant challenges" (Fairfield, 2010, pp. v-vi).

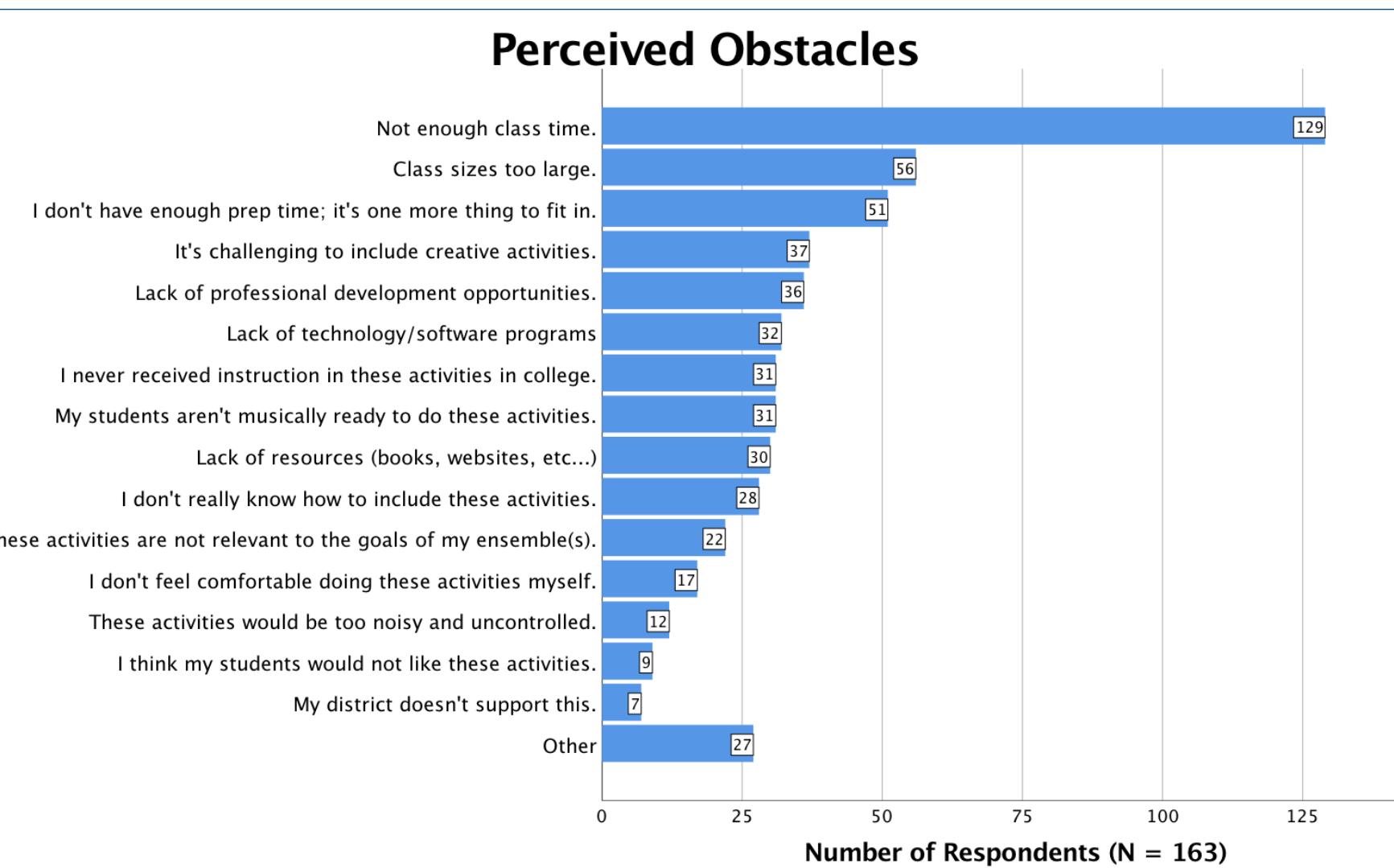
The purpose of this study was to examine school music teachers' beliefs regarding creative musical activities and their inclusion in practice. I distributed a survey to New York State School Music Association members ($N = 4,299$), then analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from 252 respondents.

Creativity Definitions



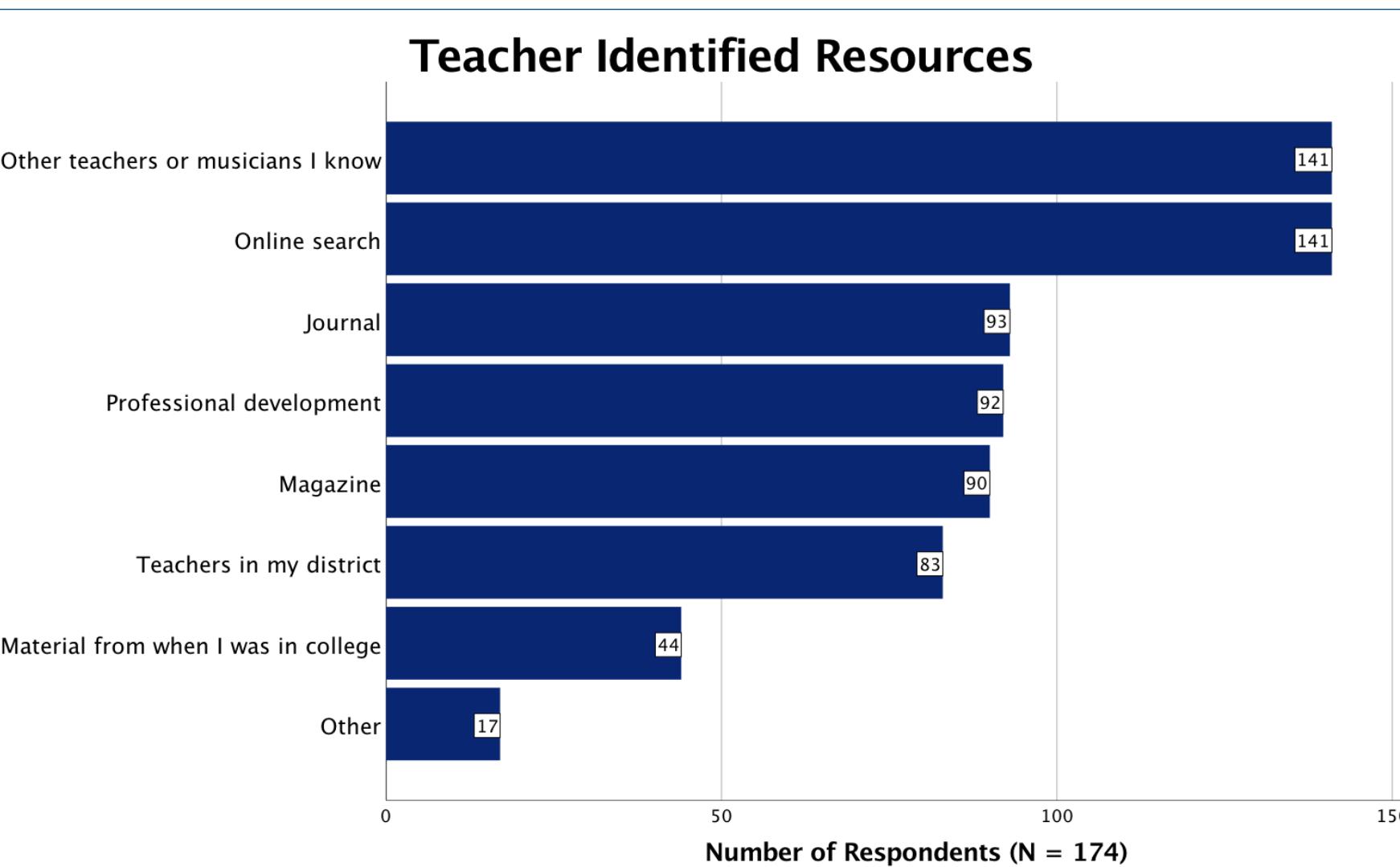
Obstacles

Research Question 1:
For teachers who include CMAs, what perceived obstacles might exist that inhibit creative musical instruction?



Resources

Research Question 2:
What resources may exist that help facilitate the instruction of CMAs despite the presence of perceived obstacles?



Motivation

Research Question 3:
What motivates these teachers to integrate CMAs in the curriculum?

There is no significant correlation between highest degree of education and the number of rehearsals which include CMAs, except for jazz ensemble rehearsals.

Of select personality traits, teachers who consider themselves to be personally creative are most likely to include CMAs in ensemble rehearsals.

The biggest predictor of inclusion of CMAs in ensemble rehearsals is the extent to which CMAs are discussed among teachers within the district.

Discussion

Consistent with extant research, teachers identified lack of class time as the most common obstacle to including CMAs, but teachers with more time **do not** appear to include CMAs in more rehearsals, except for jazz ensemble rehearsals. Reasons stated for including CMAs in the curriculum were to increase engagement and motivation, deepen knowledge of content, and develop musical independence and autonomy.

Secondary analysis indicated a modest relationship ($r = .56, p < .002$) between teacher-expressed level of importance of CMAs and their inclusion in the classroom, and a small positive relationship ($r = .263, p < .01$) between the amount of time teachers spend discussing CMAs and the frequency with which they are integrated into the classroom. However, a negative correlation existed between small group lesson time and composing or improvising activities ($r = -.202, p = .022$). Further studies may help ascertain the relationship between class time in a variety of settings and inclusion of CMAs. This research suggests that promoting discourse among teachers and increasing pre-service music teacher creative experiences may increase the inclusion of creative musical activities in the classroom.

References

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