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# A Comparative Content Analysis of Music Educators Journal and Philosophy of Music Education Review (1993–2012)

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## Abstract

Two journals reflecting the interests and concerns of music educators are *Music Educators Journal* (*MEJ*) and *Philosophy of Music Education Review* (*PMER*). The purpose of this study was to explore the interests of P–12 music teachers and university faculty as represented by the topics of articles in *MEJ* and *PMER* from 1993 to 2012. After identifying the primary topic of articles at least two pages in length ( $N = 889$ ), we determined the number of articles and pages published in each topic area within each journal. A chi-square analysis indicated topics within journals did not occur with equal probability ( $p < .001$ ). The most frequently occurring topics in *MEJ* were curriculum (21.15%), performance (15.86%), and fieldwork (9.02%). The most frequently occurring topics in *PMER* were interview (15.45%), philosophy to school (11.79%), and performance (10.57%). Performance was the only topic common to both journals for their five most frequently occurring topics. Topics also were examined in 5-year increments, showing topic frequency was more consistent across time for *MEJ* than for *PMER*. In *MEJ*, the topics creativity and technology appeared less frequently over time, while performance and social justice increased. In *PMER*, marginalization articles decreased, while creativity, research/critical inquiry, and performance increased.

## Keywords

content analysis, journals, music education, performance, philosophy

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How do we know what our priorities are as a profession? Professional journals and conferences have been used as indicators of the interests and concerns of professionals (Price & Orman, 1999, 2001; Volk, 1993). A wide range of interests and responsibilities are attended to by professionals in the field of music education, such as the age of students they teach (early childhood through older adult learners), the musical genres they explore (e.g., childhood songs, world musics, Western art music), and the contexts within which they work (e.g., informal play, accomplished performing ensembles). Given this breadth, many avenues exist for disconnects among these music teachers. One gap in interests that has received considerable anecdotal and some empirical attention is that between P–12 and college educators. Sometimes referred to as *ivory tower syndrome*, this disconnect is a perception by P–12 educators of “the inability of professors to stay in touch with what is happening in schools today” (Gitlin, 2000, p. 28). One could also argue this disconnect runs both ways: P–12 teachers may not be aware of the recent reforms in teacher education and certification.

There is a need to explore possible divides among various professionals in the field of music education in order to understand what is shared among and what is unique to these different groups of professionals. Once these commonalities and differences are highlighted, they will serve as a starting point for future dialogue. One way to examine the interests and concerns of P–12 teachers and those of university faculty is to investigate the content of professional journals aimed toward these different, but related, populations. An appropriate research methodology for investigating the content of professional journals is content analysis (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). To the extent a content analysis may represent the issues and concerns of a profession, this comparative content analysis examined topics deemed important by one music education journal aimed at P–12 teachers (*Music Educators Journal*) and another (*Philosophy of Music Education Review*) aimed at higher education faculty.

*Music Educators Journal* (*MEJ*) was selected as a journal representing the interests of P–12 teachers for several reasons. First, all 70,000 dues-paying members of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) receive a copy of *MEJ* several times each year.<sup>1</sup> Of these members, approximately 63,000 indicated they teach at P–12 levels (NAfME, 2014). Second, the content of *MEJ* is targeted more toward P–12 educators than to university educators. Its submission guidelines state the journal publishes “peer-reviewed scholarly and practical articles on music teaching approaches and philosophies, instructional techniques, current trends and issues in music education in schools and communities and the latest in products and services” (SAGE Publications, n.d.). These guidelines demonstrate an emphasis on the practical, daily responsibilities of P–12 teachers. Finally, Volk (1993) noted the distinguished status of *MEJ* to the profession: “In voicing both the needs of the society and the views of the leadership of the MENC [Music Educators National Conference], the *MEJ* takes on the role of ‘guide’ for the profession” (p. 139).

While *MEJ* stands out as a comprehensive journal for P–12 educators, there is no direct counterpart journal for university educators. We selected *Philosophy of Music Education Review* (*PMER*) as a journal representing the interests of university faculty because, we suggest, the readership is primarily university faculty. Readers must seek

out *PMER* through (previously) university libraries or (currently) the journal's website because, as a non-NAfME publication, its subscription is not included in a NAfME membership. Next, the style of writing in *PMER* is academic because the majority of articles are written in the research tradition of philosophical inquiry. Also, because college instructors often teach music education philosophy courses, we suggest they are more likely than P-12 teachers to read *PMER*. Furthermore, *PMER* authors discuss issues that are more distant from the daily classroom than the subjects present in *MEJ*. The *PMER* journal website (Project Muse, n.d.) states,

[*PMER*] includes articles that address philosophical or theoretical issues relevant to education, including reflections on current practice, research issues or questions, reform initiatives, philosophical writings, theories, the nature and scope of education and its goals and purposes, and cross-disciplinary dialogue relevant to the interests of music educators.

Finally, we selected *PMER* as a counterpoint to *MEJ* because philosophy is a foundational aspect of formal teaching. We were curious to discover whether this relationship would be evident between the journals.

## Philosophy in Music Education Journals

The young organization of MSNC/MENC started to produce publications in 1914, beginning with the *Music Supervisors' Bulletin* (vol. 1, 1914–1915). A year later, the journal was renamed the *Music Supervisors' Journal* (vols. 2–20, 1915–1934), and in 1934, the journal was renamed the *Music Educators Journal* (vols. 21–92, 1934–present). Although the early MSNC/MENC journals accepted articles about music education philosophy, there was no publication devoted to philosophy. In 1952, the fledgling *Journal of Research in Music Education (JRME)* welcomed submissions that were “serious discussions of trends, practices, and philosophies” (Warren, 1984, p. 224). Despite that invitation, only 3.6% of articles published in *JRME* between 1953 and 1983 were philosophical (Yarbrough, 1984). Likewise, Grashel (1998) found less than 1% of articles published by women from 1953 through 1994 were philosophical. This philosophical deficit was also evident in follow-up content analyses conducted by Yarbrough in 1996 and 2002, and by Sims, Lordo, and Phelps (2016). These findings were consistent with Mark (1996), who noted “relatively little was published on the subject of music education philosophy from the 1950s until the 1990s” (p. 60).

It is only recently that members of the music education profession felt the need for a journal devoted to music education philosophy. This change began with The Philosopher/Teacher in Music Symposium at Indiana University in 1990, which led to the founding of the Music Education Philosophy Special Research Interest Group (a unit of the Society for Research in Music Education, which is itself a unit within NAfME). The first written forum for continued philosophical discussion also started in 1990, the *Philosophy of Music Education Newsletter*. In 1993, the *Newsletter* was discontinued and replaced by the semiannual *Philosophy of Music Education Review*.

## Related Literature

Several researchers have used a historical approach when analyzing the methodological and topical content of journals. Warren (1984) documented the earliest history of *JRME*. Volk (1993) undertook a historical study of multicultural music education as evidenced in *MEJ* from 1967 to 1992, revealing many articles provided resources and strategies for teaching music of world cultures. Freer (2008) reviewed 65 articles, reports, and letters that focused on boys' changing voices in MENC journals published from 1914 to 2007. Notably, many ideas from articles written decades ago still resonated with choral educators of today, despite significant advances in research and pedagogy concerning the changing voice.

A number of authors have used content analysis methodology to gain insight into specific aspects of and trends in music education journals. One commonly examined parameter is research method (Lane, 2011; Yarbrough, 1984, 1996, 2002). Next, several content analyses have studied the contributing authors of journal articles, including women authors in *JRME* (Grashel, 1998; Howard, 2007), school music teachers as authors in *JRME* (Grashel & Lowe, 1995), and single-author/coauthors (Lane, 2011). Curiously, few authors have examined the topic of articles in journals. An exception is an analysis of the topics of articles in the first 20 volumes of *The Bulletin of Historical Research in Music Education*, indicating the most frequently occurring topics were music education development and biographies (McCarthy, 1999). Using a two-phase analysis, Schmidt and Zdzinski (1993) determined which articles were most frequently cited in five prominent music education research journals over a 15-year period. They also completed a content analysis of the 26 most cited articles to determine which samples and variables predominantly were studied. Other researchers also have given attention to the characteristics of the samples in research journals (Ebie, 2002; Kratus, 1992; Yarbrough 1984, 1996), noting a need for more research with secondary school students.

Recently, a number of content analyses of professional journals have been published. Lane (2011) conducted a content analysis examining qualitative literature in *JRME* and *Council for Research in Music Education*. Another content analysis of *JRME*, 1979–2009 (Miksza & Johnson, 2012) examined the theoretical perspectives most commonly employed and the primary characteristics of the participants. Two studies examined the first 20 years of the *Journal of Music Teacher Education* (Killian, Liu, & Reid, 2013; Nichols, 2013), finding the number of pages per issue increased over time (due in part to changes in publisher specifications), an inverse relationship between number of interest articles and number of research articles, and an increase in the number of both quantitative and qualitative articles. Diaz and Silveira (2014) completed a comparative content analysis focused on affective articles in *JRME*, *Psychology of Music*, and *Music Perception* from 1990 to 2009, finding a decrease in the number of affective articles published in *JRME* and increase in *Music Perception*. One of the few comparative content analyses in music education, their study highlighted the potential interaction of content among journals.

The purpose of this study was to explore the interests of P–12 music teachers and university faculty as represented by the topics of articles in *MEJ* and *PMER*. While a

content analysis has not previously been conducted on a philosophical music education journal, Schmidt and Zdzinski (1993) suggested this methodology is appropriate for philosophical research because “it may bring into focus past and present priorities [in music education]” (p. 18). Furthermore, we argue the content analysis approach is appropriate for our research questions because this study itself is not philosophical in nature. Finally, our quantitative approach is intended for publication in a comprehensive research journal. We hope this will encourage readers who may not regularly interact with philosophical inquiry to engage with it in this more familiar structure.

Three research questions guided the investigation: (1) Using comparative content analysis methodology, what were the primary topics of articles in *MEJ* and *PMER* from 1993 to 2012? (2) How did the frequency of topics in *MEJ* compare to that of *PMER*? (3) What trends for topics existed within and between journals across the 20-year period? Because *PMER* has only been published since 1993, we decided to use the period of 1993 through the most recent complete year<sup>2</sup> for this study.

## Method

While it is not usual in quantitative research to declare one’s positionality, it is relevant to do so in this study because we developed the operational definitions that are the crux of this investigation (Froehlich & Frierson-Campbell, 2013). The unit of analysis was the topic of each entire article. Despite employing a rigorous procedure for developing codes (see the next subsection), no coding system can be so complete as to perfectly encompass the topics of almost 900 articles. This is especially true when 246 articles were from the fluid, open method of philosophical inquiry. Each reader brought his or her own perspectives to the coding process. The first author taught middle school band and choir for 11 years and is now a university faculty member. Her interest in philosophy was sparked while earning a master’s degree from Northwestern University in the years immediately following Bennett Reimer’s retirement. The second author taught high school music for 2 years and was a master’s student while completing this research. The first author was the second author’s primary professor in several philosophy courses. The limitations of these authors on this research is addressed further in the Limitations section.

**Procedure.** A spreadsheet was created with the fields volume, number, season/month, year, title, author(s), page numbers, and number of pages. The corresponding information for all feature articles two or more pages in length from *MEJ* ( $n = 643$ ) and for Articles and In Dialogue from *PMER* ( $n = 246$ ) was entered into the spreadsheet. The validity and reliability of the coding process are essential to any content analysis, and here they were addressed in a two-phase protocol. First, we selected a random sample of 15 articles from *PMER* and 30 articles from *MEJ* for preliminary examination. Both authors independently read these articles and generated a list of possible category codes to identify the primary topic of each article. Then, the authors met together to discuss and agree upon the topic for each of those 45 articles. We also began to write operational definitions for this master list of codes.

Table 1 presents the codes and their operational definitions. In order for the reader to gain further insight about how we developed codes and definitions, we discuss this process using some examples. “Interview” was developed because of the frequency of interviews in *PMER*. During the preliminary coding, we discussed the possibility of including interviews in the “biography and history” definition. However, the interviews in *PMER* were not limited to retrospective reports. Next, establishing the code and definition for “fieldwork” required significant discussion. “Professional development” was too limiting, as it had connotations of formal instruction, and the concerns of practicing teachers are not limited to formal instruction. Articles about teacher preparation were unique enough to warrant their own code, therefore that area was excluded from the “fieldwork” definition. One could argue fieldwork includes anything a teacher does, but that, of course, would be too broad to be useful. The final choice of the topic “fieldwork” and its definition were a compromise between the authors to include the breadth of topics relevant to practicing teachers.

Developing codes for many of the articles in *MEJ* was quite straightforward. For example, “Arts Advocacy in Music Education” (Bess & Fisher, 1993) was coded “advocacy.” “Management Systems for Music Educators” (Kassner, 1996) was coded “fieldwork.” Even though this article was relevant to preservice teachers, it did not specifically state that it was intended for preservice teachers. Therefore, it was coded as “fieldwork” and not as “teacher preparation.” However, not all articles were placed easily into one topic. “An Aural Approach to Improvisation” (Azzara, 1999) could have been coded as “creativity” or as “curriculum”; we decided on “creativity” because the creative content of improvisation was emphasized more than how this content fit into an overall curriculum.

Developing codes for philosophical viewpoints was much more complicated, as it is perhaps antithetical to summarize a philosophical viewpoint in one or two sentences. The operational definitions for philosophical topics included many more direct quotations than the codes for more practical topics. By including language from primary philosophical sources (e.g., *Music Matters*, Elliott, 1995; “The Form of Feeling,” Yob, 1993), we attempted to represent these complex ideas as closely to their original intent as possible. This reductionist approach inevitably diminished the nuances and complexity of philosophical thought. However, we believed this compromise was justified by the potential to create dialogue among different groups of professionals.

When an article could be categorized by more than one code, we decided which code was necessary for the other code to exist, or which code addressed the dominant theme. For example, “Aesthetic Music Education Revisited: Discourses of Exclusion and Oppression” (Koza, 1994) could be coded as “aesthetics,” “marginalization,” or “social justice.” We selected aesthetics because the background of aesthetics had to be in place before the author applied the critical viewpoints of marginalization and social justice. Another article inviting multiple codes was “Freedom and Responsibility: The Aesthetics of Free Musical Improvisation and Its Educational Implications—A View From Bakhtin” (Kanellopoulos, 2011). We eventually coded it “creativity,” as “Improvisation is exactly

**Table 1.** Codes and Operational Definitions.

Code	Definition
Advocacy	Articles about strategies and reasons to support music education
Aesthetics	Articles discussing the value or meaning of music as either understanding “the depiction of human feelings in general within art works” (Yob, 1993, p. 20) or as “beauty as an abstract form, and beauty is an intellectual experience that has to do with cognition, disinterestedness, or contemplation (Palmer, 1994, p. 38); also, criticisms of aesthetic view
Biography and history	Articles relating the history of a particular person, organization, or period
Creativity	Articles addressing composing, improvising, or creative performance
Curriculum	Articles focused on the National Standards for Music Education, curriculum development, assessment, planning, competition, or festivals; also, criticisms of curriculum
Exceptional learners	Articles about preschool-aged children, adults, at-risk students, students with physical disabilities, gender differences, special learners, students with social needs, English-language learners, or differentiating instruction
Fieldwork	Articles directed at postcertification issues, including professional development, collegial relationships, leadership, or administration
General music	Articles addressing Orff, Kodály, Dalcroze, guitar, keyboard, games, or general music, in grades K–12
Interdisciplinary	Articles identifying strategies for teaching music with teachers of other subjects, the impact of interdisciplinary curriculum, or including other subjects within music class settings; also, how music study interacts with nonmusic outcomes
Interviews	Articles presenting an interview with one person
Multiple perspectives	Articles comparing two or more philosophical approaches or presenting alternative meanings to music including naturalist, fundamentalism, ecological, and scientism
Music and culture	Articles addressing non-Western musics or the role of culture in music teaching or understanding; articles addressing Western music, taught from a cultural perspective
Performance	Articles primarily discussing chorus, band, orchestra, rehearsal strategies, repertoire, conducting, or techniques for instrumental or vocal instruction; articles critical of performance
Phenomenology	Articles about music as lived experience where “analysis grounded in our experience” (Bartholomew, 1995, p. 3)
Philosophy to school	Articles intended to strengthen the relationship between school practice and higher education discourse about music education philosophy
Marginalization	Articles viewing the meaning or value of music from a perspective that there is no one right way to view music, including articles examining the role of gender in music education and LGBT viewpoints

*(continued)*



**Table 1. (continued)**

Code	Definition
Praxial philosophy	Articles discussing the value or meaning of music from the praxial philosophy: "music is something that people do ... performing, improvising, composing, arranging, and conducting" (Elliott, 1995, pp. 39–40), where each music listener is simultaneously an individual with their own personal narrative and a culturally-rooted self (Elliott, 2000, p. 87); also, criticisms of praxial philosophy
Research/critical inquiry	Articles discussing and justifying research methods and goals
Social justice	Articles addressing "a principled, even public, response to a perceived hurt or act of injustice" (Allsup & Shieh, 2012, p. 48)
Spirituality	Articles addressing the nature and use of religious music in schools (involving a supreme being), or considering students' religions as diversity; also, "spirituality is a human quality as a product of supreme levels of consciousness" (Palmer, 2006, p. 144)
Teacher preparation	Articles directed at precertification issues, including student teaching, teacher training programs, knowing about learners, or aspects of certification
Technology	Articles discussing the use of technology in teaching or technologies that support music teaching

that mode of musical practice that *demands* [italics in original] actions which are not simply a realization of a specific set of [musical] rules" (p. 121). However, we also considered the topics "performance" (the act of improvising is a form of performance), "phenomenology" (improvisation is a dialogue that requires the musicians to be present; it "unites art and life; it is a meeting point, or rather, an enactment of everyday living in musical terms" p. 121), "multiple perspectives" (Bakhtin's viewpoints frequently are contrasted to traditional aesthetics), "marginalization" (the author discussed "an ideology of classicism" in music performance (p. 114) and "exclusionary ideologies inherent in the Western music canon" p. 116), and aesthetics (discussions on traditional aesthetics, emerging aesthetic ideas, and Bakhtin's aesthetic perspective).

In the second phase of reliability coding, a second random sample of 20% of each journal's articles was read and coded by each author (*MEJ*,  $n = 123$ ; *PMER*,  $n = 47$ ). This 20% benchmark exceeded the amount recommended by Lombard et al. (2002), who suggested procedures to increase validity and reliability in content analysis methodology. During this 4-month reading period, we met weekly to discuss the codes we independently selected. Through these conversations, we refined the operational definitions and added new codes for topics that were not present in the initial 45 article sample (see Table 1).<sup>3</sup> Intercoder reliability was determined using Scott's pi, which factors in possible agreements by chance and is appropriate for two coders using nominal variables. Intercoder reliability was acceptable (*MEJ*,  $\pi = .99$ ; *PMER*,  $\pi = .95$ ). At the completion of the reliability coding period, the remaining articles were distributed randomly between the two authors for reading and coding by only one of the authors.

## Analysis

First we tabulated the topic and page counts within each journal. The counts were converted to percentages because *MEJ* had many more articles printed each year than *PMER*, and the number of issues per year in *MEJ* changed several times during the analysis period. Next, we compared the topic percentage in *MEJ* to *PMER*. Finally, the topic percentages were blocked in 5-year chunks to investigate trends within and between journals across 20 years.

## Results

During the 20 years examined in this content analysis, there were three changes to the number of issues published each year by *MEJ*. During the first year of the analysis (1993), nine issues were published. In July 1994, this was reduced to six issues. In September 2002, *MEJ* started publishing five issues per year, and in 2008 the journal reached its current state of four issues per year. Because of this variability, in addition to the difference in number of issues each year between *PMER* and *MEJ*, the results primarily are considered in percentage form.

Table 2 presents frequency counts, page counts, and percentages for each topic code by journal (also see Figure 1). Strong correlations were found between the frequency count of topics and the number of pages published per topic (*MEJ*,  $r = .99$ ; *PMER*,  $r = .98$ ). A chi-square analysis indicated the topics within each journal did not occur with equal probabilities ( $p < .001$ ). The five most frequently occurring topics in *MEJ* were curriculum, performance, fieldwork, exceptional learners, and music and culture, and they accounted for 58.45% of all articles. In *PMER*, its five most frequently occurring topics were interview, philosophy to school, performance, aesthetics, and spirituality, and they accounted for 54.47% of all articles. Only one topic was shared by both journals' "top five" lists: performance. Of the 23 possible topics, all were present at least once in *MEJ* except for praxial philosophy. Five topics were not represented in *PMER* (exceptional learners, fieldwork, interdisciplinary, teacher preparation, and technology).

The topic codes were examined in 5-year increments (quarters) in order to highlight changes across time (see Table S1 and S2, available online at <http://jrme.sagepub.com/supplemental>). A limited number of topics demonstrated consistent growth or decline across all 5-year increments. Consistent increases were found for performance in *MEJ* and in research/critical inquiry in *PMER*, while consistent decreases were found for curriculum and multiple perspectives in *PMER*. During the past 15 years, notable declines were found for the number of *MEJ* articles in creativity, interdisciplinary, and technology. The 5-year analysis also demonstrated some *PMER* topics did not follow consistent patterns across 20 years. For example, aesthetics went from a high of 18.18% between 1993 and 1997 to 6.56% between 1998 and 2002 to 12.05% between 2003 and 2007 to a final low of 5.08% between 2008 and 2012.

A correlation matrix examined relationships among the four quarters within each journal, for the five most frequently occurring topics from both journals (see Table S3,

**Table 2.** Frequency, Percent, and Page Count of Topics by Journal.

Topic code	Frequency count		Number of pages	
	<i>MEJ</i> n = 643	<i>PMER</i> n = 246	<i>MEJ</i> pages n = 3329	<i>PMER</i> pages n = 2810
Advocacy	11 (1.71%)	4 (1.63%)	55 (1.65%)	59 (2.10%)
+Aesthetics	1 (0.16%)	25 (10.16%)	4 (0.12%)	270 (9.61%)
Biography/history	21 (3.27%)	12 (4.88%)	109 (3.27%)	130 (4.63%)
Creativity	35 (5.44%)	6 (2.44%)	189 (5.68%)	95 (3.38%)
*Curriculum	136 (21.15%)	11 (4.47%)	723 (21.72%)	86 (3.06%)
*Exceptional learners	42 (6.53%)	0 (0.00%)	214 (6.43%)	0 (0.00%)
*Fieldwork	58 (9.02%)	0 (0.00%)	305 (9.16%)	0 (0.00%)
General music	26 (4.04%)	1 (0.41%)	127 (3.81%)	15 (0.53%)
Interdisciplinary	28 (4.35%)	0 (0.00%)	160 (4.81%)	0 (0.00%)
+Interview	17 (2.64%)	38 (15.45%)	75 (2.25%)	482 (17.15%)
Multiple perspectives	4 (0.62%)	12 (4.88%)	18 (0.54%)	168 (5.98%)
*Music and culture	38 (5.91%)	13 (5.28%)	208 (6.25%)	113 (4.02%)
Other	17 (2.64%)	10 (4.07%)	81 (2.43%)	87 (3.10%)
*+Performance	102 (15.86%)	26 (10.57%)	511 (15.35%)	259 (9.22%)
Phenomenology	1 (0.16%)	11 (4.47%)	3 (0.09%)	106 (3.77%)
+Philosophy to school	8 (1.24%)	29 (11.79%)	43 (1.29%)	358 (12.74%)
Marginalization	3 (0.47%)	11 (4.47%)	21 (0.63%)	131 (4.66%)
Praxial philosophy	0 (0.00%)	6 (2.44%)	0 (0.00%)	71 (2.53%)
Research/critical inquiry	15 (2.33%)	11 (4.47%)	74 (2.22%)	137 (4.88%)
Social justice	11 (1.71%)	4 (1.63%)	58 (1.74%)	46 (1.64%)
+Spirituality	2 (0.31%)	16 (6.50%)	9 (0.27%)	197 (7.01%)
Teacher preparation	31 (4.82%)	0 (0.00%)	160 (4.81%)	0 (0.00%)
Technology	36 (5.60%)	0 (0.00%)	182 (5.47%)	0 (0.00%)

Note. *MEJ* = Music Educators Journal; *PMER* = Philosophy of Music Education Review.

\* indicates one of five most frequently occurring topics in *MEJ*.

+ indicates one of five most frequently occurring topics in *PMER*.

available online at <http://jrme.sagepub.com/supplemental>). All relationships among quarters in *MEJ* were found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ), while only three out of six relationships were significant in *PMER* ( $p < .05$ ).

The top five *MEJ* topics were entered into a scatterplot matrix of both journals to examine the relationships of these topics between journals by quarter. Likewise, the top five *PMER* topics were entered into a scatterplot matrix to examine the relationships between journals by quarter. After visual inspection of the scatterplots, regression analyses were run on relationships that suggested linear relationships. For the five most frequently occurring topics in *MEJ*, *PMER* quarter 1 was significantly predictive of the frequency of these topics in *MEJ* quarter 4 (beta = .924,  $p = .025$ ). All other regression analyses were not significantly predictive ( $p > .05$ ).

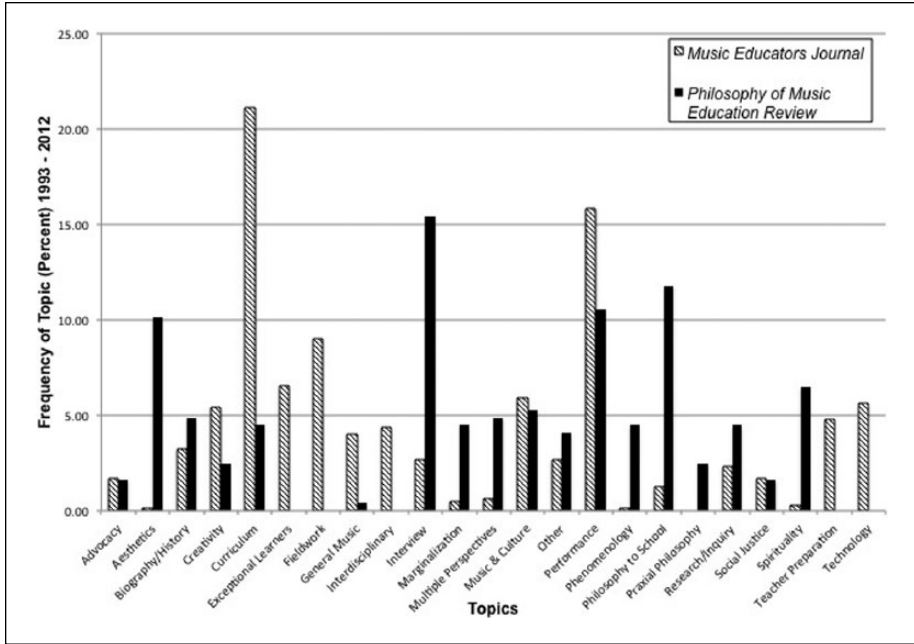


Figure 1. Frequency of Topic by Percentage in *Music Educators Journal* and *Philosophy of Music Education Review*.

## Discussion

This comparative content analysis of *MEJ* and *PMER* from 1993 to 2012 examined the primary topic of all articles two or more pages in length. The only topic shared between each journal’s most frequently occurring topics was performance. When examining the topics in 5-year increments, the correlation matrix indicated *MEJ* showed more consistency than *PMER* for topic frequency. Despite this consistency, *MEJ* had articles from a greater variety of topic codes overall than *PMER*. Regression analysis showed the top five topics in *PMER* between 1993 and 1997 were significantly predictive of those topics occurring in *MEJ* between 2008 and 2012. No other predictive relationships were found between journals.

### Between Journals

Because the journals serve different audiences, we anticipated finding differences in topic frequency between journals. One could even argue these differences were expected, because each professional journal fulfills a unique purpose for the profession. To the extent *MEJ* represents the interests and concerns of P–12 teachers and *PMER* represents university faculty, the journals should demonstrate some disconnects between these groups of educators. Yet, we suggest some common ground does

exist, especially since these professionals all live under the umbrella of music education. In this study, we indicated the topic performance is this shared ground.

Certain topics received more attention in *MEJ* than in *PMER*. Curriculum appeared in *MEJ* almost five times as frequently as it did in *PMER*. Initially this finding was not unanticipated, as P–12 teachers address curriculum every day. In addition, curriculum was the most frequently occurring topic in a content analysis of *JMTE* (Killian et al., 2013). However, further reflection on this discrepancy caused us to consider why the “what” of teaching music received such limited attention in *PMER*. It may be that curricular-like articles were present in *PMER* under other topic headings used in this content analysis (e.g., spirituality, music and culture). Another noticeable difference between journals was the frequency of teacher preparation articles. The lack of these articles in *PMER* may be due in part to another specialized journal: the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*. Authors may be choosing to submit teacher preparation articles to the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, as indicated by the 11 philosophy articles identified by Killian et al. (2013). Finally, the topics exceptional learners, fieldwork, interdisciplinary, and technology received moderate attention in *MEJ* but were all absent in *PMER*. These topics represent the practical and specific concerns of working with students and professional skills. Perhaps their more limited scope made them less appropriate for the broader brush of philosophical articles.

Other topics were more present in *PMER* than in *MEJ*, including spirituality. Our results suggest the profession is more comfortable discussing spirituality and religion at a level that is removed from the daily P–12 classroom. Next, it was not surprising to find that many topics more present in *PMER* reflected philosophical paradigms including aesthetics, multiple perspectives (of philosophy), phenomenology, philosophy to school, marginalization, and praxial philosophy. This finding was consistent with Grashel and Lowe (1995) who investigated the contributions of school music teachers in *JRME* from 1953 to 1993. They found no occurrences of philosophical articles. Waldron (2005) provided a plausible explanation for this phenomena, suggesting “music programs in specific regions have developed curricula which have reflected local values and/or responded to localized pressures and then back-tracked by developing tacit philosophies which are indirectly based on the social norms which gave rise to those curricula” (p. 133).

A secondary rationale for this study was to explore if, and how, philosophy was connected to daily practice. If, as Reimer (2003) stated, philosophy serves as a “system of principles for *guidance* [emphasis added] in creating and implementing useful and meaningful music education programs” (p. 2), then we should find evidence of it in *MEJ*. Therefore, topics found in *PMER* at one point in time should be evident in *MEJ* at a later point in time. However, our analysis did not find this to be true. Only one 5-year increment was found to be predictive of the other journal’s later content: The top five topics in *PMER* between 1993 and 1997 (interview, philosophy to school, performance, aesthetics, and spirituality) were predictive of those topics’ occurrence in *MEJ* between 2008 and 2012. This finding should be viewed with caution, as no other predictive relationships were found, and a large time gap existed between the predictor and predicted data. While this analysis is a very limited approach to

examining such a complex phenomenon as philosophy guiding practice, we present it as an exploratory finding to generate further dialogue and inquiry.

Although each journal has a unique charge, the fact that both journals have “music education” in their titles could cause one to expect some commonalities between journals. Our results indicated performance was the topic most shared between journals. The prominence of performance is consistent with previous content analyses examining journals (Tirovolas & Levitin, 2011) and conferences (Orman & Price, 2007). A topic that was less prevalent overall, but that appeared at a similar rate in both journals, was music and culture. In addition, both journals devoted limited attention to the topics advocacy and social justice, with fewer than 2% of articles appearing in these categories.

### *Within Journals*

In order for one topic to increase in frequency across time, another topic must decrease. In *MEJ*, social justice increased from 0.4% between 2003 and 2007 to 6.35% between 2008 and 2012, coinciding with increasing attention for social justice in general education (Saltman, 2009). Performance increased across all 20 years, rising from 12.74% between 1993 and 1997 to 19.05% between 2008 and 2012. This suggests performance continues to be a major priority for the readers of *MEJ*. Concurrent decreases were found for creativity and technology. Possible explanations for the decrease in creativity are that music teachers are becoming more performance-based or that the push by many states for high-stakes testing may make teachers hesitant to allocate time to more divergent activities. The decrease in technology articles from 5.60% between 1993 and 1997 to 0% between 2008 and 2012 likely represents the early need historically for technology information, followed by a shift in how professional development is now delivered in this area. Because technology changes so quickly, journal articles will quickly become out of date. Instead, teachers may be using more immediate forms of technology training such as workshops, online tutorials, and peer training.

Long-term trends were also found in *PMER*. Research/critical inquiry increased across all 20 years, suggesting a possible paradigm shift in how philosophical articles are being written. Contrary to *MEJ*, which experienced a recent decrease in creativity articles, creativity in *PMER* experienced a noticeable increase from 1.20% between 2003 and 2007 to 8.47% between 2008 and 2012. This growth may be a reaction to increased funding and attention to STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) classes. Topics receiving less attention across time in *PMER* included multiple perspectives and marginalization. It is not clear why multiple perspectives decreased consistently from 11.36% between 1993 and 1997 to 0% between 2008 and 2012. A simple, but cursory, explanation would be that the simultaneous increases in other topics required decreases to happen in some other topics. A more grounded explanation may be offered for the decrease in marginalization from 9.84% between 1998 and 2002 to 1.69% between 2008 and 2012. As marginalization decreased between 2008 and 2012, social justice increased from 1.64% to 4.82%. These two topics are closely related; articles that could have been written about marginalization prior to 2008 may have shifted to social justice starting in 2008.

## Limitations and Future Directions

The validity of a content analysis is dependent on its coding procedures and the perspectives of the researchers who conduct the coding. We have attempted to address these concerns by stating our background in philosophy and by using a multiple-step coding process with multiple coders. However, it is quite possible different readers could assign different topic codes to some articles. Likewise, a different set of authors may generate an entirely different set of topics. It would be particularly interesting for this content analysis to be replicated by authors who have more extensive backgrounds in music education philosophy. Next, this article began with the premise that professional journals are an indicator of a profession's interests and priorities. Of course, the selection of journal content is more complex than simply representing interests and priorities. The results of this research only demonstrate the final outcome of the submission and review process for each journal. An analysis of articles that were not accepted for publication could provide further insight to the interests of the profession. In addition, thematic issues could also impact the balance of topics within journals. For example, the September 2012 issue of *MEJ* featured a set of five articles on special learners. Future research could explore the role of thematic issues in professional journals.

In addition, our analysis focused on the topic of each article. Previous content analyses examining other journals have attended to different aspects of each article, such as the population addressed, methodology, gender of the author, and primary teaching role of the author. Future research with *MEJ* and *PMER* could be expanded to include these variables to build on this present work. In addition, other modes of inquiry will provide perspectives not available through a positivist exploration (content analysis) of an interpretivist field of inquiry (philosophy).

Finally, this research was a significant undertaking of professional reading for both authors. In the course of one's daily life as either a university faculty member or a high school band teacher, it is difficult to find time to keep up with professional reading. In one sense, the project provided us with an "excuse" to modify our professional development priorities. In *MEJ*, we were buoyed by the growth in quality of writing across time. In *PMER*, it was particularly humbling and enlightening to immerse ourselves in 20 volumes of philosophical writings, as the breadth of topics far exceeded our expectations. We would like to modify the suggestion by Price and Orman (1999, 2001) that these professional articles represent the interests and needs of the profession, to suggest *MEJ* and *PMER* represent the interests more than the needs. We believe this is a hopeful and healthy state for the profession.

## Supplemental Material

The online Tables S1-S3 are available at <http://jrme.sagepub.com/supplemental>.

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## Notes

1. From 1993 to 2012, members received hard copies of *MEJ*. Currently, members receive access to electronic copies.
2. We started reading articles in August 2013, so the “most recent complete year” at that time was 2012.
3. While reading, we used 25 codes. For analysis, four individual codes were reduced to two codes. “Global perspectives” included articles identifying or comparing curricular practices in diverse regions. This topic was combined with “music and culture” because the topics addressed similar content, and each topic accounted for less than 2% of articles (*MEJ* = 1.87%, *PMER* = 0.4%). The original code set included “didactic”, a German viewpoint addressing music pedagogy, rationale, aim, and content (Nielsen, 2005). “Didactics” was merged into “other” due to the low number of occurrences (*MEJ* = 0.0%; *PMER* = 1.2%).

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