Musical and Social Influences on Participation in a LGBA Community Ensemble

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The subject of community music involvement has been an area of research interest in music education. One particular set of participants presently engaged in community music are members of the LGBTQ community. Established in 1982, the Lesbian and Gay Band Association (LGBA) was formed as an organization that promotes music as a medium of communication and stimulating public interest in the unique art form of community band music in the LGBTQ culture.

The aim of the present study was to investigate what musical and social factors influence LGBA members to participate in a LGBA community ensemble.

Three Questions Guided the Present Study
- What types of social interactions within the ensemble are important to its members?
- What types of musical experiences are important to its members?
- Which is more important when deciding to participate in an LGBA ensemble: social interaction or musical experience?

A survey was designed and distributed with permission from the LGBA Board of Directors to all active LGBA performing community ensembles throughout the United States as well as to partner organizations in Canada, Australia, United Kingdom and Ireland. A total of (N=458) LGBA ensemble participants responded to the survey yielding a response rate of 84%. The survey was distributed online and was designed to gather information pertaining to how influential social and/or musical experiences were on ensemble members’ decision to pursue participation in a LGBA ensemble.

Question #1 - Participants indicated that participation in the ensemble gave them a sense of community (M=3.28, SD= 0.79) was the most important type of social interaction. The least important reported was to strictly socialization with other ensemble members (M= 1.69, SD= 1.04).

Question #2 - Participants indicated that their participation in the ensemble improved their individual playing skills (M= 3.09, SD= 1.06) was the most important type of musical experience. The least important reported was that since joining the ensemble, they attended more live music concert events (M= 2.17, SD= 1.07).

Question #3 - Participants indicated that they considered in order of preference for most important: Performance Opportunity (32%), Musical Excellence (24%), Community (21%), Promotion of a Gay Community Organization (14%), and Socialization (10.5%).