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## What Have Mississippi Band Directors found Successful When Teaching the Horn?: A Qualitative Survey

Madeleine Case

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What Have Mississippi Band Directors found Successful When Teaching the Horn?:

A Qualitative Survey

by

Madeleine Case

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Honors College of  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of Honors Requirement

May 2021



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## **ABSTRACT**

This study surveyed band directors in the state of Mississippi, asking them what methods they use to teach the horn. The purpose of this research was to find some solid methods and concepts that participants found successful in their horn teaching, as well as open the discussion on what makes horn teaching unique to that of other instruments. Participants were selected for an online survey on two criteria: they had to have at least a Bachelor's degree in Music or Music Education, and they had to have at least one year of teaching experience in Mississippi.

After participants were surveyed, three qualitative coding methods were used to analyze the data: Attribute coding, In Vivo coding, and Descriptive coding. Four emergent themes were discovered as concepts most frequently discussed by participants: equipment, differentiations, teacher preparedness, and horn player independence. Participants have the most success teaching the horn when they are prepared, confident, and equipped in their teaching with strategies to help their horn players succeed. These findings support the idea that the horn and its teaching are not harder than that of other instruments, simply different.

***Keywords: Music, Music Education, French Horn, Ear Training, Teacher preparedness***

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to all my music teachers. Though I did not know it at the time, each one of you was essential to me, both in my musical learning and my emotional and social development. Music has become my way of understanding the world around me, and the opportunities that have been afforded me would not have been as enriching without your countless hours of dedication to your careers. I know I was not always the easiest student, but know that your words and actions were never lost on me. Thank you for changing my world and helping me find my path.

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# **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

## **Introduction**

The development of young French horn players is a long, exploratory road with many intersections and U-turns. Most band directors are tasked with learning and teaching the horn, and the methods and concepts they use with their horn players set the foundation for their hornists' musicality and understanding of the horn itself. For many instruments, there are systematic pedagogies to be used in a variety of different cases, such as the Suzuki method for strings. The horn does not fall into this category, and according to Lafferty (1991), band directors today may be misguided by "the horn's pedagogical myths," leaving their French horn players to struggle. This difference in established pedagogy does not stem from today's band directors solely, though the problems it causes fall on their shoulders. There is simply a gap in the literature for applicable horn pedagogy that band directors can easily incorporate into their routines.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Band directors often find themselves in need of additional support for their horn players, especially at the beginning level. Dale Clevenger, principal horn of the Chicago Symphony from 1966-2013, stated in an interview that 50% of his incoming freshman horn students had embouchure problems (Clevenger 1997). A study performed by Jennifer Daigle (2006) assessed band directors' knowledge of the horn and its pedagogy, but no qualitative surveys have been conducted to elicit advice or methods from band directors in the field. The Daigle study revealed that most information that novice band directors knew about the horn could be applied to all brass instruments, and very few

participants could answer horn-specific questions, meaning that there is a need for band directors to learn and be able to teach this information (61). The information in instrumental method books and the information participants could elicit was different; Daigle found that the transfer of information from instrumental method books to novice band directors is low, which equates to the low level of teacher preparedness many teachers experience (62).

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this survey was to identify and conceptualize different methods used by band directors in the state of Mississippi to teach the horn. Band directors (participants) were given a 10-question qualitative survey, in which they were asked about the methods of teaching horn they currently use, which of these methods work, and which methods they do not recommend. For this study, all participants had at least a Bachelor's degree and at least one year of teaching experience.

### **A Brief History of Music Education**

The history of American music education is a long and convoluted one, but it must be explored to understand the current conditions in which music education, and therefore, the horn, exists in the United States today. Music was not offered in public schools until the early nineteenth century. This meant that to study music, private instruction was needed, which only rich, white, land-owning families could afford. It was the Massachusetts song leader and hymn arranger Lowell Mason who proposed the idea that music education be included in public schools, and in 1838, Mason became the first teacher to be paid for teaching music in an American public school (Birge 2013). To

rationalize music's place in public schools, there were three main reasons that music was originally included- it was stated as being good for students intellectually, morally, and physically (Mark 2008). The reformations that Mason made to American religious music were part of the reason he became well-known in the Boston area, and this positive reception is what helped Mason gain the support needed to teach music in the public arena.

Music existed in the singing-school model, meaning that there was no instrumental music for students to participate in. The singing-school model grew in popularity amongst Americans, but still, many students were not included because of their class, race, or economic status (Sturm 1998). The main goals of the singing schools were to supplement the education of other subjects and to create students that were well-rounded in Western Music traditions, including basic music history and notation (Birge 2013). Mason created a curriculum that followed these guidelines and included some more aesthetic guidelines as well, such as ear training and rhythmic expression (Birge 2013). Mason's guidelines for music education became the starting point for all future philosophy, earning him the nickname of the "Father of American Music Education."

Much has changed since Mason's time, and the roles that music has played in public schools are ever-changing. At the turn of the 20th century, music became a way to advocate for the nationalist sentiments being encouraged by the American government. Music teachers engaged students in patriotic singing and motivated students to participate in nationalist ideals (Sturm 1998). As global communications increased, music slowly became an integral part of the American students' patriotic upbringing, and patriotic

sentiments are still a large part of music curriculum today. Another example of music education's evolving role is presented in the Second World War and the consequent Cold War (Birge 2013). During this time, the efforts of the MENC (Music Educators National Conference, now referred to as NAFME, or the National Association for Music Educators) were directed at wartime assistance. After WWII was over, American education became centered around the space race and training future scientific and technological leaders, meaning that music went to the wayside for many students (Birge 2013). As research around the different learning methods and styles increased, there became an increasing need to focus only on aspects of education that were deemed "core subjects," which did not include the arts. Since the Cold War era, music education funding has steadily decreased, but there has been an increase in advocacy for music education, which is important for music education's longevity and life (Mark 2002).

While most advocacy today exists at the national level, there is some disparity in what exactly music educators should advocate for. Mark (2002) mentions in his essay on music education advocacy that "advocacy helps us [music educators] keep our democratic process," meaning that music teachers hold the power to shape and change how their programs function to fit the needs of their students and societies. While vocal advocacy is important, it is not the only way that music education can be advanced. This advancement comes through the thoughtful and precise training of music educators who are equipped to face the challenges presented within teaching music in the 21st century.

## **The Horn's Relationship to Modern Music Education**

The horn has existed in two main forms in its lifetime: natural horns, which include no valves, and valved horns, which have at least three valves. Before the invention of valves, non-valved ("natural") horns were used, and the only notes that could be played had to be in the horn's harmonic series, giving the horn a minimal role in most renaissance and baroque music (Meucci & Rocchetti 2001). Through the invention of crooks (exchangeable segments of tubing added to the horn where the main tuning slides are today), the horn could change keys, but still only play a small number of notes. In time, it became common practice for horn players to insert the right hand into the bell, which allowed them to play notes outside of the harmonic series. With its new musical abilities, the horn grew in popularity across Europe, especially after Mozart's horn concertos were published (Meucci and Rocchetti 2001).

The valved horn grew in popularity in the early/mid 19th century. The invention of the valved horn made virtually every note in the horn's range possible, though most composers still wrote in specified keys for the horn until the early 20th century (Meucci and Rocchetti 2001). The horn played a key role in military bands in the 20th century because of its roots as a militaristic instrument and its ability to fit into the brass timbre harmonically, thus making it an important part of school bands, which were modeled after those found in the armed forces at the time (Starrett 2009). American horn playing diverged from that of more traditional European horn playing in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, thanks to the golden age of Hollywood cinema. The need for musicians to play in movies created the need for horn players whose tones could fit that of the big screen, and the



American horn sound became different (the tone became darker and fuller) to fit that role. This “golden age of horn playing” is still the most widely preferred style in American horn pedagogy, as horn players of that generation are often romanticized by younger players and teachers (Hilliard 1999).

### **The Band Climate of Mississippi**

The researcher has lived in Mississippi for the entirety of her life and finds it important to describe the band climate of Mississippi and distinguish it from the rest of the United States. While the climate of music education in MS is not entirely different from that of other states, some research exists on how band functions, and it is important to compare this research to the findings of this study. In Mississippi, there are two separate festivals in which bands are scored: a marching band festival in the fall, and a concert band festival in the spring. A study (Washington 2007) analyzed selected characteristics of Mississippi bands and compared them to earned festival ratings for that year, and revealed that more emphasis was placed on making high ratings at marching festival over concert festival.

Many factors influence this emphasis, including the number of directors, the number of brass versus woodwind players, and the amount of money contributed to the band through fundraising. Bands with more brass than woodwind players had higher ratings in each category than bands with more woodwind than brass players, and the amount of money that a band received had a positive effect on the bands’ ratings, among several other discoveries about influences on bands’ ratings success. Other than the findings from this study, not much formal research has been done studying the band

climate in Mississippi or comparing its climate to that of other states. While this research is important because it focuses on Mississippi's band climate, it only focuses on concert and festival ratings, and not the success determined by band directors or students.

## **Conclusions/Definitions of Terms**

### ***Need for Study***

Based upon collegiate horn teachers' opinions of their incoming horn students, teachers have difficulty in preparing their horn players to the same level that they prepare students that play other instruments. This difficulty is caused by a lack of resources that are readily available to band directors and their students. While there is research surveying band director knowledge of the horn, there is a gap in the literature for effective methods that band directors are using to teach the horn today. This research seeks to link the knowledge band directors have on horn teaching with the methods and strategies they use to teach.

### ***Definitions of terms***

Band director: music educator currently teaching at least one instrumental ensemble class, with at least a Bachelor's degree in Music and one year of teaching experience. Band Directors will also be referred to as "participants" or "music educators."

Concept: A concept in this context is defined as an idea, whether concrete or abstract. Concepts can include methods and strategies, but concepts also include more general ideas that cannot be classified as methods or strategies.

Differentiation: Tailoring instruction to meet the needs of every student. Band directors do this regularly by tailoring instruction to the different instruments they teach, for example, playing lip slurs in their brass warmups (see lip slur definition below). In this context, differentiation and differentiated instruction will refer to the methods used to create different, specific instruction for horn players.

Ear training/pitch matching: Ear training is the musical skill that allows musicians to identify certain pitches, intervals, melodies, chords, rhythms, and other musical elements based only upon hearing them. Ear training is incorporated in the band classroom in many different forms and is easily one of the most important skills for students to develop to be successful musicians.

(The) horn: The brass instrument often referred to as the French Horn. In the 1970s, the International Horn Society made a motion to remove the word “French” from the instrument’s name, and this idea stuck in most countries, but not the United States. For the purposes of this thesis, it will be referred to as the horn, not to be confused with horns in a traditional jazz band.

Instrument switching: Instances where a student changes to a new primary instrument after beginning on a different one. It is a fairly common practice for many band programs, especially the changing of horn players from or to other instruments. Many

directors start their students on trumpet, trombone, or even mellophone, and switch their students to horn after a year, or when they get to high school.

Lip slurs: Lip slurs focus on slurring between different notes on the harmonic series, meaning that notes are all played on the same fingering. The goal is to match the different notes on the harmonic series to embouchure and aperture shapes within the mouthpiece to increase pitch accuracy.

Long tones: Long tones can be loosely defined as any long notes used to warm up the facial muscles and fingers, help steady the breath and airstream, and help students listen to their tone for the day and try to match the tones that are happening around them.

Method books: Method books are the textbooks of the music world; they are used to teach curriculum to students. All the method books mentioned here start with the same concepts; they have pages at the beginning dedicated to instrument carriage and posture, how to set up the embouchure, and the first few notes that come out of the horn. Each method book progresses at a different level; some are used to instruct instruments uniformly, and some are used to teach specific instruments.

Playing independence: Independence in this context can be defined as the ability to play correctly and independently of other parts being performed at the same time. For horn players, the ability to listen to their part and play on the right partials is a skill developed

over time. Independence for horn players is a unique part of playing the horn in a large ensemble, as horns are usually the only brass instrument on their particular part.

Scales: Scales are defined as musical lines ordered and organized around a key signature and starting pitch. Scales provide a multitude of benefits to student's musical studies: range building, music theory study, tone building, muscle memory/dexterity study, and several other skills can be developed by learning scales in both major and minor keys.

Single vs. double horns: Single horns are keyed in either Bb or F, whereas double horns are keyed in both Bb and F; the depression of the trigger valve changes the key from one side to the other. The use of single horns (horns keyed in *either* Bb or F, as opposed to double horns, which have *both* a Bb and F side) varies between band programs.

Teacher preparedness: The measure used to observe if teachers are prepared to teach a topic, which can be measured by the teacher themselves (self-evaluation) or through outside measures. Teacher preparedness affects teacher efficacy, as teachers who are more prepared to teach a concept will have more success in formulating instruction and assessment for said concept.

Warm-ups: Generally speaking, a warm-up is any exercise that musicians perform to prepare for the musical playing of the day. Every band program has a different warmup

routine, and each teacher specializes their warmup to what their students need at any given time.

## **CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Horn Pedagogy Today**

The horn is taught using methods that are used for a variety of instruments, and the elements that make the horn unique are often overlooked by band directors and music teachers, disadvantaging young horn players (Daigle 2006). Some of these disadvantages have been outlined by professionals in the field. Clevenger of the Chicago Symphony wrote that 50% of his incoming students have embouchure problems (Clevenger 1997). A study of professional-level horn teachers by Hoover (1994) found that only 4% of teachers believed that all the students they received were at the level they should be considering the amount of time they had played the horn. Based on these opinions, it can be concluded that unless students have studied privately, professionals believe they are not receiving a well-rounded horn education (Hoover 1994). To understand these deficiencies and why horn-players are often lagging in terms of technique, the researcher finds it important to explain the context in which music education exists today, in order to establish any correlations between deficits in horn pedagogy and deficits in general band pedagogy. The causes of these deficiencies are not completely known, but a substantial portion of these deficits could be attributed to music teacher education programs. According to Daigle (2006), the setup of brass methods classes does not affect how many teacher candidates learn about the horn while in school (62), and teacher education programs teach a wide scope of information with little connection between subjects (63). Essentially, the information that pre-service teachers learn about the horn is more difficult to transfer to their teaching because of the breadth of knowledge that methods

courses encompass. Music teacher education programs are responsible for teaching horn pedagogy, and Daigle's (2006) findings acknowledge the lack of information that novice teachers possess about the horn.

### **The Horn in the Band Classroom**

There is limited literature related to horn pedagogy in secondary school band classroom settings. One of the most pertinent studies was conducted by Daigle (2006), and was an investigation of novice band directors, asking them what they knew about the horn and horn pedagogy. Ten band directors (all with less than five years of teaching experience) were surveyed, in which they were asked questions about their educational backgrounds, and then surveyed on various aspects of the horn to see how much correct information they knew. This study show that most band directors have little knowledge above the minimum amount required to teach brass instruments and have very limited knowledge about horn-specific techniques and qualities, such as right-hand placement/hand stopping, lip trills, transposition, old/new bass clef notation, and single vs. double/triple horn construction (62). Many things differentiate the horn from other brass instruments, yet the participants here were not aware of these differences. There was also no measurable difference in information between teachers with one year of experience and teachers with more. Overall, this study revealed that band directors have varying degrees of knowledge about the horn, though participants were more likely to respond correctly to questions that were only brass-specific, not horn-specific (61). Daigle notes that the variability of college brass methods courses, and recommends a



handbook be created for pre-service teachers to lessen the variability in information they retain (64).

Such a resource does exist and was compiled by Jacqueline Fassler-Kerstetter at Kansas State University (2018). This compilation is a handbook designed for pre-service band directors, and carries relevant information in all categories of music-making, from hand positions embouchure settings to more advanced techniques like stopping and transposition (Fassler-Kerstetter 2018).

## **Current Methods for Teaching Horn**

### ***Method Books and Warmups***

Despite the discrepancies in what music educators know about the horn today, there exists a great wealth of information on horn pedagogy and methods often employed by horn-specific teachers. There are commonly used method/etude books that cover wide ranges of playing ability and problem-solving techniques. Many method books follow the same basic format: first, a warm-up is introduced, and then specific issues are addressed through recommended reading and/or exercises, such as range building, alternate fingerings, and extended techniques like stopped playing and lip trills. These exercises and etudes are written specifically for horn players, making them impractical for use in the band classroom, but the fundamentals that they are built upon apply to everyday practices. For example, Teuber outlines in his methods book that interval training is an important part of developing young horn players, and includes many different exercises in developing interval accuracy (Teuber 1999). While interval training is important to young horn players, it is not easy to incorporate when teaching a full band class and is

often overlooked in favor of exercises that more instruments can benefit from, such as scale training or long tones. Philip Farkas (principal of the Chicago Symphony from 1936 to 1960) outlines exercises in his method book that follow traditional guidelines for warmups- long tones, lips slurs, etc., but in ranges that are specific to horn playing, meaning that it would be difficult to incorporate them in the heterogeneous classroom (Farkas 1956). For a closer look at a variety of horn methods/warmups used by private teachers, Manners' *Annotated Guide to Horn Warmups* (2016) is recommended.

### ***Ear Training***

As previously defined, ear training is the musical skill of establishing and identifying musical elements aurally, as opposed to seeing them on a musical staff. It is a skill important to all musicians, but especially to horn players, as the harmonic series on which the horn exists make the partials difficult to play while relying solely on muscle memory (as opposed to relying on muscle memory and aural memory). Because of its importance to musicianship, ear training has been studied as it applies to full band education at the high school level (Stofko 1980), and more specifically to horn players at the beginner level (Gates 2001). Both studies prove that ear training is an effective method for teaching student independence and other musical skills.

### **Concepts for the Band Classroom**

There is previous literature on the efficacy of methods/concepts utilized by current band directors for not only their horn players, but their full bands. Focusing on musical fundamentals, setting clear goals, modeling, and encouraging independence were amongst the most applicable of these concepts. Juchniewicz, Kelly, and Acklin (2014)

studied characteristics of highly successful band directors and found that concepts relating to “music fundamentals” were the most helpful in creating success in their students. This means that most directors spent a majority of their rehearsal time working on fundamentals and the applications of those fundamentals into other aspects of their curriculum. Another study about perceived effective teacher habits comes from Millican and Forrester (2019): in this study, teachers were asked how they would solve certain musical problems within their classrooms. It was found that modeling and setting clear goals were among the most important ideas for student success. Sang (1986) specifically studied modeling as a tool for music educators and found that students with appropriate musical models found more success and enjoyment in playing than those who did not. This study offers the advice that pre-service teachers spend more time developing their modeling strategies while they are in school. Another key factor of student success in the band classroom is independence, or the ability to play an instrument independently of other instruments. According to Weidner (2018), creating positive relationships with students is the most important factor in their independence. Weidner reports that if students feel they are not welcome in the learning situation, it affects their musical learning.

### **Personal Practices of Music Teachers**

Steele (2010) studied three characteristics (non-verbal communication, servant leadership, self-efficacy) and how they can be applied by both novice and more seasoned teachers; the research showed that many pre-service teachers are not skilled in all three, and the point was made that both musical and non-musical development must take place

at the pre-service level. Popow (2017) studied music teacher perceptual dispositions and analyzed them into a theoretical framework to determine which dispositions were most common among participants; the most common perceived dispositions are the attribute of self, the attribute of others, the perception of purpose, and the perception of the general frame of reference. Participants in this study find success when they are self-aware, able to perceive others, have an understanding of purpose, and understand the general frame of reference in which they teach (Popow 2017). This dispositional research is helpful to teachers because it allows them to reflect on their natural tendencies (dispositions) as teachers and see what dispositions are successful for music teaching.

All this research shows that there is an interest in creating the perfect formula for a successful band director: their habits, their methods, and their dispositions should all be considered when it comes to determining teacher efficacy. While the framework for success covers many topics, music educators still debate about the efficacy of certain methods pertaining to certain instruments, and not much research exists in determining methods for individual instruments.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODS**

### **Participant Selection**

Sample data was collected from a total of 18 participants, who were contacted from a list of Mississippi band directors that totaled 56 potential participants. Potential participants were selected using two criteria; they had to have at least a Bachelor's degree in Music or Music Education, and they had to have at least one year of teaching experience. These participants all currently teach middle and/or high school band in Mississippi, with varying levels of experience and educational backgrounds. Each band director was initially sent a survey link, along with a letter explaining the goals and methods of the study. Two follow-up emails were sent over the course of a month as a reminder about the survey. The online survey consisted of ten open-ended questions related to their educational and musical background, as well as horn pedagogy.

### **Figure 1: Survey questions**

1. What is your primary instrument? Your teaching background (degrees, years of experience)?
2. What is your current teaching schedule (number of classes, grades taught, etc.)?
3. What has your experience teaching the horn been like?
4. How long have you taught the horn? Have you enjoyed it?
5. What things (concepts, methods, literature, warmups) have you found successful when teaching the horn?
6. Has there been anything you have tried that has not worked?
7. If you are not a horn player, have you consulted other horn players in your process of teaching the horn (other band directors, private teachers, etc.)? What advice have they provided?
8. Did you feel fully prepared to teach the horn when you started teaching? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel that the majority of what you know about the horn was learned in school or on the job?
10. Other horn-related comments?

## **Coding Process**

Attribute coding was used for responses to questions related to participant characteristics while In Vivo and Descriptive coding were used for responses to questions related to pedagogy. Attribute coding is the notation of basic descriptive information assigned to participants, such as participants' demographics (Saldaña 2016). This coding method provides essential participant information and helps contextualize other data in a set. In In Vivo coding, an emphasis is placed on the exact words of participants. The goal of In Vivo coding is to examine the overlap between participants' responses in the simplest way possible; connections are made between responses using phrases used by multiple participants (Saldaña 2016). Data was transferred into a document including all participants' responses, and the researcher performed the initial coding process, highlighting commonalities as well as contradictory statements. After the initial code was completed, some key concepts emerged from the data about methods employed by participants. A second cycle code was then performed; this code reaffirmed the initial methods and concepts while providing some deeper context not originally found in the first cycle coding. Descriptive coding was used in conjunction with In Vivo coding in the second cycle; descriptive coding summarizes longer data sets in the form of short, often one-word, phrases (Saldaña 2016). Using descriptive coding allowed for emergent themes and their subcategories to be found.

## **Limitations**

The main limitation of this survey was the small participant pool, which led to limited data collection and therefore, a short list of implications that can be drawn from

said data. The participant pool also only consisted of current high school band directors, and while most of these participants teach both middle and high school, no participants were strictly middle school directors, where presumably, students start on the horn. All data was collected amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, which could have been a factor in the low response rate, as band directors during this time were tasked with facing unprecedented challenges on top of their normal workloads.

Open-ended questions were used to allow participants freedom in their answers; however, this limited the instructions that were given to participants, leading to a wide variety of answer length and specificity. All collected data was qualitative, which allows for a deeper understanding of participants' responses but makes drawing connections between those responses more difficult. This led to a limitation in drawn conclusions and connections for further research.

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS**

### **Participant Attributes**

Through attribute coding, participants were assigned traits based on their teaching experience, primary instrument, and education. Participant's primary instruments were as follows: two flute players, two clarinets, three saxophones, three trumpets, one horn, four trombones, two tubas, and one percussionist. Along with this wide spectrum of primary instruments are varying levels of experience, ranging from two to 32 years of experience, with an average experience level of 14 years. The participants' highest level of education received also varied. All participants had at least a Bachelor's in Music, though not all of them have degrees in Music Education. Five participants had only Bachelor's degrees. 13 participants have Master's Degrees, either in Music Performance, Music Education, or Education and Leadership (some did not specify what their Master's degree was in), and two have Doctorate or Specialist Degrees in Educational Leadership. All participants currently teach middle or high school band, and the majority (77%) of them teach both.

### **Horn Teaching Experience**

#### ***Length and Enjoyment***

In Vivo coding was used to identify overarching concepts and methods related to horn pedagogy. In response to being asked if they enjoy teaching the horn, all participants responded yes, except for one, who reported that "teaching beginner horns has been a bit of headache," which they attributed to limited experience in teaching horn in their undergraduate degree program. The next question asked participants how long they have



taught the horn specifically, and participants have a wide spread of horn teaching experience, ranging from two years to 25 years.

### ***Participant Methods/Concepts***

Participants were asked to list what methods/concepts they recommend and advise against for teaching horn. Figure 2 shows the concepts they submitted along with the frequency of which each concept was mentioned by respondents. Similarly, Figure 3 shows the concepts they have found to be unsuccessful.

**Figure 2: Reported Successful Concepts**

Concept	Frequency
Teacher preparedness	18 mentions (100%)
Ear training	13 mentions (72%)
Method Books	9 mentions (50%)
Starting students on single or double horns	8 mentions (44%)
Student independence	6 mentions (33%)
Lip slurs	5 mentions (27%)
Alternate fingerings	4 mentions (22%)
Long tones	3 mentions (17%)
Singing	3 mentions (17%)
Mouthpiece buzzing	3 mentions (17%)
Checking right hand position	3 mentions (17%)
Homogeneous band classes	2 mentions (11%)
Warm-ups	2 mentions (11%)
Harmonic series	2 mentions (11%)
“Air”	1 mention (6%)
Breathing exercises	1 mention (6%)

There were also several methods that participants advised against, which can be found in Figure 3. Some responses were coded In Vivo, but due to differences in response length and depth, some were coded using descriptive coding. More positive

advice was offered than negative advice, as some participants even left this question blank or wrote that they had no methods to advise against or precautions to offer.

**Figure 3: Concepts Participants Advised Against**

Concepts	Frequency
Participant reports noting not working for their horn teaching	5 mentions (25%)
Using beginner method books	2 mentions (11%)
“Giving them concessions.”	1 mention (6%)
Transitioning students from trumpet to mellophone before transitioning them to horn	1 mention (6%)
“Letting them explore on their own.”	1 mention (6%)
Using different tuning procedures	1 mention (6%)
Not being selective about who plays horn.	1 mention (6%)
Starting only one student on the horn at a time	1 mention (6%)

### *Advice from Others*

The next question asked participants if they had consulted others for advice in their horn teaching, and, if they had, what advice others had to offer. All participants (except one, who is a horn player) had reached out to others for horn advice, and the others offered a lot of the same advice that was listed in Figure 2. All responses to this survey question were coded through In Vivo coding.

**Figure 4: Conceptual Advice from Others**

Concept	Frequency
Alternate fingerings	3 mentions (17%)
Right hand advice	3 mentions (17%)
Mouthpiece advice	2 mentions (11%)
General teaching strategies	2 mentions (11%)
Recommendations for personal practice	2 mentions (11%)
Horn position advice	2 mentions (11%)
Importance of early ear training	1 mention (6%)
Low register work	1 mention (6%)
What instrument to start beginners on	1 mention (6%)

Specific method books	1 mention (6%)
Ways to help students use air effectively	1 mention (6%)
Repertoire for students	1 mention (6%)
Thoughts about partials and the harmonic series	1 mention (6%)

### ***Teacher Preparedness and Other Comments***

The last few questions related to teacher preparedness for teaching the horn. One question asked if participants felt prepared to teach the horn when beginning their professional careers, and all participants except one (94%), reported that they did not feel prepared to teach the horn straight out of their undergraduate degree. Another question asked if participants learned the majority of what they know about the horn and teaching the horn in school or on the job, and 14 participants (77%) stated that they learned their majority on the job.

The final survey question asked participants for any other horn-related comments or thoughts they had, and some left more advice or anecdotal stories about teaching and playing, while others left the question blank. Some participants mentioned the difficulty of the horn and the fears they had when first teaching the horn. One participant mentioned a “shroud of mystery” associated with horn playing, and how the difficulty can be blown out of proportion easily. Others reported that they quite enjoyed their horn teaching and were looking forward to developing their own playing skills and the skills of their horn players.

### ***Emergent Themes***

From these results, four emergent themes were coded: equipment, differentiation, teacher preparedness, and horn player independence. Equipment refers to the physical

instruments participants use, and the techniques associated with instrument switching. Differentiation is what participants vary for their horn player versus their other students. The survey had two questions relating to teacher preparedness, or the measure used to identify if teachers are prepared to teach a topic. Lastly, horn player independence is students' ability to perform a part that is independent of the other parts being played around them. Each theme will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

For the purposes of this chapter, four emergent themes were found and will be discussed here. Themes are listed in no order of importance or efficacy, but instead, follow the results in Chapter 4.

### **Equipment**

The theme of equipment was found throughout participants' responses related to instrument switching and the instrument/equipment used to start their horn players.

Because each participant has a different method of starting/transitioning students to the horn, equipment will be discussed under these two headings: instrument switching and which instrument to start on. Equipment was not a hypothesized theme the way that the other emergent themes were, and no study questions were intended to prompt responses about equipment.

### ***Instrument switching***

As defined earlier, instrument switching is the act (whether enacted by the teacher, student, or another party) of changing a student's primary instrument after previously establishing them on a different instrument. Band directors switch student's primary instruments for several reasons, and the path from one instrument to the next looks different for every student. Which way to transition students is the "right" way? Participants felt strongly about the method they prefer for instrument switching, while some participants felt that instrument switching is unnecessary, meaning that students should start on horn as a beginner.

One of the main benefits to instrument switching is cost efficiency; if there are not enough horns for every horn player to play one, and there is not enough money to buy more instruments, having students start on something else and then switch when that instrument becomes available can solve that problem. For example, some teachers start students on the mellophone, which is universally cheaper than double and some single horns. Based on participants mentioning the mellophone in their path of instrument switching, cost is possibly a factor for band directors in their instrument switching technique. There is no one proven method for instrument switching, and not much research exists that studies the effects of instrument switching. Fassler-Kerstetter (2018) states that instrument switches should happen in steps and should focus on shifting the embouchure and mouthpiece placement.

### ***Beginner Horns***

Participants had different opinions as to what instrument was the best to start beginner horn players: single horns or double horns. As previously defined, single horns have only one set of pipes and can only play in one key, while double horns have two sets of pipes (F and Bb sides) and can play in both keys (the depression of the trigger valve changes the horn from the F to the Bb side). Both instruments have their pros and cons; the largest factors that likely influence participant's choice are cost, the size of their beginning horn players, and the method that was used by other band directors at their current position.

The costs associated with obtaining and maintaining horns are a significant concern. Especially for larger band programs, instrument maintenance is a sizable portion

of a band budget, and band directors often cannot solve every equipment issue immediately. In terms of size, the physicality of students is a factor as well, particularly for students in the fifth and sixth grades. Single horns are smaller and weigh less because they contain less pipe, so they are easier to position and carry correctly.

Participants used the word “we” when referring to the equipment they use to start their beginner horn players; they refer to the instruments they use from a group perspective instead of an individual one. Because of this, it can be concluded that participants start their horn players the way their coworkers/previous band directors have started them, instead of evaluating and possibly changing that method if they believe it needs to be changed. Band directors using the precedent method may be linked to teacher preparedness, as they may not feel comfortable or prepared to change the equipment or methods their band program uses.

In summary, equipment emerged as relating to two different headings: the process of instrument switching, and the debate of using single or double horns. Fassler-Kerstetter provide advice for instrument switching, stating that small steps should be taken to not overwhelm the student and their embouchure. Regarding deciding which horn to use, Fassler-Kerstetter (2018) goes into greater detail on the pros and cons of each horn, as well as recommended models for each. While no participant listed the reasons why they use the equipment they use, it can be determined that each participant is set in the technique they utilize and that participants often utilize the methods of the predecessors at their job/current coworkers in deciding the equipment they use.

## **Differentiation**

Differentiation is a large umbrella concept that can cover many aspects of instruction, but in this context, differentiation is defined as the ways participants created different instruction for their horn players as opposed to the other instruments.

Participants mentioned ways they vary their instruction, but they also mentioned what they keep consistent, so both ideas will be discussed.

### ***Variations***

Every participant mentioned differentiation to varying degrees, though it was most mentioned about the written music and exercises they use in class. Participants provide different warmups for their horn players, most frequently by changing the range of their warmups into a range that fits the horn tessitura (the pitches that young horn players can most comfortably play). Some method books differentiate automatically, and some band directors differentiate with other materials they have on hand. For example, the “*Habits of a Successful Middle School Musician*” method book has horns on different pitches for long tones and lip slurs than those of other instruments, and these pitches stay in the comfortable range for younger players (Rush, Scott, Wilkinson, Moon, & Boyle, 2015). While not much research exists on the differentiation of horn warmups, Manners (2016) gives an outline horn warmups and which elements of warmups should be included in horn players’ regular routines.

Differentiation was also sometimes mentioned in reference to methods used for other instruments. For example, ear training methods were described as “giving horn students the opportunity to match pitch with other instrumentalists on a daily basis.” This



means that the horn instruction is different and other instruments are used to help the horn players with their ear training. Ear training is a proven method of instruction for both beginner horn students (Gates 2001) and older students (Stofko 1980) alike.

Differentiation was mentioned because participants believe that their horn players need some extra attention to be successful. This idea is in line with what professional horn players and teachers believe; the horn is not harder, just different. According to Hoover (1994), “teachers need to be aware of the special requirements and expectations that horn players will eventually encounter.” This extra attention that teachers give to their horn players is created through changing their warmups to a more fitting range and providing horn-specific exercises to strengthen fundamentals. These practices encourage the students to continue working and help the teacher develop strategies they know are effective.

### ***Commonalities***

Just as participants reported strategies they use to differentiate their instruction for their horn players, they also reported what they keep the same. The concepts that participants keep the same for all instruments were usually related not to instructional methods, but rather to how they treat their horn players as members of their band community. Participants treat their horn players with the same respect as the other instruments and set the same expectations for them in terms of growth and performance. The idea of having set expectations as an influence on student performance is discussed by Juchniewicz, Kelly, and Acklin (2014). They posit that every student musician should have the opportunity to be taught at the same level, regardless of instrument or other

factors. Music educators want to instill the same level of discipline in every student; they simply take a different path to that discipline when teaching the horn. Again, this connects to the idea that the classroom environment is a large factor in student performance and independence (Weidner 2018). One participant mentioned that horn students only fall behind when they are given concessions, meaning that when they expect less out of their horn players, their horn players falter. This comment relates directly to maintaining the same expectations regarding performance for every student.

### **Teacher Preparedness**

Teacher preparedness was a theme directly addressed in two of the survey questions, which asked participants if they learned more about the horn while in school or on the job, and if they felt prepared to teach the horn when they began teaching. Because it was directly addressed, participants gave more specific responses related to their preparedness than to some of the other themes. Participants reported their preparedness under two philosophical ideas: relating to the perspective of their horn players and having the confidence to teach them effectively. Each of these ideas helped participants in their teaching.

### ***Perspective***

In reference to their preparedness to teach the horn, participants mentioned perspective. Many band directors stated that before knowing about the horn, they were not aware of the unique perspective of horn playing, or how it differs from playing/teaching other instruments. Participants mentioned that through teaching the horn, their perspective changed, and they became more aware of the challenges of horn

playing. Their teaching abilities were strengthened by understanding how the horn differs from other instruments, and the perspective gained through personal practice helped their teaching. Millican and Forrester (2018) assert that teachers must see skills from the perspective of the students they teach. Gaining this perspective is often looked over in teacher education programs, and novice teachers develop their perspectives in the field instead of in school. Popow (2017) also studied perspective as it relates to teaching, and found that teachers experience success when they understand the frame of reference (or perspective) in which they teach. Participants explained that the increased confidence they experienced after gaining this perspective was especially important, as they were able to impart this confidence onto their students over time. According to participants, prepared horn teachers understand the unique perspective of horn playing and can display and communicate that perspective through their confidence in playing the horn.

### ***Confidence***

Participants mentioned confidence in their personal abilities to teach the horn as related to being able to provide instruction through modeling for their students. This confidence in modeling relates to Sang's study on modeling as a predictor of student's musical behaviors: when participants can model ideas correctly on the horn, their students are more likely to model them correctly as well. Sang (1986) proved that modeling has bearing on student success, so teachers' confidence in their modeling skills is a concept that should be discussed more at the pre-service level.

This confidence is built as participants gained more experience and was supported by the help they received from others in their horn teaching. Confidence is important to

participant's horn playing because it allows them to instruct and relate the material they are teaching in ways that are applicable for students. Steele (2010) examined traits of effective music teachers and found that strong leadership and confidence were effective teacher traits. Because teacher confidence often grows over time, participants mentioned their best strategies for building it: patience, help from other teachers and mentors, and the perspective about horn teaching that can only be gained through horn playing.

### **Independence**

Independence emerged under two main headings: the independence that is nurtured through help from band directors, and the independence that is forced upon students because of oversight from their teachers. There is a certain level of independence that must come with playing any instrument, and, especially for young musicians, this independence can be hard to develop if students do not feel comfortable or nurtured in their learning environment.

#### ***Nurtured independence***

Some participants focused on the independence they created in their horn players. These participants focus on tailoring their teaching to help their horn players become more independent, creating their own exercises, and working to find what works for their students through trial and error (one participant mentioned "trial by fire!"). This independence created by band directors is nurtured through careful and prepared work with students that helps the young horn players gain self-sufficiency. The maintenance of horn player independence is tougher for beginner students than older students, as older students can typically play more independently of other instruments. While not much

research exists on horn-specific independence, Weidner (2018) maintains that “the independence-focused band begins and ends with the band environment” (42). He asserts that positive relationships are the basis of independence, and instructional practices should always keep player independence in mind.

### ***Forced Independence***

While some participants used the word “independence” from a positive perspective, others saw independence from a negative perspective, reporting that there was forced independence placed on horn players from an early age that needed to be counteracted with proper pedagogy. This forced independence spurs from teachers deciding that teaching the horn is too challenge or too confusing to differentiate it from other instruments. Daigle (2006) asserts that horn pedagogy should be differentiated in both the music classroom and the music teacher classroom so that this forced independence can be avoided. Horn instruction needs differentiation from other instruments, so that horn players can learn in an environment that does not restrict them.

A band director’s opinion of independence could be influenced by many factors, one being their preparedness to help their horn students independently of other instruments. Developing student independence is a journey that takes time and patience from band directors (Weidner 2018), as well as students that are willing to develop themselves into more resilient musicians. Further research needs to be done on the independence of beginner horn players.

## **CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **Summary**

In this study, participants answered a ten-question qualitative survey that asked them about the methods they currently use to teach the horn. Each participant is currently a band director in Mississippi, has at least one year of teaching experience, and at least one degree in Music. All questions in the survey were open-ended and intended to obtain extensive, thorough answers from participants.

As expected, participants recorded a depth of information in response to questions asked. Though each participant interpreted the survey differently, many similarities were identified, so much can be learned from what participants had to say about their horn teaching. Participants use many different methods when teaching the horn, with ear training being the most mentioned method, along with establishing solid warmups, starting students on single or double horns, and using the right method books.

Emergent themes include the equipment that students play on, differentiating horn instruction from that of other instruments, teacher preparedness, and the independence of students who play the horn. These emergent themes are ideas that participants find important in all aspects of their horn teaching, and they affect teaching as a whole, not only aspects of horn teaching.

### **Implications**

Directors' horn teaching experience is directly related to their horn students' success. The more experience teachers have in teaching the horn, the more prepared they are and the more equipped they become with methods they believe to be effective in their

horn teaching. Teacher educational background and employed methods, however, did not readily predict student success in this study. Because confidence and perspective are factors in participants' success, building those ideals should be a larger part of their teacher education. Pre-service teachers should work to build their content knowledge but should also work to feel confident when teaching and modeling on instruments. Teaching is a unique facet separate from learning, and the more experience one has before being "in the field", the more confident one will be. The mindset of horn teachers should reflect not only their knowledge, but their confidence in relaying that information to their students.

The resources for teaching the horn exist, but they are not as organized as the resources for teaching other instruments. Brass methods courses have little effect on pre-service teacher's knowledge on the horn, and pre-service teachers are tasked with learning on the job instead of learning in school. Because horn-specific pedagogy is often overlooked teacher education programs, novice teachers should work to learn this information.

### ***Contradictions***

Though participants had a lot of the same advice to give, a few participants' responses contradicted each other; these variances speak volumes about how differently each band director teaches the horn. Participants mostly agreed on methods they employ, but the level of implementation of these methods varies between band programs. The most prominent contradiction pulled from the data is the different instruments that participants use to start beginner horn players: some start on mellophone (with trumpet

mouthpiece or horn mouthpieces, another variance) and switch students to horn after a year; some start on trumpet/trombone and transition after a year or longer; some start students on single Bb horns; and some start on Bb/F double horns. Participants felt very strongly method they chose, and often mentioned not liking another method for a particular reason, which was not evident for other concepts. This means that equipment is a more deliberated method than others. The way participants start their horns affects the methods they use later, and this makes logical sense, as less ear training would be required to hit the right notes on an instrument with wider partials (mellophone or trumpet).

### ***Expectations***

Setting the same expectations for horn players as the other instruments is an important part of encouraging their success. Band directors teach the horn successfully when they can understand the technique and perspective of their horn players and can expect and encourage success from their students. Participants do not believe that the horn is more difficult than other instruments; it simply requires a different level of differentiation than the other instruments. The “shroud of mystery” one participant mentioned can be demystified if band directors are willing to devote the effort to doing so.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Admittedly, the methods used by Mississippi band directors do not differ significantly from the methods used in other states, but further research needs to be done on methods used by all band directors to achieve the most viable data. This study did not



differentiate between methods used for middle school versus methods used for high school, as all participants taught some form of both levels. A study of beginner band teachers would provide the most solid foundation in terms of methods used, as beginner horn teachers spend the most time teaching homogeneous horn classes and have the most effect on a student's musical foundation. Since there was also no differentiation between novice and more experienced teachers, a case study examining the methods used by novice versus veteran teachers would also be beneficial in helping novice teachers be more effective in their first years of teaching.

Finally, the biggest recommendation would be for the creation of resources for novice teachers (and student teachers) to use when they first begin teaching the horn. These resources could include guidelines for how to choose horn players based upon personality and other factors, pros and cons of starting students on different instruments before transitioning them to horn, and tools for differentiating their horn instruction from the other brasses.

## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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### NOTICE OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ACTION

The project below has been reviewed by The University of Southern Mississippi Institutional Review Board in accordance with Federal Drug Administration regulations (21 CFR 26, 111), Department of Health and Human Services regulations (45 CFR Part 46), and University Policy to ensure:

- The risks to subjects are minimized and reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits.
- The selection of subjects is equitable.
- Informed consent is adequate and appropriately documented.
- Where appropriate, the research plan makes adequate provisions for monitoring the data collected to ensure the safety of the subjects.
- Where appropriate, there are adequate provisions to protect the privacy of subjects and to maintain the confidentiality of all data.
- Appropriate additional safeguards have been included to protect vulnerable subjects.
- Any unanticipated, serious, or continuing problems encountered involving risks to subjects must be reported immediately. Problems should be reported to ORI via the Incident template on Cayuse IRB.
- The period of approval is twelve months. An application for renewal must be submitted for projects exceeding twelve months.

PROTOCOL NUMBER: 20-1000

SCHOOL/PROGRAM: School of Professional Nursing Practice

RESEARCHER(S): Seymour Eagle, Harvey Golden

IRB COMMITTEE ACTION: Approved

CATEGORY: Expedited (the category listed below is just a sample of one, there are several categories that the protocol could be assigned)

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

PERIOD OF APPROVAL: 10.27.2020 – 10.27.2021



**Donald Sacco, Ph.D.**  
**Institutional Review Board Chairperson**

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