

Exploring the Neglected Affective World of Musically Gifted Adolescent Males: Six Cases in Taiwan

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There have been few research studies of the social and emotional issues facing musically gifted students, let alone those facing musically gifted male adolescents. The aim of this study is to add to our limited knowledge of this area by examining the experiences of 6 musically gifted high school male students living in Taiwan. The study's research design was a qualitative multi-case study involving document review, observation, and in-depth interviews with students and their teachers. Major themes uncovered were narrow social circle, gender discrimination, non-self-serving and effort-oriented attribution, more pressure from academics than from music learning, and worrying about their music career. These themes were discussed in the context of the existing literature, and implications for the education of the gifted were presented.

Keywords: musical intelligence, musical giftedness, attribution, performance anxiety

Introduction

With the current trend toward viewing intelligence and general giftedness as pluralistic rather than monolithic, musical giftedness is also considered a multi-faceted psychological construct. Because of the multi-dimensionality and complexity of musical giftedness, it is rather difficult to capture its whole gamut. To unravel this complicated and inadequately investigated construct, it is beneficial to examine Gardner's musical intelligence first and then proceed further from the point.

Musical Intelligence

In Gardner's (1999) well-known Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), musical intelligence is one of the eight intelligences, eight ways human beings comprehend their surroundings. Unlike many people who called musically related abilities as talents, Gardner insisted on labeling them as a kind of intelligence because they are no less deserving of the name of intelligence (Reis & Small, 2005). According to the MI Theory, musical intelligence is the capacity to understand, appreciate, discern and create musical forms. This capacity is built upon the sensitivity to melody, pitch, rhythm, texture, and timbre (王為國, 2006; Solomon, Powell, & Gardner, 1999; Armstrong, 1994). If the high end of intelligence can be considered giftedness, then the high end of musical intelligence can be termed musical giftedness. In this study, "musically gifted," rather than "musically talented," was thus used.

Despite a salient correspondence between musical giftedness and musical intelligence, professional musicians need other MI theory's intel-

ligences, like bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, to help them achieve excellence. Classical music performers, for example, violinists and pianist, need high-level bodily-kinesthetic intelligence because they can thereby use parts of their body (hands) to manipulate the object (violin) dexterously (Armstrong, 1994). In her framework for the identification of potential musical talent, Haroutounian (2000a) also considered natural physical ease in movement (e.g. coordination and fine motor skills) to be one of the crucial characteristics. It is evidently associated with bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

Musical Giftedness

Despite a lack of agreed-upon definitions of musical giftedness, many characteristics can still be found to differentiate musically gifted students from other learners. The overlap of these characteristics and Gardner's musical intelligence is considerable. The generally recognized attribute of musical giftedness is an unusually high sensitivity to major musical elements, such as pitch, melodies, rhythmic patterns, tempo, tonal colors, loudness, harmonic scales, phrasing, and the mood or theme of tunes (姚世澤, 2003; Haroutounian, 2000a).

Paralleling Renzulli's Three Ring Model, Haroutounian (2000a) categorized characteristics concerning musical giftedness into three areas: musical aptitude, creative interpretation, and commitment. Musical aptitude highlights perceptual awareness and discrimination as well as musical behavior/performance. Individuals with high musical aptitude can discriminate between subtle differences in sounds, rhythms, and melodies. They can remember sounds, rhythms and melo-

dies, repeat them through singing and performing, and expand rhythmic or melodic ideas. They also perform musical pieces with physical ease, a fluid and steady pulse, and emotional involvement. Individuals capable of creative interpretation display creative thinking in listening, performance, composition, and critique. They enjoy experimenting with sounds and exhibit an aesthetic acuity to various musical elements. Included in the category of creative interpretation is a perceptual/cognitive process called metaperception, which according to Haroutounian (2000b) means “sensing sound internally, remembering this sound, and manipulating sound to communicate the emotional intent of a personal interpretation to others” (p.7). She coined this term, an artistic counterpart of metacognition, to describe artistically gifted individuals. Individuals with musical commitment are intrinsically motivated, keep persevering in their efforts to achieve musical excellence, show long concentration span during musical practice, and feel comfortable with independence and isolation while engaged in musical tasks. Although these motivational factors are not music-specific, they are the key to talented students’ success in their music career and should be an integral part of identification criteria (Haroutounian, 2000a).

Characteristics of Musicians

Whereas professional musicians and the musically gifted students are not necessarily the same, both of them share substantial similarities. As Gallagher (2005) pointed out, many characteristics of gifted students that distinguish them from their average-ability peers are similar to those that distinguish experts from novices. There is not

much empirically-based research that specifically investigates the personality traits of musically gifted students. Consequently, we can investigate the major traits of professional musicians to better understand those of musically gifted students. Having studied 688 student musicians and 202 professional musicians, Kemp (1981) pointed out that both groups were relatively introverted and emotionally unstable as compared with controls. In their study of 162 performing artists (65 musicians, 38 singers, 33 actors and 26 dancers), Marchant-Haycox & Wilson (1992) reported that musicians were comparatively introverted, passive, aloof, and unwilling to take risks. Along with these traits is a frequently cited problem plaguing musicians, musical performance anxiety. Musical performance anxiety or stage fright is the performance-related experience of distress involving cognitive responses (e.g. irrational thinking or unreasonable fear), physiological symptoms (e.g. rapid heart rate, trembling, sweating, shortness of breath) and behavioral manifestations (e.g. avoidance of performance) (Fehm & Schmidt, 2004; Wesner, Noyes & Davis, 1990). Different from most of the studies on musicians’ characteristics, the study conducted by Evans, Bickel, and Pendarvis (2000) focused on the characteristic of attribution pattern in their musical talent research. As they pointed out, individuals generally made self-serving attributions because the participants in their study attributed their accomplishments mainly to themselves, rather than to their parents or teachers.

Developing Musical Giftedness to Professional Attainments

Signs of musical aptitude may be demon-

strated at the tender age of 1 or 2. One clue can be that babies or toddlers are easily captivated by diverse musical sounds and even move with them in an expressive manner (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Not only is musical potential displayed early, music talent can also reach its peak early. Mozart can be regarded as the epitome of the child prodigy with stunning precocity in musical talent. Nonetheless, for most gifted students, development of music aptitude to the mastery level is a long, difficult, and solitary journey despite its comparatively earlier blossoming. Young talents generally need to spend tremendous amounts of time and effort to inch toward the accomplishments of full-fledged musicians. For example, 10 years of intensive practice and study is needed to obtain expertise in musical performance (Haroutounian, 2000b). Chin and Harrington (2007) even pointed out that on average it took approximately 16 years to become an adept performer in the domain of classical music. Considering these difficult realities, many children with music potential fail to persist in their musical study.

Difficulties Encountered during the Developmental Process

Musically gifted students may undergo many difficulties during their progression towards the professional level. Haroutounian (2000b) pointed out three major dilemmas often encountered. First, musically gifted students may be unable to manage time for both academic and musical studies. Second, instruction oriented towards auditions, competitions and recitals restricts their opportunities to explore new repertoire or to interpret musical pieces creatively. Third, gifted programs are not appropriately designed or implemented to

nurture their potential. This third point is a major problem prevalent in many academic and non-academic gifted programs. According to Reis and Small (2005), gifted students' socio-emotional problems often reflected the incongruity between their characteristics and environments. The gifted programs without doubt are integral to their school environments.

Problems Unique to Male Students in Music Education

Although more of the well-known professional performers in both classical and popular music fields have been male until today, music education has actually long been a province of females. The majority of music teachers are female, and a large proportion of the music majors at college and the elementary and high school students in special music programs are also female (Roulston & Mills, 2000). Music has been regarded as a "feminised area of the school curriculum" (p. 222), and musical performance as a female recreation. Men should engage in sports and math/science domains. Consequently, male students with a deep passion for music may suffer social adjustment difficulties because they are likely to be considered effeminate. In homophobic societies, there is often a spontaneous and unconscious association of effeminacy and homosexuality. Besides, it is not easy for these students to find male role models in their surroundings, who can guide them through developmental difficulties (Roulston & Mills, 2000). In addition to the sissy or un-macho image imposed on music students, musically gifted male students, especially those who also possess academic abilities, are generally guided to a few predetermined occupations, such

as doctor, engineer, and lawyer. Male students gifted in arts may be discouraged or even prohibited from choosing their true passions as future careers because of financial uncertainty (Greene, 2006).

Leakage of Male Talents in Music Pipelines

The path of an art career is not easy for artistically gifted students. It is even more difficult for artistically gifted male students. According to the Special Education Almanac 2007 published by Taiwan's Ministry of Education (教育部, 2007), the number of male and female elementary school students enrolling in artistically gifted programs is 3439 and 7430 respectively, the number of male and female junior high school students is 3308 and 7659 respectively, and the number of male and female senior high school students is 801 and 3363. As easily seen, the percentage of male students enrolling in artistically gifted programs drops dramatically at the senior high school level. The decrease in male student enrolment in artistically gifted programs as the grade level progresses has existed since artistically gifted programs were initiated. A large portion of art programs in Taiwan is related to music. The music pipeline in Taiwan seriously leaks male talents, but unfortunately few educational practitioners attend to it.

In addition, for most musically gifted students, the high school level usually coincides with the phases of intermediate to advanced musical ability development (Haroutounian, 2000b). It is a decisive period for the development of music talent. Musically gifted students' head start cannot guarantee their future success in music. What must intervene is the appropriate educational ser-

vice, which can help them resolve their problems and realize their full potential (Gallagher, 2005). However, there is a paucity of research regarding the problems facing musically gifted students, let alone those facing musically gifted male adolescents. Through examining the social and emotional issues of musically gifted high school male students, this study tried to add to the inadequate literature in this field.

The following research questions guided the inquiry: What were the characteristics of musically gifted high school male students in Taiwan? What were the challenges encountered by these adolescent males regarding their social and emotional development? How did these challenges influence these adolescent males? Were their experiences consistent or inconsistent with former studies?

Research Methods

Selection of Participants

In this study, criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) was implemented, whereby the participants have to meet some predetermined criteria of importance. The criteria for selection of the participants were as follows: (1) Taiwanese, and (2) male, and (3) secondary students, and (4) identified as musically gifted during their (K-12) school experience, and (5) at least one-year experience in the gifted music programs. Information from school records was used to document the label "musically gifted."

Six Taiwanese tenth-grade male students were recruited. They came from a musically gifted class of Florence Girls' Senior High School, a prestigious public girls' high school located in

an urban area of Taiwan. Established in the Japanese colonial era, this historical school had approximately 2500 students (10th, 11th, and 12th graders totally) and enjoyed an excellent academic reputation. The high school recruited the best female junior high graduates from all over the urban area, with the exception of the musically gifted classes. Because these musically gifted classes represented the only formal gifted music program in the whole urban area, they also recruited musically gifted male students. Every year 30 students were selected by the audition and the music aptitude and achievement tests, and then placed in a self-contained gifted class. This high school had three musically gifted classes (with one class at each grade level) and a total of 90 musically gifted students.

Research Design

To arrive at a rounded interpretation of the issues with relevance to the research purpose, I chose a qualitative case study as my research design, which involved in-depth interviews, document review, and observation. According to Merriam (1998), "A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (p. 27). A social unit can be an individual, couple, group, organization, or community. A case study research design is suitable for this study because case studies focus the enquiry on "the way particular groups of people confront specific problems" (Shaw, 1978, p. 2). Regarded as small scale and problem centered endeavors, case studies can address researchers' needs and interests in interpreting the situation where it is impossible to decontextualize the variables or to ignore their syn-

ergy. Through this research design, the complexity of human behavior happening in the context of the setting can be examined thoroughly (Merriam, 1998; Shaw, 1978).

Data collection of this study took place over a period of one and half years. Two in-depth interviews were conducted with each of the participants, each lasting approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. The interviews, taking a semi-structured form, posed open-ended questions and probed for details throughout each conversation in order to capture the participants' experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The purpose of these interviews was not merely to obtain information directly from the participants but also to develop insight into how they would interpret their affective issues. Aside from the interviews with the musically gifted adolescent males, one individual interview was conducted with their teacher, also lasting 1 to 1.5 hours or so. This interview focused on the teacher's perceptions of their school experiences and performances. Objectivity was enhanced with the addition of the interview with the participants' teacher. All the interviews were conducted in Mandarin and transcribed verbatim. Sample interview questions are shown in appendices. Moreover, the documents reviewed included transcripts, course schedules, teaching materials, and the program menus of the gifted classes' recitals. The observations of the participants' formal performances were conducted with extensive, carefully documented field notes.

The case study proposed by this project is the so-called multiple case study. Using many cases along with a predetermined data analysis scheme to study a phenomenon can enhance external validity of qualitative research. Two major

phases of data analysis were involved in the multiple case study: the within-case study and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 1998).

During the phase of within-case analysis, each case was initially viewed as “a comprehensive case in and of itself” (Merriam, 1998, p. 194). Rich data collected from each case helped me gain a holistic view of it. To analyze the data of the single case, constant comparative method was employed. The first set of data in a particular case (e.g. the first interview transcript, the first set of field notes, or the first document reviewed) was divided into segments. Each segment was assigned a code that could capture its concept. Notes and comments were also written down beside the codes. Afterwards, I went back over these codes, notes and comments, and grouped them into categories or themes. Then, I moved to the next set of data (e.g. the next interview transcript, the next set of field notes, or the next document reviewed). The same process was implemented again. A separate list of themes was made out of the second set of data and compared to the one derived from the first set. These two lists were merged into a master list of themes which formed a prototypical categorization system demonstrating the recurring patterns of the study. Through interconnection and consolidation these primitive themes could be subsumed under each other. New themes or categories could also surface across the remaining data in this particular case (Merriam, 1998).

After the within-case analysis came the cross-case analysis. During the phase of cross-case analysis, an inductive method was conducted to establish abstractions across cases. In other words, I tried to find general explanations which

fit each of these cases. The end product was an integrated list of themes that conceptualized the data from all the cases (Merriam, 1998).

Visual devices such as diagrams or matrices were used to facilitate the formation of the lists mentioned above (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Counter-argument was employed to test the tenability of these themes. The finalized themes were discussed in the context of the existing literature.

Researcher Subjectivity Considerations

Qualitative researchers acknowledge, examine, and control their subjectivities. In this research project, I was the primary data-collection instrument. Therefore, it is significant to acknowledge my biases and make my personal position clear.

Since childhood I have been a classical music fan. As a former senior high school teacher with experience in teaching gifted classes in Taiwan, I have observed the difficulties encountered by gifted adolescent males. Currently I am teaching courses related to gifted education in a national university. Besides, I often help local or national educational bureaus with many duties, such as in-service training for teachers at elementary and high schools, identification and placement of gifted students, improvement of gifted programs and services, providing gifted students with counseling for their special needs, etc.

To control subjectivities, periodic member check was implemented during every interview occasion, where interviewees were asked of different questions about similar issues from time to time to ensure the consistency of their viewpoints. They were also allowed sufficient opportunity and

time to clarify or extend the ideas they intended to express. Besides, each participant was sent a transcript of the interviews in which he or she participated for a follow-up member check. These two kinds of member check can enhance the internal validity of the data collected from interviews (Haroutounian, 2000a). To further control subjectivities, one of my colleagues who was familiar with qualitative research methodology and taught in a different department from mine, was asked to help me examine the English translation of the transcripts, the construction of the themes, and the formulation of generalizations.

Participants

Adam (major: cello, minor: piano)

Adam possesses perfect pitch and abilities to reproduce melodies correctly. He started to learn piano at seven and cello at nine, and likes to perform solo more than in groups because he can enjoy more freedom in solo performance. His favorite cellist is Jacqueline du Pré due to her stylized interpretation “conveying so much feeling.” Adam’s father works for a municipal government. His mother used to be a kindergarten teacher and is currently a full-time housemaker. He has one elder brother, who is a firefighter, and one elder sister, who is now a college student. Of the three children in his family, he is the only one who has studied in music classes. His career goal is to be a music professor at a national university.

Optimistic, and confident in his musical talent, Adam is an introverted and humble young man with an average build. He thought he is emotionally stable in general except the time some situational disturbance happens. Admitting his

weakness in handling interpersonal relations, he prefers being alone to hanging out with friends. He also mentioned his nonchalance towards social and political news. Adam shows great motivation and perseverance in learning cello, which audience can easily tell from his great élan during his practices and performances. As for performance anxiety, Adam said, “Of course, I feel nervous about my performance, especially solo performance. However, I always tell myself not to be nervous before performances.” He added, “Because of performance anxiety, my performance usually does not do me justice. However, experience and training can resolve this problem. I believe I will have more and more experience and training to cope with it.”

Brian (major: violin, minor: piano)

Brian is sensitive to the nuances of timbre and has an excellent sense of pitch. However, he is not satisfied with his sense of rhythm. Brian started to learn violin at five and piano at six, and prefers ensemble to solo performance because he likes to interact with others. Of all the schools of classical music, he loves classicism most due to its purity. In addition to violin and piano, he can play the Oriental flute very well. Brian is the only child in his family. His father works as a clerk in a relative’s machinery company. His mother used to be a part-time piano teacher and now is a full-time housemaker. Like Adam, he also wants to teach music in the future, but at the senior high school level rather than at the college level because he thinks the high school level was very critical to music students’ development toward professional attainments. He even compares the high school level to a “period of metamorphosis.”

An inactive and docile-looking teenager, Brian bears a physical resemblance to a chubby teddy bear. Very musically imaginative, he frequently associates different melodies with relevant images when listening to them. A diligent student, he works hard on both his academics and music learning and sleeps less than five hours almost every day. The way he faces failure is to practice or study harder to prepare for the next challenge. Under his quiet and sweet appearance is a high sense of morality and justice. He used to be outspoken when “seeing others’ improper behaviors,” which made his interpersonal relations suffer. However, he has learned to hold his tongue to avoid annoying others. As for performance anxiety, Brian pointed out that he often felt nervous about his performance and would take a deep breath before standing on the stage. However, he added calmly, “My anxiety is not that bad.... Generally, being nervous is related to inadequate practice. If I have enough practice, I will not feel too nervous.”

Chris (major: violin, minor: piano)

Chris started to learn violin at eight and piano at nine. He is fond of performing solo but not in ensembles or orchestras because he “does not feel like getting in contact with other people.” His father is a wholesaler of mineral water. His mother used to be a nurse and now is a full-time homemaker. He has one elder sister, who majors in French at a private university. His career goal is to become a professional violinist.

A sensitive, moody, and philosophical young man, Chris is interested in many modes of arts, such as painting, design, and dancing, in addition to music. He denies that he is a perfectionist, but

many of his teachers think that he has a rather strong perfectionistic tendency. Chris is open-minded about music. Though not caring for pop music, he mentioned, “I don’t think the level of pop music is lower. Every kind of music has its meaning.” Chris feels there to be a great discrepancy between the real and the ideal. The utopian world in his mind is one that is free from the hustle and bustle of commercialized society but full of “the beauty of nature.” Unlike most of his classmates, he expresses much concern over Taiwan’s declining social order and the widening gap between rich and poor. When asked about if he suffers performance anxiety, Chris answered, “It takes courage to perform on the stage. I lack this kind of courage, especially at the moment my performance just starts. He continued, “I think performance anxiety is my body’s natural reaction. I can’t help it. However, I won’t let it lower my performance quality. I always try hard to manage it. After all, the show must go on.” Sometimes his performance anxiety was replaced by pleasant excitement before performance. He said, “It’s kind of weird. Sometimes, I feel excited before performance. It is a pleasant feeling, not a painful one.”

Derek (major: trumpet, minor: piano)

Derek started to learn piano at five and trumpet at nine. Having a superior sense of rhythm is his forte. His major used to be piano at elementary school, but he changed to trumpet at junior high school because of his intense interest in the trumpet. He prefers performing in groups not only because he likes to communicate with others but also because he is too shy to perform in front of an audience by himself. Audiences can

easily observe his much more exuberance in orchestral performances, compared with his solo performances. Derek's father is a teacher at a private vocational high school. His mother used to be a corporate manager but resigned from her position after getting married. Derek has a younger sister who is a junior high student but who shows little interest in music. Derek wants to become a professional trumpet player who can travel all over the world. He thinks that to be a music teacher is too boring and monotonous.

A dark-skinned, and amiable young man, Derek loves sports and has an outward appearance which contradicts the stereotypical image of music students. He described himself as having a macho and extroverted exterior but a tender and introverted interior. One of his major weaknesses is that he easily gets distracted when studying. Derek enjoys "group life" and loves to hang out with friends. He also cannot tolerate being alone for a long time. When practicing trumpets or studying, he needs to take a break frequently to chat with his friends. As for performance anxiety, Derek admitted, "Performance anxiety sometimes affects my performance level negatively, but not that much. If I am too nervous, I will try to relax in a quiet place just by myself or take a deep breath to slow down my heartbeat." Another strategy he used to solve this problem was to divert his attention from the thought about intimidation of performing in front of audience and try to think about nothing but how to interpret the musical pieces.

Eric (major: violin, minor: piano)

Eric started to learn violin and piano when he was still a kindergartener. Like Brain, he has a

superior sense of pitch but his rhythmic sense is comparatively weak. He prefers performing in groups to solo because he does not have enough courage to perform before an audience alone. Eric's father works as a government agent, and his mother teaches Chinese in a public junior high school. He has a sister, who is two years senior and, who is also a violin major and studies in the same gifted program (in the 12th grade) at the same senior high school. He wants to become a music teacher in the future because he likes a stable working environment and lifestyle.

Skinny and pale-looking, Eric is a very reserved teenager. He exhibits persistence and determination in musical practice. Many of his teachers think that his performance lacks emotional involvement. What bothers him the most currently is "how to deal with interpersonal relations." He often has a feeling of being different and cannot find anyone to talk with. His maladroit interpersonal skills even resulted in his adjustment difficulties at junior high school, which in turn caused his transfer to another school at that time. As for performance anxiety, Eric complained, "My formal performance oftentimes is not as good as my informal practice." However, he also said that his performance anxiety was not out of control though it was unavoidable for him.

Fred (major: ErHu, minor: piano)

Compared with his current classmates, Fred's music lessons began rather late. He started to learn ErHu at 12 and piano at 13. Due to his late start, his music abilities and knowledge are below the average in his class. As he mentioned, his sense of pitch is especially weak. Besides, he is the only student who majors in a Chinese musi-

cal instrument in this western-music-dominated gifted class. During the school year recital, he was the only student in his class who did not participate in any performances. Nonetheless, Fred prefers performing in groups to solo because he likes to “play music with a bunch of people.” Fred’s father works for a municipal government, and his mother is a full-time housemaker. Fred has two elder brothers. One majors in biological science at a private university, and the other majors in music (bassoon) at a national university. Fred has not decided the specific direction of his future career. He thinks that it is still too early to make this decision. He just knows he will “do something related to music” in the future.

An easygoing and somewhat frivolous teenager, Fred has a carefree attitude toward his academic or music achievements. Like Derek, he also has a concentration problem when studying. In addition to music, he loves acting very much. He thinks that he is an inborn comedian. The most important thing in his life right now is “to have fun.” As he noted, most of his classmates do not know how to enjoy their lives. They just concentrate on study and musical practice.” As for performance anxiety, Fred pointed out calmly, “I only feel nervous one minute before stepping onto the stage. Then, I get used to the tense atmosphere of performance gradually...and become better and better.” He added, “Anxiety is not always a bad thing. Anxiety of a proper level is helpful for performance.”

Findings

After analyzing the data collected, six compelling themes emerged. They were narrow social

circle, gender discrimination, non-self-serving and effort-oriented attribution, more pressure from academics than from music learning, and worry about their music career. Investigating these themes helps us obtain more complete pictures of the socio-emotional issues encountered by these young men.

Narrow Social Circle

The six young men pointed out that they did not have many opportunities to know students from regular classes and that most of their friends were the students in gifted music classes. Visitors can easily observe a separate building for music students located at the very back of their campus, like an isolated hermitage. According to their course schedule, the school club time, which provides a good opportunity to interact with the students from different classes, is used for their enrichment courses. Brian mentioned that studying in gifted music programs kept him from making friends with students from regular classes. He said, “The majority of my friends are from gifted music classes though I had a few from cram schools.” Eric mentioned with a little sadness, “It is not easy for me to make friends. It is even harder for me to make friends with students outside of music classes.” Fred acknowledged the difficulty of going beyond the boundary of their music building walls: “I know almost no one from regular classes. I do not take part in any school clubs because I’ve got one-on-one lessons on Wednesday afternoons.”

The six young men all supported the viewpoint that the self-contained class provided a more suitable learning environment for musically gifted students than did the pull-out program. However,

the distance between regular and gifted music classes sometimes caused mutual misunderstanding or incompatibility. Adam complained, "Some students from regular classes call music classes mentally retarded." Chris divulged that he disliked participating in school clubs and said, "Students of music and regular classes hate each other. Some of the students from regular classes think we are so arrogant. The others think we are good for nothing but music.... We think their level is so low, including their thinking or the way they talk." Derek reminisced, "At junior high, my class oftentimes could not take part in school meetings or other activities because we had music lessons. Regular classes might thus criticize us for abusing privileges."

Nonetheless, Adam also pointed out one benefit of their narrow social circle, "Many of my current classmates have enrolled in gifted music classes since elementary school. Therefore, many of them have been in the same classes since then. They become bosom friends because they have been together for such a long time."

Gender Discrimination

In Taiwan, the predominant majority of music students from the elementary school level to the college level are female. Based on their recital program menus, most of the accomplished graduates of this gifted program invited back to join the performances of the current students are also female. When asked if there still existed a social stereotype that music programs were more suitable for girls, all of the six young men answered in the affirmative. Chris' father used to oppose Chris' choice of learning violin and piano as a child. He argued, "I don't think it is proper to

have him learn music. Music is not for boys." All of these young men also said that they had been teased about wearing a uniform with the name of a girls' high school on it, and their teacher also mentioned their unpleasant experience. The six young men reacted to others' teasing in different manners.

Adam mentioned, "At elementary school, I was sometimes concerned that studying music might make me less masculine, but I grew out of it." He continued,

In cram schools, some people there cast weird glances at me.... However, I never explained why my uniform had the name of a girls' high school. I did not feel bad about myself because of this. On the contrary, I felt kind of proud because I was different.

Brian said, "I ignored those jokes. I was never worried about being considered sissy. However, I knew some of my male classmates cared about these jokes and did not like to talk about this 'sensitive' issue." Chris described his experiences: "Walking on the street in this uniform did catch some people's eye. Some male students ever asked me if I was wearing my sister's uniform. I am fine with their teasing. I am not particularly concerned about what other people think of me." Derek noted, "I am OK with those jokes. At first, I even thought it was cool to wear this uniform." Fred pointed out, "Sometimes, they told me 'Dude, you go to a girls' high school. You are a man, aren't you?' I dismissed this as nothing.... Studying at a girls' high school did not affect my masculinity." On the other hand, Eric was rather upset over the teasing: "It seemed that they did not understand why I wore a uniform like this. Sometimes they just said something hurtful, such

as ‘Did you steal a girl’s uniform and put it on yourself?’ I really did not like their teasing.”

Non-Self-Serving and Effort-Oriented Attribution

The six musically gifted young men’s attribution pattern is not self-serving, which is inconsistent with (even opposite to) the findings of existing literature (Evans, Bickel, & Pendarvis, 2000; Marsh, 1984). When asked “If you succeed in your music career some day in the future, to whom (self, parents, teachers, or others) you will attribute your music accomplishments,” Adam, Brian, Chris, Eric, and Fred answered “parents,” and Derek answered “teachers.” No one answered “self.” The reason why the five young men answered parents was that they thought of their parents’ encouragement and financial support as essential to their talent development. The reason why Derek answered teachers was that he regarded his teacher’s instruction and enlightenment as indispensable to his progress in music. On the other hand, when asked “If you do not make it in your music career in the future, whom (self, parents, teachers, or others) you will blame for your failure,” all of the six young men answered “self” without exception. They all thought they would fail even with their parents’ and teachers’ strong support if they did not apply themselves to music. Their teacher also gave a non-self-serving answer to a similar question: “Self, parents, teachers are all very important for their accomplishments.... However, self should be the key to success because talent and hard work are the basic requirements.”

In addition, when asked “Is your success attributed to your high ability or hard work or good

luck or others,” Adam, Chris, Eric, and Fred answered “hard work,” whereas Brian and Derek answered “good luck.” When asked “Is your failure attributed to your lack of ability or inadequate effort or bad luck or others,” Adam, Brian, Chris, and Derek answered “inadequate effort,” Eric answered “bad luck,” but Fred answered “lack of ability.” Unlike the previous two questions eliciting almost identical responses, these two questions brought out more varying attribution patterns. Nonetheless, effort-related answers still dominated these young men’s responses.

More Pressure from Academics than from Music Learning

The six male high school students needed to shoulder the burdens of both the academic field and music lessons. After school, they continue to study academic subjects (for approximately 2 to 4 hours), and practice their major and minor musical instruments (for approximately 2 to 3 hours altogether) every weekday. On weekends, their study and practice time was even longer. Little time was left for exercise and pastimes.

Studying in a prestigious gifted music program at the high school level, the six young men all decided to choose music as their college major in the future. Arguably, higher stakes were supposed to be placed on music learning, from which more pressure was derived. However, they pointed out that their pressure primarily came from the academic field, rather than music lessons. According to their course schedules, there were only 10 sessions arranged for musical enrichment courses, compared with 30 regular ones. Actually, the six boys only have 9 sessions since they do not have to participate in the one-session choir

course due to their minority status. The quantity and difficulty level of the teaching materials their academic teachers prepared for them are the same with those of regular classes. All of the six male students went to cram schools to fortify their academic abilities after their normal classes. When asked if the educational reforms in the past decades alleviated students' academic burdens, they and their teacher all replied in the negative. They thought that currently Taiwanese students' academic burdens were "the same as before" or "even heavier."

Studying academic courses took most of Adam's time at home because he thought he was "very poor at the academic field." He noted, "After normal classes, I study about four hours every day.... However, I think my study time is still below the average compared with my classmates. Many of them usually study until about 1 o'clock in the morning." As Brian admitted, compared with music enrichment courses, academic courses were more stressful, which made him spend more time and effort on them. He also described his parents' attitude toward academics: "My parents put more emphasis on my academic achievements. They told me to take good care of academic courses and let music learning take its course." He added, "For me, failure in exams is more serious than failure in contests." Chris echoed this view, "Now academic courses definitely gave me more pressure." He continued, "I still remember I even did not want to go to school because of the heavy loads of academic courses when I was an elementary student enrolled in the gifted music class. I felt so tired then." Eric mentioned his weakness in academics dejectedly, "I am not good at memorizing stuff, so I can't get good grades in some aca-

ademic courses, like Chinese or social studies.... Comparatively, the academic field makes me suffer more stress and strain." Fred complained, "Our school places too much stress on our academic achievement. Basically teachers set the same academic standards for gifted music classes as those for regular classes.... Now the biggest trouble I have is academics."

Although Derek said that at present his pressure from academic courses and music lessons was "sort of half and half," he expressed his hatred of academic exams: "I am not good at exams at all. When it comes to exams, I hate every academic subject." Derek added, "What bothers me the most now is academics.... I heard that students studying music in foreign countries only need to take easy academic courses. Taiwan's educational system gives all students difficult academic courses, much more advanced than those in other countries." Adam, Brian, Fred, and their teacher also mentioned the relatively light academic workload of music schools in foreign countries.

Worry about Their Music Career

These six musically gifted young men have been worried that their future career would not be promising because of their major. According to their courses schedules and teacher background information, only a few of their music teachers are male. It is hard for them to find male role models around who can give them career advice. Adam expressed his worry, "Now it is difficult to get a good job. I am kind of worried about my future. I have ever regretted choosing the music career path." He divulged, "At junior high, I thought about giving up music and just focusing

on academics.” Brian also confessed he almost gave up studying music at junior high and mentioned uncertainties existing in music talent development: “Success in music careers involves the factor of chance. You need someone who recognizes your talent and gives you opportunities.... This path has some uncertainties you just cannot control.” Chris worried that being a professional violinist was by no means easy. With a deep passion for violin, he mentioned, “If I stick to it but still cannot make it, I think I may choose making violins as my job in the future.” Eric reminisced, “I almost quit at junior high. At that time, I felt tired and frustrated. I was not sure if I could go anywhere on this path.” Derek confessed his inner conflict of choosing music as his career and said,

Some teachers used to mention the music major was less and less marketable and wanted us music students to consider this problem. I was distraught when considering this problem. I seriously thought about leaving the field of music at junior high.... Now, I am telling myself not to quit since I have been on this road for a long while. I have already spent so much time and effort on music.

Because Fred’s major was a traditional Chinese musical instrument, he was mainly concerned that his major was not as popular as western musical instruments. In actuality, he was “not that pessimistic about choosing music as a future career.” Were it not for the encouragement of one music teacher he met in a traditional Chinese music orchestra, he would have opted to enroll in regular classes. He confessed,

I have been worried about my major for sure.... Now, I just tell myself not to think

too much. I will continue this path step by step. Entering the music department of a good college is currently what I need to think about. Don’t think about anything else till I graduate from college.

Discussion

This study makes pioneering efforts to explore the issues related to gifted adolescent males which have long been neglected. The findings of this study, the six young men’s narrow social circle, gender discrimination they experienced, their non-self-serving and effort-oriented attribution, their pressure mainly coming from academics, and their worry about future careers, remind educational practitioners and researchers to address the socio-emotional needs of musically gifted adolescent males. They are a minority group in gifted population. Discussions and implications of these findings are provided as follows.

These gifted students’ lack of chances to expand their social circle makes them appear unso- cial and aloof (Marchant-Haycox & Wilson, 1992). These students should be encouraged to participate in school clubs, and their enrichment subjects should not be scheduled at the time as school club activities. Moreover, the music and regular classes can cooperate to give performances which integrate classical and popular music, as is done by many illustrious classical musicians. The students from regular classes or even from other schools should also be encouraged to attend music classes’ recitals. The more that contact is made, the less the misunderstanding between the groups.

The six young men all agreed that their pres-

sure and anxiety primarily derived from academics instead of music lessons or performance. Adam contended that the heavy academic workload could hamper the talent development of music students. Brian made a suggestion about this issue: "If we want to become professional performers in the future, we need more time to practice musical instruments. More enrichment music courses should also be offered. A total of nine-hour enrichment courses a week is not enough." Their teacher agreed with their opinions: "Ideally, they should spend half of their school time on music lessons. That is, about 20 sessions a week. Besides, there are too many required academic courses. Some of them should be elective for music students." Haroutounian (2000b) also pointed out the academically related predicament confronting musically gifted American high school students. They may be overwhelmed by the burdens of advanced music lessons and the demands of maintaining high academic achievements. Then what they have to face is the difficult decision to give up music learning. In Taiwan and other East Asian countries, students need to shoulder a heavier academic workload at an earlier time (usually at junior high school, or even at elementary school), as compared with those in the USA. Consequently, musically gifted Asian students may decide to give up their music career earlier than American students. Musically gifted male adolescents are especially vulnerable to this dilemma. The six young men in this study mentioned that they almost gave up learning music at junior high school. As Haroutounian (2000b) warned, "it is not uncommon for talented students who are equally talented in academics and music to end music lessons during high school, which is often

traumatic for them" (p. 8). Educational practitioners have to realize that excessive academic workload can exert detrimental effect on the students' talent development and their career decision, and should create a music program through frequent communication with students that can maintain a healthy balance between academics, music, and social lives.

In addition, the academic subjects that the six young men were best at or most interested in showed a wide variety, including Chinese, English, math, physics, chemistry, biology, and social studies. This variety also extended to the subjects that they were worst at or least interested in. Consequently, the widespread stereotype in Taiwan that music students are better at language arts or social studies and poorer at math or science is not necessarily true to all of them. In Taiwan the identification exams of music programs and the academic courses of the subsequent placement emphasizes language arts and social studies. This traditional academic emphasis thus needs to be reconsidered because it may impose undue pressure on the musically gifted students whose weaknesses are language arts and social studies. This incongruity between academic emphasis and their strengths can cause them adjustment difficulty (Reis & Small, 2005).

Knowledge of students' attributional styles can help educators gain a clearer understanding of their perception of their living environments and their behavioral patterns (Assouline, Colangelo, Ihrig, & Forstadt, 2006). The six young men all attributed their own success to others instead of self, but blamed self rather than others if they did not attain high music achievements. This result contradicts what Evans, Bickel and Pendarvis

(2000) had found in their study of music talent. This inconsistency may be explained by the impact of cultural background. Dominant Western culture is deeply influenced by individualism, whereas Asian culture is built on collectivism (Kao & Hébert, 2006; Lee, 1997). Collectivism demands the subordination of the individual to a group. When it comes to achievements, East Asians are likely to be less self-centered and give credits to people other than themselves. Moreover, Asian culture stresses careful expression of feelings. Displays of complacency and assertiveness are considered inappropriate, while being self-effacing and humble is considered a virtue. Therefore, it may be a “humbleness factor” that makes the six young give this kind of answer.

Additionally, domination of effort-oriented answers may be because East Asian culture emphasizes the role of effort in achievement, but de-emphasizes the contribution of inborn abilities. Hard work, one of the virtues firmly held by East Asian societies, is viewed as the ultimate factor that determines the level of accomplishments one can attain (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Stevenson, 1994). Moreover, according to Stevenson (1994), high achievers in East Asia were more inclined than average achievers to attribute accomplishments to the virtues highly valued by their culture. It follows that East Asian gifted students demonstrate the effort-oriented attributions. Their attribution patterns disagree with some researchers' postulation that an identity as being gifted leads to attributing success and failure to ability (McNabb, 2003).

Furthermore, all of the six young men were concerned that their future career might not be promising. To help musically gifted male students

establish their confidence in their music career and find their career niches, a series of career-related assessments should be conducted for them from early adolescence on. In addition to aptitude measures, preference/interest measures should be included in career-related assessments. Preference and aptitude assessments can team up to provide a more holistic picture of the individualities of smart young men and then help select optimal career niches for them (Lubinski, Benbow, & Morelock, 2000). Along with conducting these career-related assessments these youngsters need encouragement to establish contact with a variety of nontraditional occupations related to music. They can thus expand their career choices, not just limiting their choices to music teachers and performers, as evidenced by the remarks of the six young men. Moreover, counselors can arrange values-based career counseling in the single-sex-group format, which helps the gifted male students consider careers congruent with their deeply held values and then stay impervious to the socio-cultural bias and discrimination. Due to the values-based counseling and exposure to diverse career options, they are not susceptible to parent expectations, peer pressure and misleading surveys of job markets, but are prompted to follow their own inner voice (Kerr & Sodano, 2003). As their teacher mentioned, “In the current recession, no major is promising, not just music. Maybe, music majors can find their own ways to something special and significant.”

Limitations

There are limitations to this research study that need to be addressed. The six participants

living in an urban area of Taiwan may not represent musically gifted Taiwanese adolescent males. Like most of the qualitative studies, this study does not have sufficient generalizability, as is the objective for quantitative studies. Moreover, the data collection process failed to include interviews with these participants' parents, which might have offered additional insights into the issues under discussion.

Conclusion

Male students in Taiwan and many countries have long been under-represented in music gifted programs. Notwithstanding, little attention has been paid to this problem. On the other hand, the under-representation of female students in math and science gifted programs (Kerr, 1997) is regarded as a warning signal calling for the attention of educational practitioners. Is this because male students are not suitable to study art socially and culturally? Is this because the public think the path of an art career is getting narrower and rockier and is not worthwhile for males to pursue? Today's world, inundated with greed and materialism, all too often makes people lost in desires. Music, which can elevate people's spiritual lives, has the power to change this dire situation. Rather than blindly following the mundane trend to pursue the so-called promising majors, musically gifted male adolescents should listen to their own inner voices and make critical contributions to this degenerating world.

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Appendix 1: Sample Interview Questions Used with Students

1. Please describe your experiences in the gifted music programs.
2. Which courses in the gifted program did/do you enjoy the most? The least? Why?
3. Do you prefer the self-contained class or the pull-out program? Why?
4. Do you suffer anxiety over important examinations or competitions? Why? How do you deal with your anxiety?
5. How do you feel about your interpersonal relationships?
6. What do you think about being identified or viewed as gifted?
7. Can you describe your perception of your teachers in the gifted program?
8. How much time do you spend on your homework?
9. How much time do you spend practicing musical instruments?
10. If you succeed in your music career some day in the future, to whom (self, parents, teachers, or others) you will attribute your music accomplishments? Why?
11. Describe the problem (academic or non-academic) that bothers you the most.
12. Is it important for you to obtain excellent grades and high rankings? To score high on standardized tests? Why or why not?
13. In what aspects do you think the gifted program of your school can be improved?
14. Do you think there still exists the gender bias that music is for girls not for boys in our society? Why?

Appendix 2: Sample Interview Questions Used with Teachers

1. How do you feel about their interpersonal relationships? Why?
2. Is teaching musically gifted classes different from teaching regular classes? Why?
3. What do you think about the enriched courses provided by the gifted program?
4. How do you think about the male students who are musically gifted? Have they ever suffered adjustment difficulty at this girls' high school?
5. Describe the problems that bother the students in this class.
6. How much time do your students spend on practicing musical instruments?
7. How much time do your students spend on their homework?
8. Do you think they have a lot of pressure because they need to study both music and academic courses? Do music or academic courses give them more pressure? Why?
9. In what aspects do you think the gifted program of your school can be improved?
10. What do you think about the educational system in Taiwan? Is it helpful for the development of musical giftedness? Why?

探索男性音樂資優青少年被忽視的 情意世界：台灣的六個案例

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摘要

由於僅有少數的研究探索音樂資優生的社會情緒議題，所以針對男性音樂資優青少年所遭遇的社會情緒議題之研究更為匱乏。透過檢視六位居住在台灣的男性音樂資優高中生的經驗，此研究盼能增進此領域不足的文獻；所用的研究設計為質性的多重案例研究，其包含有文件審查、觀察以及學生與教師的深度訪談。所發現的主題為狹隘的社會圈，性別歧視，歸功他人與努力導向的歸因模式，學業比音樂術科造成更大的壓力以及憂慮未來的生涯發展。並與現存的相關文獻比較後提出討論與建議。

關鍵字：音樂智能、音樂資優，青春期、歸因、演奏焦慮