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Surviving Pandemic Practicum: Early Career Music Teachers' Perceived Self-Efficacy Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Surviving Pandemic Practicum: Early Career Music Teachers’ Perceived Self-Efficacy

Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the
College of Education and Social Work
West Chester University
West Chester, Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of
Doctor of Education

By
Aubree Pacifico Windish

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy following teacher practicum during a global pandemic. I conducted focus group conversations with undergraduate music education alum (N=16) from Southeastern State University (SSU) at the end of 2023. Participants described the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their music teacher practicum and overall experiential learning at SSU. The focus group questions, and subsequent deductive coding of their answers, aligned with the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. Participants reported low perceived self-efficacy in their first year of in-service teaching, with variations based on the stages of the COVID-19 pandemic and the timing of their student teaching experiences. Participants shared feelings of ambiguous loss while various parts of their practicum, like classroom management practice, were modified and adapted for pandemic safety restrictions. Participants reported the positive influences of peer mentorship and communal coping during their first year of in-service teaching which increased their perceived self-efficacy. The findings indicate that early career music teachers who experienced a pandemic teacher practicum and found support through peer mentorship and communal coping increased their perceived self-efficacy in the first three years of teaching. Implications for research and practice are explored.
Dedication

Teaching is a challenge even on its best day. Add a global pandemic, and it becomes an unimaginable task. This work is dedicated to all the teachers out there doing the hard work every day. You make the world a better place.
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This work would have never happened if not for the support and guidance of my team members: professors, advisors, colleagues, family, and friends.

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Chapter 1

Teacher attrition and teacher turnover are historical and continuously growing problems in the U.S. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Cowan et al., 2016; Ingersoll et al., 2014; Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). Teacher attrition is the percentage of teachers who leave the education profession for any reason (Boe et al., 2008; Perda, 2013). Teacher attrition leads to more frequent teacher turnover, or the repeated replacement of teachers who leave their teaching positions within the first five years (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). The effectiveness of new teachers is generally lower because of their lack of pedagogical preparation with little to no teaching experiences (Kersaint et al., 2007). In the U.S., the costs associated with replacing teachers are estimated at $8 billion dollars annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). Frequent teacher turnover negatively impacts student learning by way of teacher shortages, the potential hiring of inexperienced or unqualified teachers, larger class sizes, and the possible cutting of courses or curriculum (Kersaint et al., 2007; Kini & Podolsky, 2016; Sutcher et al., 2019). Students in schools with higher teacher turnover are at an educational disadvantage due to the interruptions in staffing, the more frequent hiring of new and inexperienced staff, and the costs associated with the continuous replacement of teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Ingersoll et al., 2014).

As early as the mid-1930s, following the Great Depression, researchers documented teacher attrition with concerns about teacher retention (Behrstock-Sheratt, 2016). By 2018, the U.S. teacher attrition rate reached 8% annually (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019). There are myriad reasons why teachers leave their teaching positions including retirement at the end of their career or migration, the movement from one teaching position to another (Boe et al.,
2008). However, many teachers leave the profession prior to retirement due to burnout or emotional exhaustion (Kelly et al., 2019). There are many factors that lead to teacher burnout and emotional exhaustion like the increase of assessment and accountability (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003), lack of administrative support, low pay (Ingersoll, 2000), insufficient mentoring (Kelly et al., 2018), larger workloads, poor working conditions (Wang et al., 2015), and issues with student behavior (Cui & Richardson, 2016).

Early career teachers are the biggest population of teachers leaving the profession with 40-50% of new teachers resigning after only three years (Boe et al., 2008; Perda, 2013). Most of that percentage falls within their first year of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Many of the teachers who stop teaching this early in their careers experienced praxis shock, the shock teachers feel when there are discrepancies between their expectations of school life and the realities of teaching (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). The stress associated with praxis shock can create greater emotional exhaustion, lower self-confidence, and burnout (Ballantyne, 2007b; Mason & Matas, 2015; Skaalyik & Skaalyik, 2016). All of these factors which may lead early career teachers to reevaluate their notions of continuing in the teaching profession (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated teacher attrition rates (Koner et al., 2022; Pressley, 2021; Westphal et al., 2022). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning overwhelmed teachers, administrators, and students in PK-12 education around the world (Choate et al., 2021; Kaschub, 2020; Koner et al., 2022; Pryor et al., 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). In the spring of 2020 almost all PK-12 public schools shuttered their buildings to students, teachers, and staff and education was moved to online learning (Choate et
The sudden closure of school buildings, lack of routine, and absence of in-person interactions negatively impacted students and staff both mentally and physically (Allen et al., 2020; Daniel, 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). Students with additional needs felt an even greater impact of loss as school-based services including mental health, food, social service, and disability assistance ceased to exist (Allen et al., 2020; Daniel, 2020; Kaschub, 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2022). Curriculum and instruction were adapted to virtual and hybrid platforms leaving teachers and students scrambling for technology and resources (Nichols, 2020; Potter et al., 2021; Pryor et al., 2020). These losses multiplied the stress and responsibilities for teachers and educational staff as they attempted to fill the gaps left by school building closures and social distancing safety restrictions (Pressley, 2021).

**Higher Education**

Higher education was also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic when many colleges and universities transitioned to online learning, leaving administrators, faculty, and staff to make decisions on the best course of action (Bull et al., 2022; Burke & Lamar, 2020; Octaviani, 2021; Vandeyar, 2021). College students felt uncertain as they determined how, or if, they could continue their studies given the circumstances (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Choate et al., 2021; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Gravett et al., 2021; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). The COVID-19 pandemic acknowledged, and intensified, the need for more mental health services and resources for college students as they grappled with its effects (Hadar et al., 2020; Pozo-Rico et al. 2020; Roman, 2020; Jones & Kessler, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021; Soria & Horgos, 2021; Gluckman & Mangan, 2022). Nearly all U.S. college and university teacher training degree programs and practicum experiences occurred virtually, or not at all, impacting overall teacher education
At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, most preservice teachers did not experience traditional teacher practicum, like in-person classroom observations or student teaching, which would allow them to better anticipate their responsibilities and acknowledge the realities of the teaching profession (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). Without this realistic exposure, preservice teachers furthered their risk of praxis shock and an early exit from the teaching profession (Ballantyne, 2007a).

As teacher attrition and teacher turnover continue to grow, with early career teachers most at-risk, institutions of higher education prioritize the preparation of preservice teachers for the responsibilities and expectations of their careers, including unanticipated influences (Darling-Hammond, 2000), like the COVID-19 pandemic. Teacher training degree programs consist of both rigorous curricular content and teacher practicum experiences, like classroom observations and student teaching, where preservice teachers can experience firsthand the realities of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher practicum assists students with pedagogical skills like classroom management, assessment, and administrative responsibilities – the skills not realistically practiced within the college classroom (Conway, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Music Education

School building closures and social distancing safety restrictions affected music education and music making, specifically, by taking a communal activity and moving it online, in an isolated space (Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Haning, 2021; Koner et al., 2022; Octaviani, 2021). PK-12 music education includes general music, choir, band, orchestra, jazz band, musical theater, humanities, and any content area that includes some form of music curriculum.
Music education is essential to the PK-12 curriculum because of the global interest in music, its notable presence in culture and human activity, and for the small population of students who pursue it as a career (Goble, 2010). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, music teachers knew that distance learning, exclusively, was not an ideal medium for music instruction (Dammers, 2009; Kaleli, 2021). Teaching the intricacies of instrumental or vocal music online is only effective as a compliment to traditional, in-person learning because of the technological issues with sound quality, delays, and all-around inconsistencies (Kaleli, 2020; Riley, 2009). Additionally, a student’s online experience is only as strong as their teacher’s technology teaching pedagogy (Maor & Currie, 2017). There are many music-based software programs that promote students’ music learning at all levels, but teachers must be trained to use them to their full potential and, if necessary, trained to use them exclusively online, without an in-person instructional component (Maor & Currie, 2017).

Music teacher education, the process or curriculum of instructing individuals to teach music to PK-12 students, is a unique teacher training degree program because of its vast collegiate curriculum, including both music-based and education-based courses (Conway, 2015). Because music teacher education curriculum includes so much music-based instruction, the program relies heavily on its teacher practicum to adequately immerse preservice teachers into the PK-12 classroom (Conway, 2015). It is in these PK-12 classrooms where preservice music teachers can better actualize the realities of teaching and build their resistance to praxis shock as they enter the teaching profession (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine how preservice music teachers who were enrolled in their music teacher practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic, transitioned to in-
service music teachers, independently teaching PK-12 music in the classroom. More specifically, I explored early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy in the classroom after experiencing a teacher practicum affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Perceived self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in their capabilities to organize and implement a task (Bandura, 1997). An individual’s perceived self-efficacy directs how they think, act, and feel based on specific undertakings (Bandura, 1997; Haverback & Mee, 2015; Pajares, 1996). For teachers, perceived self-efficacy may present as their capabilities to achieve desired outcomes of student engagement, learning, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy can increase job satisfaction while reducing emotional fatigue, a side effect of the teaching profession (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

When school buildings closed during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many preservice teachers were forced to move their teacher training degree programs online alongside their professors and mentor teachers (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). They did not receive traditional, in-person experiential learning in PK-12 schools, typically found in teacher practicum (Ressler et al., 2022). Experiential learning is the idea that individuals learn more through real, hands-on practice and experience than by learning facts in isolation (Kolb 1984; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2017). John Dewey (1938) first introduced the concept of experiential learning through his formation of purposes, a learning cycle consisting of four parts: observations, knowledge of past consequences, judgments of observation, and intellectual anticipation. Through the formation of purposes, experiential learning becomes a transactional relationship between an individual and their environment which creates both a subjective and objective learning experience focused on process, not outcome (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is used in higher education curricula to simulate real-world
experiences beyond the college classroom, through programs like internships, service-learning, and student teaching (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Slavich & Zimbardo, 2017). This trial-and-error learning process is an education in and of itself and allows preservice teachers to see realistic student responses to their lesson planning, classroom management, and teaching styles (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). In the spring of 2020, most preservice teachers did not receive an in-person practicum at PK-12 schools. As time progressed, and as early as Fall 2020, they began to enter PK-12 classrooms again with safety restrictions like social distancing, masking, and hybrid learning, in place.

**Rationale for Study**

The rationale for this study was to support early career music teachers and avoid higher teacher attrition rates. This study explored the perceived self-efficacy of early career music teachers who experienced a COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum. Current, early career music teachers are a complex group of teachers that may be at risk for praxis shock and an early exit from the profession. Previous research identified the issues of early career teacher attrition (Boe et al., 2008; Ingersoll, 2014; Perda, 2013), the importance of in-person music education curriculum (Dammers, 2009; Maor & Currie, 2017; Kaleli, 2021), and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on undergraduate teacher training degree programs (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). Furthermore, the participants of this study had a combination of those issues, and there are gaps in the research for early career music teachers whose teacher practicum was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Ressler et al., 2022). Additionally, these participants were in their first – third years of in-service teaching, a critical time for teacher attrition (Boe et al., 2008; Ingersoll, 2014; Perda, 2013). It was necessary to gather and present this data now in hopes of sustaining these teachers’ professions.
Studying alums of undergraduate music teacher training degree programs impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic provided data on issues that were specific to this group of teachers but that could apply to veteran and future teachers too. Generating data from alums’ voices provided a broad overview of their perceived self-efficacy and could inform specific professional development needs to support them and keep them in the field of teaching (Baez-Hernandez & Andres, 2019). The highest rate of teacher attrition occurs within the first year of teaching, when the influence of their teacher training program is most effective (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Teachers who claim to be satisfied with the quality of their undergraduate teacher training degree programs were significantly less likely to leave the teaching profession after their first year (DeAngelis et al., 2013). Therefore, teacher accounts are important indicators of whether their nontraditional COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum impacted their perceived self-efficacy as in-service music teachers.

**Problem Statement**

When PK-12 and higher education school buildings shut down at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the experiential learning component of teacher training programs changed from traditional, in-person learning to various forms of online or hybrid observation and teaching (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). Experiential learning, in the form of traditional in-person classroom observations and student teaching, is one of the most impactful elements of undergraduate, teacher training degree programs (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015). This deviation from traditional teacher practicum created a gap in the curriculum that did not allow preservice teachers to see or experience, in-person, the realities of teaching (Ballantyne, 2007a). This gap in curriculum could lead to praxis shock, where the realities of
teaching differ from expectations (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Praxis shock leads to lower self-efficacy levels, greater emotional exhaustion, and signs of burnout (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002; Mason & Matas, 2015; Skaalyik & Skaalyik, 2016), factors known to contribute to teacher attrition and teacher turnover (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).

The problem is that the COVID-19 pandemic, an unanticipated global crisis, disrupted the essential elements of experiential learning in music teacher training degree programs. These programs rely heavily on teacher practicum to provide experiential learning and realistic educational situations (Conway, 2015). Additionally, some learning was lost when much of the coursework and instruction moved to virtual learning. Teaching music exclusively online, without the proper pedagogical training, is not an effective approach to music education (Dammers, 2009; Kaleli, 2021). Preservice music teachers who experienced gaps in their practicum leading to losses in experiential learning, may be missing more of the hands-on training necessary for success as an in-service music teacher (Conway, 2015). Those losses could also contribute to praxis shock (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Since 40-50% of early career teachers are already leaving the profession after three years of teaching (Boe et al., 2008; Perda, 2013), then early career music teachers are most at-risk for teacher attrition, and their PK-12 schools risk more frequent teacher turnover.

**Research Questions**

Three research questions guided this qualitative study:

1. What are the perceptions of early career music teachers regarding the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on their teacher practicum and overall music teacher training degree program?
2. How do early career music teachers perceive their self-efficacy in the PK-12 music classroom, after the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their teacher practicum?

3. What are early career music teachers doing to increase their perceived self-efficacy moving forward?

The first research question addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on music teacher training degree programs and teacher practicum, from the perspective of in-service early career music teachers. Early career music teachers are PK-12 classroom teachers who taught anywhere from one to five years. Therefore, this first question was necessary to understand the undergraduate, music teacher training degree curriculum and how it was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Traditional teacher practicum consists of experiential learning in the form of in-person classroom observations and student teaching (Conway, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000), but the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic led to the closure of PK-12 and higher education school buildings and the move to online and hybrid teacher practicum (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). Asking participants questions about their teacher training degree programs and teacher practicum allowed me to identify how their teacher practicum was altered during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second research question addressed early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy as in-service teachers, following their COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum. Perceived self-efficacy is an individual’s belief in their capabilities to organize and implement a task that can work towards a specific goal (Bandura, 1997). It leads how they think, act, and feel based on those tasks (Bandura, 1997; Haverback & Mee, 2015; Pajares, 1996). Perceived self-efficacy can limit or encourage a person’s actions toward a goal based on whether they believe they can achieve it (Bandura, 1997). Perceived self-efficacy in early career music teachers is an
important component since it could determine whether they feel capable of continuing in the teaching profession or if they are at-risk for teacher attrition. I asked early career music teachers to describe their first year(s) teaching and if they felt ready to lead a classroom on their own. Additionally, I asked them if their perceived self-efficacy prevented, or encouraged them, to confidently enter their first teaching positions.

The third research question asked what early career music teachers are doing to increase their perceived self-efficacy moving forward. Based on the most current research (Baumgartner, 2023; Chung, 2021; Reiger, 2021), I anticipated that the participants of this study might report lower levels of perceived self-efficacy in their first-year teaching. By asking the question of how they are improving it, I discovered a consensus of strategies that worked for this specific group of pandemic practicum music teachers. Perceived self-efficacy is a moving target, one that changes with impact and influence (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, it was important to understand which strategies or coping mechanisms worked for these participants and which ones were considered ineffective throughout the participants’ first few years of teaching. This research question also provided a reference and framework for which to discuss future practice in music teacher practicum.

These three questions provided an encompassing view of the research as they shaped the beginning, middle, and end to the study. First, I identified the specific losses in preservice music teacher practicum, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the experiences of the participants during this time. Then, I examined how those losses affected early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy throughout their first few years of in-service teaching. Finally, I explored the steps and strategies employed by early career music teachers as they worked to improve their perceived teacher self-efficacy moving forward.
Rationale for Methods

This study used a qualitative research design to better understand early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy in the PK-12 music classroom. Qualitative research is a fundamentally interpretive methodology, grounded in the human experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Through qualitative methods, researchers can offer explanations for objects or social actions based on participant data (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Qualitative methods provide certain aspects of validity, not offered in quantitative methods, as participants answer questions in real time, providing more depth and potentially new ideas not yet uncovered by the researcher (Reish, 2007). Additionally, this study was rooted in concepts of experiential learning, often stressing its importance in education. Qualitative research is a form of experiential learning (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). It is based in empiricism, the philosophical tradition of obtaining knowledge through direct experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The process of data collection and analysis becomes an active and experiential learning process as the researcher becomes an instrument for gathering and interpreting data (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Focus Groups

This qualitative study aimed to gather data through focus group discussions. Working in groups is a collective experience and a focus group is a special type of group formed by participants with certain common characteristics and lived experiences (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Wibeck, 2007). In this study, the participants studied music teacher education through the same COVID-19 pandemic, but each of their teacher practicum experiences were
different depending on their PK-12 mentor school assignment or the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic stages. The purpose of focus groups is not to come to a predetermined consensus on a particular topic, but rather to understand the broader range of experiences and perspectives while examining the data for thematic material (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015).

While individual interviews would also allow for qualitative data collection and analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Snape & Spencer, 2003), this study used focus group discussions for several reasons. First, focus group discussions can produce a wide range of data quickly, up to 70% times quicker than individual interviews with the same number of participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This accelerated rate of data collection could allow the researcher to include more participants, therefore, gathering more data for analysis. Second, focus group discussions shift attention from the interviewer to the participants (Krueger & Casey, 2015). When participants begin their discussions within the focus group setting, the interviewer can become a passive audience member, allowing the conversations to embody more of the participants’ reactions than the interviewer’s line of questioning (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Third, the construction of conversations within a focus group discussion creates clarity, depth, and detailed data as participants interact with each other (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997). Through the course of conversation, participants may question each other or take the time to explain themselves to each other, generating valuable data on group consensus or divergence, not accessible through individual interviews (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997).

**Significance of Study**

This study is significant because of the importance of music education in PK-12 schools and higher education. Music is a shared, global experience, present in most cultures and human
activities (Goble, 2010). Therefore, music education is necessary in today’s PK-12 curriculum to preserve the benefits and continuation of music in a rapidly changing, technology-focused world (Dupont, 2014). Furthermore, music education benefits students beyond musicianship, it trains them for citizenship (Bowman, 2018). Music education requires individuals to problem solve, listen to others, and adapt themselves to different situations (Bowman, 2018; Edgar, 2017). Music, possibly more than any other subject, allows students and teachers to work together to resolve conflict, lead with empathy, and recognize diversity (Edgar, 2017). When students learn these skills in a musical setting, they can transfer them to other real-life circumstances beyond musical performance.

The results of this study are also significant to the fields of both PK-12 music education and higher education by way of music teacher training degree programs. First, in PK-12 music education, the data produced from a study like this has the potential to necessitate targeted professional development to combat teacher attrition and teacher turnover. PK-12 professional development programs are meant to help teachers gain content-specific knowledge and skills which will assist in student achievement (Floden et al., 2020). Despite the cost and time investments in professional development programs, the content is not always relevant or accessible to teachers (Loyalka et al., 2019). Content aimed at experiential learning and what early career teachers missed from their teacher practicum would be relevant to professional development. Additionally, teachers in programs which prioritized experiential learning and applied teaching skills were less likely to leave the profession after their first year of teaching (Ingersoll et al., 2014). The participants of this study had gaps in their experiential learning like classroom management practice and dealing with student behavior – the kinds of factors that lead to early teacher attrition (Kelly et al., 2019). Taking the time to address these issues through
professional development may lead to longer careers in the teaching profession.

Second, in undergraduate music teacher education, the data gathered from music education alums could inform curricular changes or contingencies in undergraduate teacher training degree programs. It is the responsibility of teacher training degree programs to prepare their preservice teachers for the realities of teaching, including the unanticipated events (Ballantyne, 2007a; Darling-Hammond, 2000), like the COVID-19 pandemic. Examples of potential updates could deal with more music technology pedagogy instruction and distance learning practice. Colleges and universities could also find ways to address the gaps in experiential learning when situations arise, like the COVID-19 pandemic, that prevent preservice teachers from physically working with students and mentor teachers in-person.

Finally, in postgraduate music teacher education, acquiring data from music education alums garners the potential to create postgraduate courses and degree programs which support the specific needs of these early career music teachers. The data gathered from understanding what they experienced in their undergraduate teacher training degree programs coupled with their current experiences as in-service music teachers could create support for the gaps created by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, or any future crises and disruptions. Continuing education courses as professional development or as postgraduate music teacher training degree programs have the potential to alleviate the praxis shock they may have felt, or are feeling, which could combat early career teacher attrition and turnover.

Summary

U.S. teacher attrition is an historical problem, magnified in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic (Pressley, 2021; Westphal et al., 2022). Traditionally, 40-50% of early career teachers leave the profession after only three years (Boe et al., 2008; Perda, 2013). Furthermore, current
early career music teachers experienced a COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum that impacted their experiential learning practice, leaving them to learn and teach music online without the proper training - a documented, unrecommended exclusive pedagogy for music education (Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Haning, 2021; Koner et al., 2022; Octaviani, 2021). The combination of these elements leaves this group of teachers vulnerable to praxis shock and an early exit from the teaching profession, making them an important group of participants to study. Using focus group discussions to generate data from these participants will provide rich, clear, detailed data as they take the time to explain their answers and ask each other additional questions (Hennink, 2014; Morgan, 1997).

In Chapter 2, I will review the literature associated with early career music teachers and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their undergraduate teacher training degree programs. Additionally, I will present a theoretical framework of Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory and Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory which further grounded this study.
Chapter 2

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is presented in two sections: first, a review of the literature relating to early career music teachers, perceived self-efficacy, and the COVID-19 pandemic and, second, a description of the theoretical framework used to guide this study. The literature review includes five parts: teacher training degree programs, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning, pandemic-informed pedagogy in higher education, teacher self-efficacy, and the influence of teacher voice on curricular change. The topics and organization of this literature review highlight the important elements of teaching and learning, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the restoration of educational integrity. The second part of this chapter is a theoretical framework weaving together David Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory with Albert Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory. The merging of these theories guided my study by determining if and how preservice music teachers’ experiential learning practices affected their perceived self-efficacy in the classroom.

Literature Review

The following literature review includes five main sections related to this study. The first section, teacher training degree programs, provides a broad overview of teacher training and the roles of music teachers and preservice music teachers. This section offers background information on music teacher training degree programs and defines the individuals involved. The second section, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning, investigates how the COVID-19 pandemic affected both PK-12 and higher education, music education, and music teacher training degree programs. The third section, pandemic-informed pedagogy in higher education, examines music teacher training degree programs in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how some institutes of higher education are using the experience to
influence their pedagogies and curricula. The fourth section, teacher self-efficacy, defines perceived self-efficacy in teachers and music teachers, specifically. The final section, the influence of teacher voice on curricular change, explores the importance of amplifying teacher voices to impact further pedagogical and curricular changes in higher education. Those who continued to teach during the COVID-19 pandemic have firsthand experience and awareness into the academic and emotional issues that arose, and they may be the most knowledgeable resources to influence future change in teacher training degree programs.

**Teacher Training Degree Programs**

Teacher training degree programs are undergraduate or postgraduate programs that prepare preservice teachers to become in-service teachers and provide the degree and teacher certification necessary to teach in PK-12 public schools (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gratch 2001; Hill, 2021; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Teacher training degree programs support preservice teachers through the pedagogical, theoretical, and practical application of teaching and learning in PK-12 classrooms (Hill, 2021). Teacher training plays an important role in guiding preservice teachers to develop a realistic understanding of the PK-12 classroom and overall teaching profession (Gratch, 2001; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). Accrediting firms like the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (n.d.) emphasize teacher training as an evidence-based profession, which requires compliance from institutions of higher education and comprehensive updates as the profession changes. The quality of a teacher training degree program can impact the quality of teaching that occurs in PK-12 schools and includes four considerations: a shared vision of good teaching, clear standards, a curriculum centered on child development, and learning theories, pedagogy, content knowledge, and applied practice (Darling-Hammond, 2000).
Teacher training degree programs consist of both rigorous curricular content and teacher practicum (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher practicum is the part of a teacher training degree program that allows preservice teachers to visit PK-12 classrooms through classroom observations and student teaching (CAEP, n.d.). Teacher practicum assists students with pedagogical skills like classroom management, assessment, and administrative responsibilities – the skills not realistically practiced exclusively within the college classroom (Conway, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Teacher practicum provides the time and space for preservice teachers to work with their mentor teachers addressing issues they may not otherwise anticipate if not for their mentorship in the PK-12 classroom (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015).

**Music Teacher Training Degree Programs.** Music teacher training degree programs, also referred to as music teacher education, prepare preservice teachers to teach music as a subject in PK-12 schools (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Kaleli, 2020). PK-12 music education includes general music, choir, band, orchestra, jazz band, musical theater, humanities, and any content area that includes some form of music curriculum (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2019). Music teacher education is a distinctive degree program because its curriculum includes both music-based and education-based courses (Conway, 2015). Teacher practicum is an essential element of music teacher education because the collegiate curriculum must also include music performance instruction, leaving less credit hours for strictly education-based courses (Conway, 2015; Haning, 2021). When preservice music teachers enter their teacher practicum, they can better realize their responsibilities for various musical domains like band, choir, or orchestra, across PK-12 music education (Kaleli, 2020). This makes it an important step in their professional training.
Teacher training degree programs must continue to update their curricula to the recent standards of PK-12 teaching. These programs can support preservice teachers by providing realistic examples of teaching, therefore minimizing praxis shock (Ballantyne, 2007b). Praxis shock is the shock experienced by teachers when there are discrepancies between their expectations of school life and the realities of teaching (Ballantyne, 2007b; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). The stress associated with praxis shock can create in teachers lower self-efficacy levels, greater emotional exhaustion, and signs of burnout (Mason & Matas, 2015; Skaalyik & Skaalyik, 2016), all of which may lead them to reevaluate their notions of entering the teaching profession (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002). A continued support system comprised of collegiate professors, supervisors, and mentor teachers can lead an individual from preservice to in-service teaching, addressing their specific needs (Ballantyne, 2007a). Furthermore, the quality of teaching in PK-12 schools is related to the quality of a teacher’s teacher training degree program, therefore, institutions of higher education are essential in the transition from preservice teaching to in-service teaching (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). For all these reasons, teacher training degree programs hold the responsibility for maintaining realistic curricula and experiential learning.

**Music Teacher Roles.** A music teacher certified in Pennsylvania is trained and qualified to teach all aspects of PK-12 music instruction including music appreciation, composition, arranging, jazz, humanities, multi-media sound, critical response, aesthetics, and conducting, in addition to directing choral and instrumental ensembles, marching band, and orchestra (Pennsylvania Department of Education [PDE], 2019). Although many music teachers identify with a certain grade level or musical domain, like band, choir, or orchestra, they are tasked with teaching any grade level or music content curriculum at any time in their teaching careers (Conway, 2015). Additionally, the role of the music teacher consists of four identifies: musician,
performer, student-centered teacher, and content-centered teacher (Bouij, 1998). These identities can create higher workloads, role conflicts, and resource inadequacy due to the number of roles in which they are assigned (Bouij, 1998; Scheib, 2003). Music teachers are also tasked with leading extra-curricular programming like before or after school rehearsals, evening concerts, and weekend commitments, in addition to their teaching responsibilities during the school day (Ballantyne, 2007a; Bouij, 1998).

Many early career music teachers experience praxis shock due to the expectations associated with the roles and identities of a music teacher (Ballantyne, 2007b). In addition to the responsibilities and extra-curricular workload, early career music teachers often feel isolated as the only discipline specialist in their school (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017). These feelings of isolation are amplified when they do not feel adequately prepared by their music teacher training degree programs as they spend more time working and learning on the job than they do collaborating with others (Ballantyne, 2007a; Ballantyne & Packer, 2004).

**Preservice Music Teacher Roles.** Preservice music teachers often find themselves identifying as both performers and teachers, with many individuals centered on a “performer first” mentality (Bouij, 2004; Conway, 2015; Haning, 2021). There is an expectation for music teachers to master musical competencies in all instruments and vocal domains, as well as adequate teaching and leadership prospects (Bouij, 2004). Preservice music teachers study musicianship and performance within their music education degree programs, which require a great deal of time and credit hours and, in some cases, leaves less time for education-specific studies (Conway, 2015; Haning, 2021). The dual role identity between musician and teacher can create a barrier for some students and the disconnect between theory and practice leads to a unique form of praxis shock at the start of their teaching practicum (Ballantyne, 2007b;
Preservice music teachers differ from regular education preservice teachers in this way. Regular education preservice teachers focus their time and coursework on education-related courses (Darling-Hammond, 2000), whereas many preservice music teachers spend an equal or larger amount of time on musicianship (Conway, 2015; Haning, 2021).

Many preservice music teachers align themselves to a certain grade level (elementary, middle, or high school) or domain (band, strings, choral, general music) which limits their vision of overall PK-12 music education (Conway, 2015). For example, if an individual spends all of their time learning the skills of a high school marching band director, then that leaves less time to learn the skills of an elementary general music teacher, which are two different jobs. Preservice music teachers train to teach grades PK-12 in a wide variety of musical content like music appreciation, theory, instrumental and vocal ensembles, and anything music-related (PDE, 2019). Teacher training degree programs, including teacher practicum, guide preservice music teachers to see the larger picture of PK-12 music education by providing them core educational goals and strategies that work in multiple grade levels and across all domains (Conway, 2015).

Additionally, music teacher practicum can lead them to further examine the connections that exist between their education courses and music courses, and between theory and practice (Ballantyne, 2007a; Haning, 2021).

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning overwhelmed teachers, administrators, and students in PK-12 and higher education around the world (Choate et al., 2021; Kaschub, 2020; Koner et al., 2022; Pryor et al., 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). In March of 2020, almost all PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education closed their buildings to
students, faculty, and staff and moved their education to online learning (Choate et al., 2021; Kaschub, 2020; Koner et al., 2022; Pryor et al., 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). Approximately 1.5 billion students in 195 countries, from preschool to higher education were affected by repeated lockdowns during this time (UNESCO, 2022). Teachers and faculty moved much of their curriculum online while caring for their families at home and assisting their own children in new, online learning environments (Boivin & Bridgewater, 2021; Jones & Kessler, 2020).

**PK-12 Education.** The COVID-19 pandemic created many challenges for PK-12 students and teachers across the U.S. (Boivin & Bridgewater, 2021; Cheng & Lam, 2021; Pryor et al., 2020). Especially impacted were students who relied on schools for assistance with disabilities, English language learning, mental health services, food, or other social services (Kaschub, 2020; Unesco, 2022). Furthermore, most schools moved their instruction to virtual platforms, creating inequities for students who lacked the adequate technology and for the teachers who were unprepared for the virtual move (Cheng & Lam, 2021; Nichols, 2020; Potter et al., 2021; Pryor et al., 2020). The sudden changes caused by the COVID-19 pandemic multiplied the stress and responsibilities for teachers and educational staff as they attempted to fill the gaps left by school building closures and social distancing safety restrictions (Pressley, 2021).

PK-12 music education is a subject that relies on collaboration with others, however, online learning and social distancing safety restrictions forced this communal activity into an isolated learning space (Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Haning, 2021; Koner et al., 2022; Octaviani, 2021). While technology enhances musical experiences, exclusive online learning is not an ideal medium for which to learn music performance (Maor & Currie, 2017; Dammers, 2009; Kaleli, 2021). Online instrumental and vocal pedagogy is restricted by issues with sound quality, delays,
and all-around inconsistencies (Kaleli, 2020; Riley, 2009). Even teaching with technology through music notation software is not ideal for online learning without an instructor who is trained in such virtual pedagogy (Maor & Currie, 2017).

**Institutions of Higher Education.** Students, faculty, and staff within institutions of higher education also felt the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their teaching and learning (Bull et al., 2022; Burke & Lamar, 2020; Octaviani, 2021; Vandeyar, 2021). The difficulties of online learning and home displacement left many undergraduate college students making difficult decisions regarding their continuation in their degree programs (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Choate et al., 2021; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Gravett et al., 2021; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). As resources became scarce, or moved online, mental health became an important issue for undergraduate college students dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and their difficult decisions to stay in school (Hadar et al., 2020; Pozo-Rico et al. 2020; Roman, 2020; Jones & Kessler, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021; Soria & Horgos, 2021; Gluckman & Mangan, 2022).

**Pandemic Teacher Practicum.** In the spring of 2020, as PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education closed their school buildings and moved to online learning, so did nearly all teacher practicum, with 44% of teacher practicum placements suspended entirely (AACTE, 2021). By the fall of 2020, AACTE (2021) reported that 81% of preservice teachers were assigned to some form of in-person placements, 13% were offered a hybrid configuration of learning, and 4% reported no practicum for preservice teachers. Furthermore, the mentor teachers to whom these preservice teachers were assigned were learning how to teach using online capacities for the first time and were unable to provide the traditional expectations of in-person mentor support (Trust & Whalen, 2020). This paradigm shift presented many challenges to teacher training degree programs which typically required classroom observations, field-based
coursework, and in-person teacher practicum (AACTE, 2021; Trust & Whalen, 2020; Yamamura & Tsutsui, 2021).

Preservice music teachers have documented high levels of stress due to the nature of their ambitious music teacher training degree programs which include music performance, musical competencies in all instrumental and vocal domains, and proficient teaching and administrative expectations (Bouij, 2004; Conway, 2015; Kuebel, 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, preservice music teachers transitioned from in-person teacher practicum experiences to online instruction, or no instruction at all, which created a state of distress for both preservice teachers and their mentor teachers (Atkins & Danley, 2020). These preservice music teachers were presented with challenges for which they, and their mentor teachers, were not prepared, like the accelerated process of integrating technology pedagogy and content knowledge (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Because they spend much of their time on musicianship and instrumental and vocal competencies, preservice teachers rely heavily on their teacher practicum experiences like classroom management, assessment, and administrative responsibilities to support the education emphasis of their degree program (Conway, 2015).

**Pandemic-Informed Pedagogy**

Employing a pandemic-informed pedagogy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic is an academically and emotionally productive approach to teaching and learning in higher education (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Gravett et al., 2021; Vandeyar, 2021). During and immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, some higher education faculty considered the changed circumstances of their students and adjusted their instructional delivery to better serve their students’ physical and emotional needs (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021). Informed by the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, many instructors moved towards a more empathetic pedagogy, one that is
thoughtful and compassionate rather than subjective and critical (Gravett et al., 2021). When institutions of higher education examine the foundation of their instruction and listen to their students’ needs, they better prepare students for their future academic endeavors (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Walker-Gleaves, 2019). Consequently, if institutions of higher education better prepare preservice teachers for the teaching profession, then they will have a longer tenure in the field, creating a more consistent and sustainable practice for PK-12 students (Barnacle & Dall’Alba, 2017; Gravett et al., 2021; Walk-Gleaves, 2019).

**Relational Pedagogies.** Relational pedagogies are one category of instructional delivery in a pandemic-informed pedagogy. Relational pedagogies position meaningful relationships or connections as fundamental to effective teaching and learning (Gravett et al., 2021). Approaching teacher training curriculum using an ontological approach leads to relational pedagogies (Gravett et al., 2021). Ontology is a branch of philosophy regarding the nature of being, of what is, or of how we classify entities (Smith, 2012). An ontological approach in education would focus on who students are and who they are becoming (Barnacle & Dall’Alba, 2017). Empathetic instruction, built into the curriculum, can be more effective than that which is subjective and critical (Gravett et al., 2021). Empathetic instruction is described as faculty and staff listening to and showing empathy for their students, actively engaging in their learning, giving appropriate feedback, and creating high expectations in standards of work and behavior (Walker-Gleaves, 2019).

**Pedagogy of Care.** A pedagogy of care is a relational pedagogy of intentional engagement as a compassionate, student-centered approach which acknowledges the complexity of students’ lives (Burke & Larmar, 2020; Noddings, 2005). Long before the COVID-19 pandemic, Nel Noddings (2005) argued for education to develop a capacity and commitment to
care. Noddings’ (2010) Framework of Moral Education outlined a caring pedagogy through four components: modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. These components work together to provide students an example of how to care, and the space to practice and learn how to implement care in their own lives (Noddings, 2010). Faculty should not tell their students to care, but rather show them how to care by creating caring relations with them (Noddings, 2010). Higher education faculty and staff who actively and explicitly support students in their learning positively impact both their academic and personal outcomes (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Walker-Gleaves, 2019).

While seemingly beneficial, Noddings’ (2005) pedagogy of care was often met with resistance from higher education. University missions are brimming with statements endorsing care for students, responsive and caring faculty, and caring philosophies to include and empower its students and staff, but educational capitalism and risk management often contradict a caring pedagogy (Walker-Gleaves, 2019). Institutions of higher education concerned with educational ratings and competitive educational publicity withdraw at the mention of closeness or intimacy, since academic progress and achievement are the demonstrated standards upon which their data rely (Walker-Gleaves, 2019). However, there are positive connections between student compassion and academic performance (Barnacle and Dall’Alba, 2017). Caring teachers can reconcile personal motivation with professional justification, meaning pedagogic care has the potential to distress and disturb but it will eventually deepen and transform education (Walker-Gleaves, 2019).

**Compassion Pedagogy.** Created in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, compassion pedagogy is another relational pedagogy grounded in empathetic instruction (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021). It was derived from the initial term *panicgogy* used to describe the
quick, and anxiety-filled, transition teachers made from face-to-face teaching to remote online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (Vandeyar, 2021). Later, ‘panicgogy’ in higher education was replaced by a pedagogy of compassion, allowing faculty to purposefully incorporate care and compassion into their syllabi to not only assist preservice teachers, but to demonstrate how it can be done in the PK-12 classroom (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021). If institutions of higher education can embrace the needs of students and staff through a pedagogy of compassion, then they can begin the process of creating meaningful, educational experiences (Vandeyar, 2021). Those experiences may inspire cyclical change when students graduate, enter the workforce, and begin their own careers teaching through a lens of compassion (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021).

**Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Teacher self-efficacy is a teacher’s belief that they can positively influence student learning, thus improving the livelihood of both students and teachers (Klassen et al., 2009; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teacher self-efficacy affects the motivational and emotional elements related to teaching like job satisfaction, professional involvement, and reducing emotional fatigue, all which can increase teacher retention (Skaalvik, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014). It demonstrates in teachers their capabilities to achieve desired outcomes of student engagement, learning, and classroom management (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy and teacher confidence are crucial factors in knowing when to seek out help (Huang et al., 2007), an important element for early career teachers who are new to the profession.

**Music Teacher Self-Efficacy.** Although limited, there is research discussing the perceived self-efficacy of PK-12 music teachers. According to the research, music teacher self-
Efficacy includes two factors: musical self-efficacy and teaching self-efficacy (Bartel & Cameron, 2002; Biasutti, 2010; Biasutti & Concina, 2017; Wagoner, 2015; Zee & Koomen, 2016). Musical self-efficacy is often formed in a social context so that the stated or perceived opinions of others can influence a performer’s self-efficacy (Bartel & Cameron, 2002). Biasutti & Concina (2017) noted that more research includes self-efficacy in musical performance than in music education, however, some similarities exist between the two fields. For example, the nature of musical ability is important for perceived self-efficacy in both a musical performer and a music teacher (Biasutti, 2010). Furthermore, teacher self-efficacy is often identified as a task-specific construct, meaning self-efficacy could change based on the teaching task (Zee & Koomen, 2016). For music teachers, specifically, that task is often associated with their professional identity regarding the grade level or domain (instrumental, choral, general) of the students they teach (Wagoner, 2015). For example, a music teacher who plays a wind instrument may have more self-efficacy teaching band than they would teaching choir.

Early career music teachers with up to 10 years of experience report lower levels of perceived self-efficacy than their colleagues with 11 years or more of experience (West & Frey-Clark, 2019). This could be because it takes almost 10 years for music teachers to see the results of their work or it could be that teachers are leaving the profession before entering their 11th year of teaching (West & Frey-Clark, 2019). Since early career music teachers often feel isolated in their new teaching positions and spend a lot of time learning on the job (Ballantyne & Zhukov, 2017), then it may be important to examine their self-efficacy prior to in-service teaching. Baumgartner (2023) recounted qualitative stories of music student teachers as a form of vicarious experience and reflection for current music student teachers. Reiger (2021) researched preservice music teacher’s self-efficacy prior to student teaching, during their undergraduate
degree programs. Overall, the most recent research stressed the importance of addressing self-efficacy in music teacher training to increase self-efficacy as they enter the field of in-service teaching (Baumgartner, 2023; Chung, 2021; Reiger, 2021).

**Teacher Voices**

Listening to teacher voices, or teacher feedback, is essential to adequately examining the academic and social emotional losses in PK-12 and higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic (Frey-Clark et al., 2023). Pandemic-informed pedagogies supported higher education students academically and emotionally in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Gravett, 2021; Vandeyar, 2021). However, without a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, institutions of higher education may have a difficult time justifying its use of relational pedagogies. Alums who experienced the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequently were recipients of pandemic-informed pedagogies, can attest to the adequacies of their higher education degree programs of that time. Specifically, early career music teachers who are alums of pandemic-informed music teacher training degree programs, can provide feedback on their experiences, informing curricular and pedagogical changes for future music teacher training degree programs (Frey-Clark et al., 2023).

Teachers have the lived experiences necessary to acknowledge how their teacher training degree programs supported or thwarted their effectiveness in the classroom (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Kelly et al., 2019). Music teachers, specifically, have a unique perspective on what constitutes effective teacher training because of the unique challenges they face like extracurricular responsibilities and feelings of isolation (Ballantyne, 2005; Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). Frey-Clark et al. (2023) discovered four emergent themes amongst first-year music teachers who lost half of their student teaching due to the COVID-19
pandemic: overwhelm, disconnection, concern for well-being, and missing out. While teachers across many domains may have felt similarly, these themes are unique to these early career music teachers and using their feedback as data could provide specific experiential knowledge to better inform teacher training curriculum (Frey-Clark et al., 2023).

Teacher feedback also changes throughout the course of their careers (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004). A first-year teacher will most likely have a different perspective than a 20-year teacher based on their lived experiences and changes in society (Ballanytne & Packer, 2005; Koner et al., 2022). Therefore, continued research and a tracking of these early career music teachers will help to identify any possible shifts in their challenges, experiences, and identities (Koner et al., 2022). Institutions of higher education must stay current on PK-12 teachers’ needs to update curricula and pedagogies to match the educational landscape, better preparing preservice teachers for their future careers (Ressler et al., 2022).

Literature Review Summary

The preceding literature review examined current research related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on music teacher training degree programs. The first section defined music teacher training degree programs, the roles of music teachers, and the importance of teacher practicum. The second section examined how the COVID-19 pandemic affected PK-12, higher education, and teacher practicum. The third section explored pandemic-informed, relational pedagogies in higher education and how empathetic instructional delivery can serve students both academically and emotionally. The fourth section defined teacher and music teacher self-efficacy. Finally, the fifth section justified the use of teacher voices and teacher feedback to spur curricular and pedagogical change in music teacher training degree programs. The next part of Chapter 2 will explore the theoretical framework which grounds this study.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study combines David Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) with Albert Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) to better understand early career music teachers’ perceived levels of self-efficacy after some, or all, of their teacher practicum was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. David Kolb’s (1984) ELT stresses the importance of learning through experience, often used in music teacher training degree programs and teacher practicum. Albert Bandura’s (1977) SET is a subset of his broader Social Cognitive Theory, initially named Social Learning Theory, which suggests that a person’s self-efficacy affects how they think, act, and feel in various contexts. First, I will present each theory as its own construct situated within its philosophical and historical roots. Then, I will weave the two theories together, apply them to this study, and provide a figure which visually aligns to the written application of the framework.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning Theory (ELT) (1984) is the theory that learning is a transactional relationship between an individual and their environment creating both subjective and objective learning experiences focused on process, not outcome (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning was not a new concept in 1984, but rather a continuation and combination of behavioral theories attributed to Kurt Lewin (1946), John Dewey (1938), and Jean Piaget (1952) (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) credited his model for experiential learning (Figure 1) to a summation of elements from Lewin’s (1946) Action Research Theory and model of experiential learning, as applied to education. In this model, Kolb (1984) proposed a four-stage learning cycle of abilities: concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.
Figure 1

*Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle*

![Diagram of Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle]

*Note: Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle is based on the Lewinian (1946) Experiential Learning Model*

This cycle, combined with shared human experiences, is an important part of teaching and learning, as it allows personal experience to give subjective meaning to abstract concepts (Kolb, 1984). Furthermore, observation and reflection are a necessary part of the feedback process, providing the basis for a development of growth, action, and evaluation (Kolb, 1984).

Similarly, Dewey (1938) outlined a formation of purposes comparable to the experiential learning cycle. Through the formation of purposes, Dewey (1938) determined four steps necessary to learning: observations of surrounding conditions, knowledge of what previously happened in similar situations, judgment of observation, and intellectual anticipation. Dewey (1938) inspired Kolb’s ELT (1984) through his learning cycle and the concept of the impulse of experience giving force to ideas and ideas giving direction to impulse.

Piaget (1952) also influenced Kolb’s (1984) ELT through his model of learning and cognitive development and the four major stages of cognitive adolescent growth (Kolb, 1984).
Piaget (1952) stressed the balanced tension between the processes of accommodation and assimilation. Specifically, an individual acclimates to their learning experience and then integrates that experience into their existing knowledge or perceptions of the world (Piaget, 1952). Kolb (1984) was inspired by this broader progression of accommodation and assimilation and adapted it into his four-point learning cycle.

David Kolb (1984) presented ELT as an integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. ELT is an important theory for teaching and learning, accentuated by a constructivist view (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009). Constructivism is the theory that learning is not passive, but rather an active form of constructing meaning by assimilating new information into what we already know (Piaget, 1970). Teacher practicum is an example of constructivist theory. Faculty consider what their preservice teachers already know and allow them to put their knowledge into practice in PK-12 classrooms, re-forming their previous knowledge into something new (Amineh & Asl, 2015). ELT (1984) also has an epistemology based on the concept that ideas are not fixed, but rather formed and re-formed through experience (Kolb, 1984). Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and how and when we understand something (Matthias & Neta, 2020). Kolb (1984) emphasized learning through the interaction of expectation and experience with the understanding that learning happens when there are unforeseen circumstances, miscommunications, and miscalculations.

**Self-Efficacy Theory**

Albert Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) is the theory that individuals see outcomes as contingent on the adequacy of their performance and, therefore, rely on their efficacy beliefs to decide whether they will pursue an action (Bandura, 1997). Specifically, individuals will actively pursue something they believe they can successfully accomplish, and
Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory

Experience → Self-efficacy → Behavior and performance
Vicarious experience → Self-efficacy
Social persuasion → Self-efficacy
Physiological feedback → Self-efficacy

Note: Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory is comprised of four roles in human behavior.

they will avoid a pursuit they believe they cannot adequately achieve (Bandura, 1997). SET (1977) is a subset of Bandura’s (1977) Social Cognitive Theory. In Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura (1977) suggested that learning occurs in a social context with an interaction of the person, environment, and behavior. Self-efficacy is the final of six subsets associated with Social Cognitive Theory, previously named Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977, 1986). SET (1977) is comprised of four roles in human behavior: experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasions, and physiological states like stress or anxiety (Figure 2). These components determine an individual’s levels of self-efficacy which then determines their behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Perceived self-efficacy, or an individual’s self-efficacy beliefs, direct how they think, act, and feel regarding a task (Haverback & Mee, 2015; Pajares, 1996). Perceived self-efficacy is what you believe you can do with what you have, under varying circumstances (Bandura, 1997).
A person may perceive a higher level of self-efficacy for one task and a lower level of self-efficacy for a different task (Bandura, 1986; Haverback & Mee, 2015; Pajares, 1996). It is like a judgment call for an individual after they consider their own skillset and the environment for which they are about to enter (Bandura, 1986; Haverback & Mee, 2015; Pajares, 1996). An exception to this is when expected outcomes are independent of efficacy beliefs under circumstances of gender, race, age, or other groups which are historically disadvantaged (Bandura, 1997). If a person believes they can perform a specific task, but that task is historically performed by a person of another gender, race, or age group, then regardless of how high they perceive their skill levels, their self-efficacy levels will be lower (Bandura, 1997).

**Applying the Framework**

Together, Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) create a theoretical framework which justifies this research study (Figure 3). A theoretical framework weaving together Kolb’s (1984) ELT and Bandura’s (1977) SET provides a foundation upon which to explore early career music teachers’ voices on how their COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum disrupted their experiential learning and how it is impacting their perceived self-efficacy as in-service teachers.

Institutions of higher education apply Kolb’s (1984) ELT to their teacher training degree programs through the experiential learning cycle (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015). In teacher training degree programs, a preservice teacher learns an abstract concept in the college classroom, practices and re-learns that concept through experiences with students in the PK-12 classroom, reflects on their learning experience with their mentor teachers while adjusting their technique and expectations, all while relearning the concept (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015). Learning is a
Theoretical Framework of the Study

Note: This theoretical framework combines Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Model with Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory.

process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984), and teacher practicum is a space for preservice teachers to work through unanticipated outcomes with their mentor teachers (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015).

A teacher with strong perceived self-efficacy can improve student learning and predict their overall success in the classroom (Cho & Shim, 2013; Gotch & French, 2013). Increased perceived self-efficacy lowers teachers’ stress levels, slowing the pace of teacher attrition and teacher turnover (Rabaglietti et al., 2021). Additionally, perceived self-efficacy is a data source which indicates early career teachers’ preparation for the teaching profession (Baez-Hernandez, 2019; Pajares, 1996; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2016). Teachers can receive support for their perceived self-efficacy and instructional performance through professional development,
following the completion of their teacher training degree programs (Baez-Hernandez & Andres, 2019). However, it is important for institutions of higher education to update their curricula and pedagogies to anticipate the needs of teachers, better preparing them for their first year of in-service teaching (Ressler et al., 2022).

**Summary**

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on music teacher training programs and defined a theoretical framework weaving together Kolb’s (1984) ELT and Bandura’s (1977) SET. The literature shows that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted both PK-12 and higher education teaching and learning and overwhelmed faculty, students, and staff (Choate et al., 2021; Kaschub, 2020; Koner et al., 2022; Pryor et al., 2020; Westphal et al., 2022). Almost all PK-12 and higher education instruction was moved online (UNESCO, 2022) and teacher training degree programs adapted in-person classroom observations and student teaching to online, hybrid practicum, or, in some cases, excluded practicum from the curriculum altogether (AACTE, 2021). Higher education faculty revisited relational pedagogies to better support their students’ needs using empathetic instructional practices and compassion pedagogy (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021). Following the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, higher education students graduated and joined the workforce. Graduates, like early career music teachers, who experienced the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and compassion pedagogy from their professors, can provide valuable feedback to impact further curricular change in higher education (Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Koner et al., 2022; Ressler et al., 2022).

A theoretical framework weaving together Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory and Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory provides a foundation upon which to explore teacher
voices and how their disrupted experiential learning circumstances impacted their ability to teach. The experiential learning associated with teacher practicum is essential for a preservice music teacher’s perceived self-efficacy in the classroom (Ballantyne, 2007a; Conway, 2015; Haning, 2021). When the COVID-19 pandemic altered preservice music teachers’ practicum and experiential learning, then that may have altered their perceived self-efficacy as in-service teachers. Chapter 3 will present the methodological approach and study design which explored how early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
Chapter 3

This study examined early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy following a COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum. Specifically, this study identified how music teacher practicum was impacted by school building closures and safety restrictions and how that affected the alums of early career music teacher training degree programs as they prepared to enter the teaching profession. Focus groups created the conversations (Krueger & Casey, 2015) that determined how music teacher practicum was affected and if that altered early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. The participants provided feedback on their experiences, which informed curricular and pedagogical changes for future music teacher practicum and professional development (Frey-Clark et al., 2023). The following sections of Chapter 3 will explore my research design, participants, description of materials, procedures, data analysis, and ethical stance.

Research Design

The research design of this study consisted of qualitative focus groups with alums of music teacher training degree programs whose teacher practicum was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are many valuable reasons to use a qualitative research design. For instance, qualitative research aims to provide an in-depth and interpreted understanding of a topic through participants’ experiences and perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Snape & Spencer, 2003). It typically uses smaller sample sizes with participants purposely selected based on a set of specific guidelines (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017; Snape & Spencer, 2003). Qualitative data collection allows the researcher to work closely with the participants discovering emerging themes they have not yet uncovered (Reish, 2007). The researcher becomes an
instrument for gathering and interpreting data through data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

A focus group conversation is a research methodology in which participants gather to discuss a specific issue under the guidance of the researcher (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Wibeck, 2007). The purpose of a focus group conversation is to understand the wider range of experiences and perceptions while examining the discussions for themes, connections, or consensus among participants (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015). They are valuable because of their ability to allow researchers to study the way participants collectively make sense of something (Wibeck et al., 2007). Working in groups is a collaborative experience and focus groups are a special type of group formed by participants with certain common characteristics and lived experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

In this study, the participants studied music teacher education through the same COVID-19 pandemic at the same Southeastern State University (SSU), but each of their teacher practicum experiences were different depending on the timing of their practicum with the COVID-19 pandemic or PK-12 mentor school assignment. Teachers have the experiences necessary to acknowledge how their teacher training degree programs supported or thwarted their effectiveness in the classroom (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Frey-Clark et al., 2023; Kelly et al., 2019). Using their voices through conversations in a collaborative setting allows them the opportunity to make sense of their individual situations while leading to a consensus moving forward (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Wibeck, 2007). Specifically, the participants of this study generated opinions regarding updated PK-12 professional development, pedagogical changes in undergraduate teacher training degree programs, or postgraduate course content.
**Participants**

I conducted four focus group conversations with 16 participants dispersed among those focus groups. The participants of this study were music teacher training degree program alums whose teacher practicum was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. For consistency, participants were limited to those who studied in U.S. music teacher training degree programs because of the difference in timing of the COVID-19 pandemic, school building closures, and extent of safety restrictions employed among different countries.

**Inclusion Criteria**

This study was comprised of three inclusion criteria for participant eligibility. First, participants were 18 years of age or older. Second, participants were alums of U.S. undergraduate music teacher training programs. Third, participants were enrolled as music education students during the COVID-19 pandemic and experienced a modified teacher practicum.

**Participant Demographics**

Sixteen individuals participated in this study. They were all SSU alums and were enrolled in the same music teacher training degree program where their teacher practicum was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They conducted their student teaching experiences in the years of 2020, 2021, and 2022, indicating that different parts of their teacher practicum were affected based on where they were in the degree program at the time. Table 1 displays the participant demographics. 62.5% of the participants identified as female and 37.5% identified as male. 81% identified as white and 19% identified as bi-racial. There were two participants who had less than one year of PK-12 teaching experience, eight participants had one-two years of PK-12 teaching experience, and six participants had three or more years of PK-12 teaching experience.
**Table 1**

*Demographic and Professional Information*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender identity</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years teaching PK-12 music education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stan</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>White and Middle Eastern</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aria</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seth</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Champ</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avery</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Less than 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eugene</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheldon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joelle</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>White and Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Less than 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus Group Setting**

In this study, there were two focus group settings: (1) virtually on Zoom and (2) in-person on the SSU campus. Focus group #1 included two participants on Zoom, focus group #2 included six participants on Zoom, focus group #3 included five participants in-person at SSU, and focus group #4 included three participants on Zoom. Both focus group settings had benefits and challenges, but each conversation was engaging and informative.

The virtual focus groups were conducted on Zoom using my professional Zoom account. Holding the focus group conversations on Zoom allowed for more participants to join the discussion as they could participate from any location, and it did not require them to commute to SSU. Participants also used Zoom functions like the chat box and emojis to comment on each
other’s responses or emphasize each other’s statements. Two research team members assisted with the Zoom focus groups, taking note of facial reactions, emoji reactions, and monitoring the chat box.

The in-person focus group was conducted at the Music Building located on the SSU campus. A permission to conduct research letter was accepted and a room request was submitted once there were participants who noted that they could meet in-person. Holding this focus group conversation in-person allowed for a more natural flow of discussions and dialogue. The participants were set up in a circle and encouraged to respond to each other and engage in conversation. One research team member assisted me with this focus group by taking notes on facial reactions and participant engagement throughout the conversations.

**Description of Materials**

This section describes the materials used in the study. The study materials included the recruitment flyer (Appendix A), the recruitment email (Appendix B), the Music Conference email exchange (Appendix C), the permission to conduct research letter (Appendix D), the informed consent (Appendix E), the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F), and the focus group guide (Appendix G). Together, these materials created the foundation for this study’s research design. I will provide more detail on how these items will be used in the upcoming Procedures section of this chapter.

**Recruitment Materials**

My recruitment flyer (Appendix A) was a one-page promotion of my study created on Canva. The recruitment flyer included a brief description of the study, the participation requirements, and inclusion criteria. My contact information, IRB protocol number, and a QR code that directed interested individuals to my demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) were
also printed on the recruitment flyer (Appendix A). My recruitment email (Appendix B) was a more personal note to potential participants asking them to consider joining the study. In this email I attached the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) and provided a direct website link to the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F). The Music Conference email exchange (Appendix C) was the communication between the Music Conference state executive and me. In this email exchange I requested permission to promote my study through the Music Conference and the state executive gave me consent to send them the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) and demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) so that they could post it on the Music Conference research website.

**Permission to Conduct Research**

My permission to conduct research letter (Appendix D) was a one-page letter signed by SSU’s School of Music Dean. The letter was addressed to the IRB and stated that I had permission to use the music building on the SSU campus as a location for my focus groups. Prior to their signing this letter, I reviewed my study with the Dean to better inform them of my research design.

**Informed Consent**

The informed consent (Appendix E) was included within the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F). Informed consent is the process by which a researcher explains to their participants the rights to their privacy, how their personal information will be stored and shared, and allows them to choose whether they would like to participate in the study (Jones, 2019). The informed consent (Appendix E) for this study included a project overview, the purpose of the study, risks, benefits, and privacy protocols. The participants in this study agreed to the informed consent before completing the questions on the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F). I used
skip logic on my demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) Qualtrics form so that the questionnaire ended if they did not agree to the informed consent. Furthermore, I read aloud the informed consent (Appendix E) before each focus group conversation and asked participants to inform me if they no longer wished to remain in the study.

There were minimal risks to the participants in this study. There were two possible privacy risks regarding confidentiality and anonymity which I attempted to minimize throughout the duration of my study. First, there were audio and video recordings of the focus groups which identified the participants. I minimized this risk by storing all recordings on my password-protected laptop and mobile device. I did not allow any non-research team members access to these recordings. Second, there was the chance that participants would know and identify each other in the focus groups, risking their anonymity to others. To minimize this privacy risk, I required all participants to choose pseudonyms and reminded them to call each other solely by their pseudonyms, not by their actual names. Furthermore, participants risked mild emotional discomfort with the content of the focus group questions in addition to the loss of free time while participating in the study. To minimize discomfort, I reminded participants that they may step away from the focus group conversations or choose not to answer specific questions at any point in the study. To minimize the loss of free time, I was transparent about the time commitment necessary to participate in this study, communicating this through email and at the start of each focus group conversation.

There were expected benefits to the participants of this study. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and express their views with other individuals in their professional fields. Participants reflected on their music teacher training degree programs and teacher practicum and compared stories about how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their
classroom observations and student teaching. Some participants shared that they enjoyed the
debriefing process and found solidarity discussing the topics with fellow music teachers.

**Demographic Questionnaire**

The demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) was a form created with Qualtrics, a web-based software program. In the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F), individuals first agreed to the informed consent (Appendix E). I utilized skip logic so that if they did not agree to the informed consent (Appendix E) the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) would close automatically. If they checked the box that they did agree to the informed consent (Appendix E), then the participants answered demographic questions regarding age, gender identity, racial identity, highest level of degree completion, and current teaching status. Study-specific eligibility questions also included identifying which part of their teacher practicum was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, I added two questions regarding their reasons for choosing music education and if any of their family members were also music teachers. The answers to these questions provided some additional background information on the participants.

Once individuals submitted the demographic questionnaire (Appendix F), I followed up with them through email to schedule their focus group date, time, and setting. I accepted demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) submissions through the months of November and December of 2023 and scheduled the focus groups accordingly.

**Focus Group Guide**

The focus group guide (Appendix G) included the line of questioning for the focus group discussions and the approximate amount of time dedicated to each question. The first page of the focus group guide (Appendix G) consisted of scripts for both the in-person and Zoom focus groups. These scripts included a read-through of the informed consent (Appendix E), a reminder
that the discussions will be recorded via video and audio, and instructions to call all participants by their chosen pseudonyms for the duration of the focus group. The focus group guide (Appendix G) included ten questions organized by the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory: experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. I used Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory as part of my theoretical framework to ground the study, and to guide my questions as I examined the participants’ perceived self-efficacy.

**Procedures**

This section describes the study’s timeline for data collection. First, it will outline the steps taken for participant recruitment and selection, then it will describe the focus group discussions, and finally, it will examine the steps that were necessary for data collection. A researcher timeline (Table 2) is provided at the end of this section, which summarizes each phase of my research.

**Participant Recruitment and Selection**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved my study on July 26, 2023. I passed my dissertation proposal defense on November 1, 2023, and began recruiting my participants with the following procedures. I posted my recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to my personal social media pages including Facebook and Instagram inviting my personal contacts who were, or knew, eligible participants to join my study. Then, I attached the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to a recruitment email (Appendix B) to my former students and professional contacts who I believed were, or knew of, eligible participants for this study. Additionally, I emailed the recruitment flyer (Appendix A) to the state executive at the Music Conference (Appendix C) to post on their research website. When contacting potential participants, I asked them to consider
individuals who they believed may be eligible and interested in participating in this study and encouraged them, through snowball sampling, to pass along my recruitment flyer (Appendix A).

As potential participants began to submit the demographic questionnaire, I checked for their eligibility and completion of the informed consent (Appendix E). After that, I examined their preferred study setting, in-person at SSU or virtually on Zoom, and their preferred days and times for the focus group discussions. I drafted potential focus groups including the participants, days, and times while I investigated room availability at SSU. Once a focus group schedule was in place, I contacted each participant via email to confirm their eligibility and participation for the specified focus group. In this email I included the date, time, location, zoom link (if applicable), parking information (if applicable), and contact information for myself should they have had further questions or needed more clarification.

**Focus Group Conversations**

This study included four focus group conversations comprised of 100 - 120-minute, in-person and Zoom discussions. This allotted timeframe was adjusted depending on the number of eligible individuals assigned to the focus group. The focus group guide (Appendix G) included a script that I read aloud, addressing informed consent, privacy protocols, and the ten questions with approximate time durations for each question. At the start of all focus groups, I re-stated the informed consent that all participants previously signed. Additionally, I asked if there were any questions before starting the discussions.

The in-person focus groups were held at SSU. The in-person focus groups were recorded with video and audio for data analysis purposes. All participants assigned themselves pseudonyms and wore pseudonym name tags. For anonymity purposes, I asked that the participants always address each other by these pseudonyms. During the focus group discussions,
I encouraged participants to answer questions, explain themselves to the extent they were comfortable, and to elaborate on each other’s statements.

The Zoom focus groups took place online. I asked the participants to change their Zoom screen names to their chosen pseudonyms prior to joining the Zoom room, and for anonymity purposes, to only refer to each other by those pseudonyms. Once the screen names were changed, I began recording the session via audio and video. During the focus group discussions, I encouraged participants to answer questions, explain themselves to the extent they were comfortable, and to elaborate or question each other’s statements, either when called upon or through using the chat box. My research team members took note of the use of reaction emoticons (hearts, thumbs up, etc.) participants made throughout the discussions.

Two individuals volunteered to assist my study as research team members. Their roles in my research study consisted of assisting me with the technical operation of the focus groups as well as data collection. For the in-person focus groups, they assisted me by checking in the participants, assigning pseudonyms, locating restrooms, and vending machines, and providing participants with water bottles. For both the in-person and Zoom focus groups, they sat in on the focus group conversations and took notes on their observations. I will reference these notes during the data collection phase of my study.

**Data Collection**

Immediately following the in-person focus groups, I used researcher memoing to look for any emerging themes or connections. Researcher memoing, also called analytic memoing, is when a researcher journals about the data collection or writes notes to themself regarding participant behavior, answers, or immediate emerging themes (Saldaña, 2016). I used researcher memoing to ensure I did not forget any important themes or reactions while each focus group
Table 2

Researcher Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Phase</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant recruitment</td>
<td>November-December 2023</td>
<td>Distribution of recruitment flyer and email invitations. Selection of participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups and data collection</td>
<td>November-December 2023</td>
<td>Conduct in-person and Zoom focus groups. Record and collect data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Checking</td>
<td>November-December 2023</td>
<td>Contact participants to verify my interpretation of their answers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding</td>
<td>December-February 2024</td>
<td>Code the transcripts looking for thematic material.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

was recent in my memory. I looked back upon these memos during the data analysis phase to guide my coding. Coding and researcher memoing create a reciprocal relationship in qualitative data collection and analysis (Saldaña, 2016; Weston et al., 2001). After the memoing phase, I transcribed participant discussions by taking the transcript from Zoom and running it through Temi, a transcribing software program. Table 2 provides a summary of my research timeline.

Data Analysis and Coding

Upon completion of the focus groups, I reviewed the transcripts, conducted member checks, and coded the transcripts searching for thematic material. In qualitative data analysis, coding is the construct produced by the researcher to represent the interpreted data, paving the way for pattern detection and categorization (Vogt et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2016). During the data collection phase, I used researcher memoing to identify any emerging themes. In the data analysis phase I used the member checks and researcher memos to help inform the coding and analysis process. I conducted two cycles of coding in the data analysis phase: inductive coding and deductive coding. In this section I will explain my member checking process and explore the two cycles of coding.
**Member Checking**

Upon the completion of each focus group conversation, I created two-page member checks for participants’ responses. In Google Docs, I made a template of the focus group questions. After the focus group finished, I watched the video recording and listened to the audio recording and wrote in a summary of each answer as narrated by the participant. Once the Google Doc was completed with all answers included, I emailed the link to each participant and gave them editing privileges. In the email I gave the participants a date by which they needed to make any edits, should they deem it necessary.

The member checks assisted my research in two ways. First, it supported the validity of the study. A few of the participants made edits in the Google Docs and told me that either I had a detail incorrect, or that they misspoke at the focus group and wanted to update their answers. The member check ensured that my interpretation of their answers was valid. Second, the member checks assisted my researcher memoing by essentially providing me a round of pre-coding. By re-watching the focus groups and typing participant answers prior to any formal coding process, it allowed me an opportunity to recognize any initial themes within the focus group conversations.

**Inductive Coding**

I used inductive coding in my first cycle of data analysis. Inductive coding is the process of generating themes and categories as the researcher reads through the transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). Inductive coding allows the researcher to enter the coding process without a predetermined qualifier, finding thematic material based solely on participants’ answers (Saldaña, 2016). The use of inductive coding in this study avoided the categorization of themes prior to listening to participants’ focus group conversations and allowed for a wider perspective.
of analysis. Furthermore, it helped me to keep an open mind and avoid using my bias to pre-generate categories for the participants’ answers.

After looking through a few coding software programs, I made the choice to print the focus group transcripts and code them each by hand. As I read through each transcript, I found potential themes and color coded them by underlining the text and making notes on the side of the page. Additionally, I created a list of themes on a separate page and color coded that to match the notes on the transcripts. Initially, I discovered thirteen potential themes in my first round of inductive coding. Upon further rounds of coding, I grouped certain topics together and narrowed it down to six total themes.

**Deductive Coding**

I used deductive coding as my second cycle of data analysis. Deductive coding is the process of generating a list of codes and categories prior to data collection (Saldaña, 2016). My theoretical framework guided my codes during the deductive coding analysis. I used Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle alongside Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) to produce codes that weaved the theories and grounded the framework. Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory provided a basis for my focus group questions regarding the participants’ experiences in their teacher practicum. Furthermore, my focus group guide (Appendix G) aligned the questions to the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET: experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. These roles guided the codes and theming in this second cycle of data analysis.

I completed one round of deductive coding following the first round of inductive coding. As I read through the transcripts, I made notes when I recognized themes regarding Bandura’s (1977) SET. By the time I reached the third focus group’s transcripts, I noticed the deductive
coding was lining up with the themes from my round of inductive coding. I was not discovering new themes, but rather categorizing the inductive themes into the roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET. After completing the final focus group analysis, I made an outline in which I placed the roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET and added the themes that fell into each category of those roles. By doing this, I could see that certain themes could be combined, and other themes were different than what I initially thought. Using both inductive and deductive coding created depth for my data analysis and allowed me to perceive themes from different vantage points.

**Ethical Stance**

The following section outlines my ethical stance for this study. First, I will define internal validity and address any threats to the internal validity of this study. I will follow this up with a description of strategies I employed to mitigate those threats. Second, I will define external validity, or generalizability, and identify any threats to the external validity of this study. Then I will discuss the strategies I used to alleviate those threats. Finally, I will offer my positionality on this study and why my position is important to understand in the context of the research.

Validity refers to the credibility of a given research study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, validity relies on conducting an ethical investigation which leads to the establishment of trustworthiness of a researcher and the credibility of their study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While there are threats to the validity of any study, there are also strategies to increase its credibility while reinforcing the trustworthiness of the researcher (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Internal Validity**

Internal validity refers to the meaning of reality or the constructs of an individual’s reality and how they view the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study is grounded in
constructivism and its internal validity is based on how early career music teachers perceive themselves and their self-efficacy. Therefore, focus group discussions, similarly to individual interviews, are a valuable tool in which to collect data (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A researcher can hear a participant’s answers in real time while observing their body language or facial expressions. Participants in the focus groups can ask each other follow-up questions, request further explanations, or even challenge each other’s statements providing more depth to their understanding and the potential to uncover more information than the initial questions asked by the researcher (Hennink, 2014; Krueger & Casey, 2015; Morgan, 1997; Reish, 2007).

There are two threats to the interval validity of this study: misinterpretation of participant answers and researcher’s bias. First, in a qualitative study you run the risk of misunderstanding your participant’s answers. Qualitative research is a fundamentally interpretive methodology, (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Rossman & Rallis, 2017), meaning sometimes the researcher’s interpretation does not match a participants’ intentions. Second, the researcher’s bias may threaten the internal validity of a study. A researcher often cares about their study and their values, interests, and identity play a role in their bias (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Fortunately, there are strategies to mitigate these threats to the internal validity of the study. Member checks and researcher’s bias are two such strategies.

**Member Checks.** I employed member checks to ensure I did not misinterpret the participants’ answers. Member checking is the process of taking your interpretated data analysis and asking your participants to verify that your interpretation is an accurate portrayal of their responses (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I deciphered my participants’ focus group discussions through the coding and analysis process, I drafted my interpretation of
their answers through Google Docs. Then, I contacted my participants, provided for them my interpretation of their answers, and asked them to verify that it adequately represented their statements.

**Researcher’s Bias.** I identified my researcher’s bias and avoided using my position to influence participants’ answers. The researcher’s position, or clarifying the researcher’s bias, is another strategy meant to increase the validity of a qualitative study (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Clarifying a researcher’s bias requires a critical self-reflection regarding a researcher’s relationship to the study that may affect the research (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When the participants begin their discussions within the focus group setting, the interviewer can become a passive spectator, allowing the conversations to embody more of the participants’ reactions than the interviewers line of questioning (Krueger & Casey, 2015). Allowing the participants to talk amongst themselves, instead of my intervening, alleviated some of my bias during the focus group discussions. Later in this section I will define my positionality in more detail.

*External Validity / Generalizability*

Once a researcher verifies the internal validity of a study, then they must consider the threats to external validity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The external validity, or generalizability, of a study is the extent to which the findings can be applied to other settings or situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Generalizability is a threat to qualitative research because the sample population is often smaller and less diverse than that of quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

**Maximum Variation.** I employed maximum variation to highlight the external validity of my research. Maximum variation is a strategy meant to increase the generalizability of the
research by selecting a broad, diverse sample pool or creating multiple settings within a study
(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This study utilized maximum variation by holding multiple focus
groups, both in-person and on zoom. Providing more options of times and locations allowed for a
larger sample population. Furthermore, this study used snowball sampling which increased the
variations of participants as the source of their recruitment expanded beyond my own
recruitment strategies.

**Researcher Positionality**

Understanding a researcher’s positionality allows for more validity and credibility in a
study because it provides the context for a study’s purpose and rationale (Merriam & Tisdell,
2016). Earlier in this chapter I referred to researcher’s position as a strategy to alleviate
researcher bias and in this section I will provide more detail of my own positionality.

I am an adjunct professor of music education at a four-year public university where I
teach courses in elementary music methods, choral music methods, foundational music
education, piano classes, and supervise student teachers. I teach first-year music education
majors, months after they graduate high school and I supervise student teachers months before
they become in-service teachers. On any given day, I witness the full range of coursework in a
music education teacher training degree program. Prior to entering this position in higher
education, I taught middle school general music and directed choirs for fifteen years at a public,
middle school, just a few miles from where I work.

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the U.S. halfway through my second semester teaching at
the university. I was away for spring break at the time. When I boarded the plane home there was
an email that the university would be closed for two weeks and by the time I landed our
buildings were closed and courses were moved online for the rest of the semester. We stayed
virtual until Fall 2021. During this time, I was caring for my own family and children, who were also learning virtually, while assisting my students. Teacher practicum came to a halt for most of our students. We scrambled to find ways to get them to graduation, even without the credit hours of teacher practicum. The following year, most of our students had virtual or hybrid placements. Those that were able to visit classrooms were limited by safety restrictions like social distancing, masking, and length of time allowed in the buildings. Choirs and bands were downsized because of the extra air flow from voices and instruments. It was a difficult time to be a student, a teacher, or a student teacher.

The Department of Education (DOE) adjusted their teacher certification requirements which allowed the spring 2020 student teachers a pathway to teacher certification, regardless of missing half of their student teaching requirements, however, we had to find ways to prove they were still learning, and we wanted to provide them with valuable resources for their future careers in education. We provided online learning resources, included them in PK-12 virtual learning when permitted, and searched for meaningful ways to complete their degree programs. Additionally, students not yet student teaching were completing coursework virtually for two and a half semesters and many of them could not observe any PK-12 classroom as usually directed. We worked to find meaningful ways to deliver content and provide virtual observations into classrooms, but we knew they were not getting the traditional, in-person experiential learning as outlined in their original course curriculum.

As the crisis mode of the COVID-19 pandemic slowed, I discovered that a lot of those same preservice music teachers who never experienced a full, in-person teacher practicum, were accepting teaching jobs. Teacher attrition was at an all-time high and these alums were available and eager to fill those vacancies. I hoped that the training they received at the front of their music
teacher training degree programs would be enough for them to face the realities of teaching, but I knew based on my own experiences that was probably not the case. For me, it was not until I conducted my student teaching that I understood and practiced classroom management, differentiated instruction, and the basic administrative duties of a teacher. These alums had little to none of that experience.

As I began having conversations with these alums, they continued to bring up their COVID-19 pandemic teacher practicum and how they felt it was impacting their ability to teach. They knew what they were missing, and they believed it was affecting their efficacy in the classroom. By researching the perceived self-efficacy of early career music teachers, I am providing myself some closure on what happened to those alums, and I am creating the potential to adapt future curriculum based on the findings of this study.

Summary

Chapter 3 provided an overview of the research design elements to be employed for this study. I outlined the methodology, participants, setting, materials, and procedures of the study. Then I examined the data collection, data analysis, and threats to validity. Finally, I presented my positionality as the researcher of this study. Chapter 4 will explore the results of the study.
Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the findings of this study. Six themes emerged across the four focus group discussions: pandemic practicum timing, ambiguous loss, vicarious classroom management, peer mentorship, communal coping, and solo teaching. These themes align with the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET): experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. In this chapter, I will discuss the findings of the study by first identifying each of Bandura’s (1977) SET roles and defining how they relate to this research. Then, I will explore the themes which emerged in the focus group discussions, as they align with each specified role.

**SET Role: Experience**

Experience is one of the most critical roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET. Individuals’ experiences can impact their perceived self-efficacy, which influences their performance outcomes and determines their success (Bandura, 1977, 1986). In this study, the participants’ experiences are identified as the experiential learning gained through their music teacher training practicum. All 16 participants attended Southeastern State University (SSU) as undergraduate music education students. They followed the same curriculum including music teaching methods coursework, weekly observations in PK-12 music classrooms, and student teaching at both elementary and secondary schools. Although they shared numerous vital elements of teacher training throughout their practicum experiences, it was clear from the focus group discussions that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted their curriculum and experiential learning.

I discovered two themes which aligned with Bandura’s (1977) SET role, experience. First, the timing of the participants’ teacher practicum experiences, in tandem with the COVID-19 pandemic, determined how they perceived their relative self-efficacy in their first-year
teaching. Second, the participants experienced ambiguous losses (Afifi et al., 2020), defined later in this section, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, in turn, contributed to lower levels of perceived self-efficacy in their first-year teaching positions. The following section will examine the themes of pandemic practicum timing and ambiguous loss as defined by the participants’ experiences.

**Pandemic Practicum Timing**

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the participants’ teacher training practicum in various ways. Different stages of their practicum were affected according to the impact or severity of the pandemic. For instance, the spring of 2020 marked the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis and caused cancellations and shutdowns across the U.S. However, by 2022 buildings were open, safety restrictions were receding, and day to day life started to resume as it did prior to the pandemic. The phases of the COVID-19 pandemic affected the participants’ practicum experiences and perceived self-efficacy as first-year teachers. There were three cohorts of individuals who participated in these focus groups – those who completed their student teaching requirements in 2020, 2021, and 2022. Each focus group included participants across these three cohorts, but the theme of perceived self-efficacy and the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic during their degree programs was discussed across all four focus group conversations. This section will explore those themes organized by the year in which the participants completed their student teaching experiences.

**2020 Student Teaching.** Four participants of this study, Seth, Phil, Aria, and Cara, conducted their student teaching in the spring semester of 2020 and completed their first field placements with eight weeks of traditional, uninterrupted, in-person student teaching experiences. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic began on the final day of their first student
teaching placements and caused the cancellation of their second student teaching placements for the remainder of the semester. During this time, almost all buildings and public spaces were closed, and individuals were asked to stay at home until the virus passed. There were no vaccines for the COVID-19 virus at this time, and the U.S. and the rest of the world tried to figure out how they would move forward and what types of safety guidelines were necessary. It was an uncertain time across the globe, and the field of education was in a bit of upheaval as they planned what to do. All four participants’ SSU classes were cancelled for two weeks while faculty and staff prepared for remote learning. During this time, their professors and supervisors continued to troubleshoot what would happen next for the participants. Thus, students who were student teaching in Spring 2020 were able to complete their first placement without disruption, as was intended by the curriculum, however their second placement was cancelled.

_Cancellation of Second Placement._ Seth, Phil, Aria, and Cara described the absence of a second student teaching placement during the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on their first-year teaching. First, they discussed the ways in which they attempted to continue their teaching practicum in modified settings and the sense of disappointment that followed. They also described the practicum requirements which were eventually waived or modified for them in the 2020 spring semester. Finally, the cohort reflected on this time, and what came after, as they discussed how fortunate they were insofar as their college curriculum and teaching practicum were only affected in the second half of their final semester, as compared to some of their peers in the focus groups.

When their second student teaching placements were cancelled, this cohort of participants was tasked by SSU to seek out whatever teaching experiences they could find to show they were attempting to continue their practicum, despite the hardships of the COVID-19 pandemic. For
example, Seth completed his elementary school student teaching experience but never had the opportunity to conduct his student teaching experience at his assigned high school. He reached out to his high school placement mentor teacher and asked about helping remotely, but recalled, “the band director let me know that the district was not comfortable letting any outsiders in and that they had nothing for me to do.” Seth then decided to reach out to his first placement teacher at the elementary school and asked if there was any student teaching work he could continue to do for them. He said, “I went back to my elementary mentor and actually helped out a little bit with grading and online stuff with the elementary schoolers.” Because of this, Seth was able to continue a few minor elements of his student teaching, although modified, to gain some experience in how to work remotely with students and colleagues.

Like Seth, Phil’s second placement was cancelled. While Phil also sought out opportunities that might help him continue his teacher practicum during the COVID-19 pandemic, he could not make up the depth of experience and self-efficacy that a second placement would have offered him. Phil finished his high school student teaching placement before his elementary school placement was cancelled, therefore, he contacted his elementary mentor teacher in hopes of assisting her classroom virtually from home. However, they were unable to make a remote student teaching situation work. He said:

I emailed the [mentor] teacher to reintroduce myself and asked if there was anything I could help with. But they weren’t sure what was going to happen from day to day so there was nothing she could give me right now. And there was nothing, really, that I would’ve been useful for as a student teacher, just with how uncertain everything was.

Phil was disappointed that he could not work with the elementary students in his second placement, but he understood safety concerns took priority.
Cara completed eight weeks of elementary music student teaching before her high school placement was cancelled. The interruption was difficult, but in the focus group conversation, she explained that she felt lucky that her experience played out the way that it did. She recalled:

My college experience was normal until the last eight weeks, so I was lucky in the sense that I did all the methods stuff [coursework and classroom observations]. I felt super prepared going into student teaching and got a normal experience for a little bit.

Cara was the only participant in her focus group conversation who completed their student teaching in 2020, and many times she sat back and listened to the others’ stories, often reiterating that she felt lucky her degree program worked out in the way that it did.

Furthermore, Aria, Phil, and Seth, in the same focus group conversation, echoed Cara’s sentiments. Aria completed her middle school student teaching experience, but never entered her elementary school placement. She shared the same sense of good fortune in that her undergraduate experience was traditional for all but the last few weeks of her final semester. She said, “Covid was not really a thing yet – so I did my entire middle school placement totally normal. It was really great because I got to teach everything normally.” Directly following Aria’s comments in the conversation, Phil added, “I actually had a similar experience to Aria. I had a high school band placement, that was my very first placement, and that’s what I teach now … that was the entire placement with no shutdown or anything.” Finally, Seth shared that he too had one traditional student teaching placement when he concurred, “yeah, pretty similar. I had elementary general [music] completely normal.”

**Modification of Requirements.** Next, the 2020 student teachers discussed the PK-12 teaching certification requirements that were modified or waived during the spring 2020 semester. The Department of Education (DOE) recognized that many student teaching
placements were cancelled and acknowledged that students like Seth, Phil, Aria, and Cara, could not find suitable replacements for their student teaching experiences. Therefore, the DOE waived their final eight weeks of student teaching, typically required to receive a PK-12 teaching certificate. The DOE left it up to the universities to decide which requirements were manageable, and SSU chose to reinstate the Student Learning Objective (SLO) which required students to write and record themselves teaching the associated lessons. Phil elaborated:

“The state waived the second half of our student teaching requirements, but my university required us to complete an SLO [student learning objective] … I wrote [the SLO] at home and taught [it] to my parents in my living room.”

Seth added, “I just kind of did what my university wanted, like the SLO making a video to nobody, that kind of thing.” Similarly, Aria discussed the SLO requirement, however, she somewhat enjoyed the process of teaching the SLO lessons to her family at home. Laughing, she said, “I still had to do an Elementary SLO that I taught to my parents and my sister at my house. I recorded it and did the pre-test and post-test, so that was kind of fun.”

This cohort of participants had their second student teaching placements cancelled, but they shared what they did in its place. The modified requirements, including the SLOs, were examples of the experiences of these participants at this time. Their student teaching was cancelled, not moved to virtual or hybrid learning, and the only work they had to produce was the SLO, which they taught to the camera or to their families at home. According to the participants, it was an insufficient replacement for student teaching, but it kept them in the teaching mind frame while they waited to see what was next.

**Something is Better than Nothing.** All four participants in this 2020 student teaching cohort acknowledged the disappointment of their unfinished student teaching experiences and
their attempts to complete modified forms of student teaching. However, they agreed that their coursework, classroom observations, and one traditional student teaching placement created a stronger foundation for them than their colleagues in the later cohorts. They listened to the stories of the participants from the other cohorts and acknowledged that their experiences left them feeling more confident than the other participants because only eight weeks of their entire undergraduate degree program was modified or cancelled. The uncertainty of education during the COVID-19 pandemic was challenging for this cohort of teachers during their first-year teaching. However, recalling back to this student teaching era allowed them to discuss how fortunate they were to have had so many traditional practicum experiences, providing them with higher levels of perceived self-efficacy as they entered the teaching profession.

2021 Student Teaching. Four participants of this study, Marion, Marie, Janet, and Stan, completed their student teaching requirements in 2021. Unlike the 2020 student teachers, these participants completed a full semester of student teaching at two different placements. During this time, the U.S. was learning how to manage life with the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccines were introduced and became available throughout this year, slowing the spread of the virus. Also, safety restrictions like masking and social distancing became standard in public spaces, including PK-12 schools and institutions of higher education. While the U.S. moved out of crisis, there was still much uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and when life would truly return to normal. As Marion, Marie, Janet, and Stan shared their student teaching experiences, it was evident that this group of participants was most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, leaving them with the lowest levels of perceived self-efficacy as they entered the teaching profession.

Ambiguous Teacher Roles. When Marion began her student teaching, she did not join her mentor teacher in-person, but rather due to district-wide safety restrictions, taught remotely
via Zoom. This was challenging for her, her students, and her mentor teacher as some students were logging into Zoom from home while others were in school but separated from one another. Her mentor teacher had to assess her teaching skills in a new, online environment. Marion discussed her isolation from the mentor teachers, students, and school community when she said:

> It altered my student teaching experience pretty significantly … all my work was done virtually, which means I had absolutely no exposure to the professional or social settings … the way the buildings run, the way staff interact with students, how staff interact with each other, with administration, just the whole ecosystem of a school and access to that culture in a meaningful way.

Marion could work with students in some way, but it was the loss of school culture and in-person experiences that impacted her perceived self-efficacy. Student teachers often need to see the context in which students learn to better understand administrative responsibilities, student demographics, and classroom management. Without that in-person experience, Marion entered her first year of teaching unsure of her capabilities.

Marie and Janet both completed their student teaching experiences in hybrid classrooms, but, unlike Marion, were able to attend their schools in-person. Due to the limited availability of student teaching placements, Marie conducted her student teaching at two middle schools, instead of a middle school and elementary school. She witnessed the transition of some safety restrictions as school districts began to ease their rules. She recalled, “at my first placement, middle school band, the biggest class I had was nine students in-person, because it was still hybrid. So, I had to teach both online and in-person, everyone was six-feet apart, and wearing masks.” As she began her second placement, Marie saw the transition of loosening safety restrictions and recalled, “middle school choir, my second placement, that’s when they decided
to go 85% back in-person…so then I did have 30 students in a class.”

Similarly, Janet discussed the transition between her placements as some safety restrictions were lifted. She said:

At my high school choir placement, teachers were required to go in-person, but most of the students were virtual, but some in-person. It was kind of weird. But by the time I got to the kindergarten placement, most of the classes were in-person, with one class still virtual.

Both Marie and Janet observed the transition from smaller class sizes, six-feet social distancing, and masking to larger class sizes and three-feet social distancing. While this expanded what they could observe and teach, it also added some ambiguity to their roles as teachers. They observed varying classroom management techniques and curricular adaptions, leaving them to question what their own classrooms might look like during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. This left them confused and uncertain of how all these experiences would apply to them as future teachers. The role of the teacher felt ambiguous during this time.

Stan completed his student teaching in-person, without a hybrid classroom. However, like the other participants of this cohort, safety restrictions and classroom adaptations were in place. Stan felt he was fortunate to student teach in-person, but he recognized it was a much different atmosphere than what he learned from his coursework, and it continued to change throughout his placements. He recalled:

[The students] had to be six feet apart, they had to wear masks, and they were not allowed to play instruments. My elementary placement was [the students] sitting at desks, singing, and just watching lessons that we taught, but they couldn’t actually play or interact with each other.
The classrooms Stan observed were using curricular adaptations to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, but they differed from what he learned in his coursework, creating the same feeling of uncertainty and ambiguity as Janet and Marie. He left his student teaching placements confused about how he would teach on his own without practice in a traditional classroom.

**Modified Coursework and Cancelled Observations.** The participants in the 2021 student teaching cohort were unique in that not only did the COVID-19 pandemic alter their student teaching experiences, but it also altered their prior coursework and observations, in some cases even more than their student teaching placements. All participants attended SSU and were required to take both elementary and secondary music methods courses while observing elementary and secondary classrooms on a weekly basis. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted this cohort of students by moving their music methods courses online and cancelling their weekly classroom observations. Stan recalled, “my methods classes right before student teaching were all on Zoom. I had no in-person observations. I never got to see a classroom in a secondary setting or in an elementary setting before I [completed my student teaching].” Marie, in the same conversation as Stan, added, “yeah, it was just me filming videos and submitting playing tests.”

Janet and Marion had the same experiences as Stan and Marie, and they elaborated on how the experiences made them feel as they entered student teaching. Janet said, “when I had my first methods class the pandemic hit, and we never met again. We did very little, and I really did not feel equipped to teach general music, but that was where I [conducted my student teaching].” Marion felt that her coursework was not updated to the current situation, especially since she ended up student teaching virtually. She said:

I was being taught to be prepared for going into an actual classroom with physical instruments and supplies in front of me. So, the situation...had a significant impact on my
ability to adapt quickly in the classroom and adapt my knowledge and approach smoothly, just because I didn’t have to do that with any professional teaching [up to that point].

Marion and Janet recognized that nobody was to blame for the situation, as no one could have predicted the outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, but it was still a challenging position for them. They felt they were teaching across two different worlds depending on the semester. As this cohort of participants shared their experiences it became increasingly clear that the upheaval of their practicum, like virtual coursework, cancelled observations, and modified student teaching experiences affected their perceived self-efficacy more than the other participants. They knew they were experiencing modified practicum, but they did not have a traditional practicum for which to compare, so it left them with feelings of ambiguity, uncertainty, and frustration.

**2022 Student Teaching.** Eight participants of this study completed their student teaching in 2022. This included Sheldon, Eugene, Joelle, Avery, Rob, Erin, Elizabeth, and Champ. In 2022, the U.S. moved further out of the crisis mode of the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety restrictions continued to recede until there were no longer masking and distancing requirements in most public spaces, except for hospitals and medical facilities. The COVID-19 virus was still at large, but the U.S. and public education were finding ways to coexist with the pandemic. The participants of this 2022 student teaching cohort completed full semesters of student teaching. Furthermore, all eight participants were student teaching in-person with only a few limited scenarios of hybrid teaching. During their student teaching experiences, these participants noted that most safety restrictions were starting to recede, and many schools began to return to more traditional classroom settings.
**Pre-Student Teaching.** While the participants of the 2022 student teaching cohort shared the challenges of student teaching during this time, all eight of them agreed that it was the semesters prior to student teaching that lowered their perceived self-efficacy as they entered their student teaching experiences. All participants attended SSU where music education degree students engaged in elementary and secondary music methods coursework and weekly observations. The 2022 student teachers had their classroom observations and music teaching methods coursework altered leaving them to feel unprepared for some aspects of student teaching and eventually in-service teaching. Collectively, these participants felt that their undergraduate experience was so modified during 2020 and 2021, the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, that it affected their preparation and perceived self-efficacy as they entered student teaching and the teaching profession, post-pandemic.

Four participants in this cohort, Sheldon, Eugene, Joelle, and Avery, attended the same focus group conversation and came to the consensus that their loss of weekly observations at an elementary school negatively impacted their preparation for student teaching in an elementary classroom. Sheldon recalled:

> When I was in methods one, which is heavily elementary-based, it was all remote and observations were altered in a very, very significant way, and did not have me in a classroom at all. It did not really prepare me for student teaching at all.

Eugene echoed an experience like Sheldon’s, “with the methods courses being so heavily online, it kind of gave us all whiplash when we got there…it was far different than anything we’ve ever done.” Joelle agreed, “I was going to say what Eugene and Sheldon said, that not being in an elementary classroom for our pre-student teaching classes did not help.” Moreover, Avery was
looking forward to her elementary student teaching placement, but her inexperience made her nervous. She said:

I was really excited to do it. I was also nervous and had a little extra anxiety because I never got the chance to actually work with [elementary] students or see students in that setting. I never got to see the trial and error.

Trial and error are important components of teacher practicum and overall experiential learning. Whether watching a mentor teacher learn through trial and error, or learning on your own, it is what allows an individual to reflect and assess a situation before trying again.

**Alternative Experiences.** Two participants, Rob and Erin, sought out alternative teaching experiences, when possible, but they both remarked how it was not the same as observing a traditional classroom. Erin said, “my methods class was all virtual, so I didn’t have any in-person field experiences, in a traditional sense. I was able to do [other] experiences, which was awesome, but it wasn’t the traditional classroom setting.” Rob, in the same conversation as Erin, agreed:

Covid kind of prevented me from getting the same field experiences that others in the program before or after me would’ve gotten. I got one single observation the semester before I [completed my student teaching] but aside from that no field experiences aside from marching band teaching experience, which is not exactly the same as a high school [classroom] setting.

Rob and Erin acknowledged the difference in educational settings and although they were happy to have any teaching experience, they agreed that seeing a teacher in a traditional classroom would have increased their confidence and perceived self-efficacy as they entered their student teaching experiences.
Summary of Pandemic Practicum Timing. The COVID-19 pandemic affected each of the preceding three cohorts differently, therefore impacting their perceived self-efficacy at varying levels. The start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 impacted those student teachers by abruptly ending their student teaching experiences. However, three years later they discussed how fortunate they were to have had as much traditional learning as they did prior to the pandemic. The participants who conducted their student teaching in 2021 experienced ambiguity and a different kind of loss as the year leading up to student teaching was adapted for the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, their student teaching occurred both in and out of the crisis era of the pandemic. The participants who completed their student teaching in 2022 felt low levels of perceived self-efficacy as they entered their student teaching experiences, but since the COVID-19 pandemic moved out of crisis by that time, they had relatively normal experiences compared to the two years prior. Some of these educational losses were more concrete than others. The next section of this chapter will explore the theme of ambiguous loss as discussed amongst the study participants.

Ambiguous Loss

Ambiguous loss refers to a loss without closure, leaving an individual to feel unclear about the situation and confused about the loss itself (Boss, 1999). For example, when a loved one passes away, their family can feel the concrete loss of their physical presence. Alternatively, when a family member is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, their physical presence still exists, but they no longer seem like the same person. This may leave their loved ones feeling confused about how to identify and manage their grief.

Ambiguous loss can be a complicated issue since the individual may not understand the nature of their loss, which, in some cases, can be more challenging than the loss itself (Boss,
During the COVID-19 pandemic, many individuals experienced concrete losses like losing a loved one, however, individuals also experienced undefined losses which complicated their grieving processes and left them in states of hopelessness (Scheinfeld et al., 2022). In education, these types of losses may include students missing graduation, teachers balancing work and home life, and the sudden loss of in-person interactions. This section will explore the participants’ ambiguous losses in their teacher practicum and how that impacted their perceived self-efficacy.

**Ambiguous Loss and Teacher Practicum**

The participants discussed their practicum losses and how it impacted their first year of in-service teaching. In many cases, they had a difficult time defining the loss because they were navigating a world that existed before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven of the study participants, Stan, Marie, Marion, Phil, Aria, Janet, and Rob, discussed teaching in this environment and the ambiguous losses that occurred. They often used phrases of confusion or uncertainty when describing their practicum and first-year teaching. Therefore, it was clear that their losses were somewhat undefined, and ambiguous.

Stan and Marie attended the same focus group conversation. They came to the consensus that their teacher practicum, which included virtual coursework, cancelled observations, and altered student teaching, left them feeling unsure, unprepared, and nervous for their first-year teaching. They did not know how to prepare for the changing landscape of teaching in 2021. At the start of his first year of in-service teaching, Stan recalled:

This is what they don’t prepare you for. But then again, half of it is like covid [student] behaviors. But then again, is it? I don’t know, I don’t know … I think my first year just felt typical to me but, then again, I don’t know anything pre-covid to really change that
... Sometimes I’m like, I don’t know what to do with this child right now. I have no idea how to teach this lesson with Orff instruments because I had no Orff experience.

Stan reported lower self-efficacy in his first year of teaching and credited his inexperience for his lack of teaching preparation.

In the same conversation, Marie agreed with Stan and recalled that the expectations for teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic were unclear. Regarding her first year of in-service teaching, she said:

I didn’t understand what the goals were, so I just had no idea what I was walking into. I just had no idea what to expect so it was just very intense. For the first time I just had no idea what to do...It was very intense.

Marie, too, felt unprepared for her first year of teaching, because the expectations were unclear. Her feelings were intensified as a new teacher because she did not know the difference between what she should already know and what was new for everyone because of the pandemic. This topic of conversation evoked in Stan and Marie a sense of confusion and low confidence. They emphatically agreed with each other and often threw their hands up in frustration as they commiserated together. Marie concluded this part of the conversation when she said, “I knew what I had to teach, but I didn’t know how to teach it.”

Next, Marion completed her student teaching experience virtually, from home, while her mentor teacher and some of the students were in-person. While in a different focus group conversation from Marie and Stan, she echoed their frustrations when she said:

I was teaching students that were in-person, but I was not there, which was an added layer of difficulty. It was a challenge all around. How do you get these kids to learn a technique that you can’t physically show them outside of being in a little box...It
definitely challenged all the methodologies I had been taught up to that point because no one was teaching me how to be prepared for a pandemic. Marion felt strongly that the loss of a traditional student teaching experience negatively impacted her perceived self-efficacy. She added, “student teaching during the pandemic took away a sense of autonomy [that] I think I would’ve had as I stepped into the role of educator, if I had done it in a traditional setting.”

Phil completed his traditional coursework, weekly observations, and half of his student teaching experience, however, he lost his elementary general music student teaching placement, which happened to be where he landed his first job. Recalling his first-year teaching, he said:

I didn’t know what the reality would be because I had no experience teaching elementary general music. The job that I got was for the student teaching placement that I did not have [in 2020] – I didn’t really have experience teaching, I wasn’t comfortable teaching it, and I was with an age group I wasn’t super familiar with or comfortable teaching; all of those things, in addition to teaching online.

Even though Phil felt fortunate to have the traditional experiences he did, the changes that occurred from the COVID-19 pandemic impacted his perceived self-efficacy and confidence entering his first-year teaching.

Aria shared Phil’s sentiments of feeling unprepared not only because of the loss of a student teaching placement but also because their first year of teaching was greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. About her first-year teaching, she said:

I was coming home every day and creating this new stuff every single day, figuring out how to grade, figuring out what I wanted to grade, figuring out what I was even teaching…Nothing from my [one traditional] student teaching [placement] helped me
because we were all doing something new.

As fortunate as she was to have had a mostly traditional degree program and practicum, it did not prepare her for her first year of in-service teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Finally, in some cases, the participants felt so much loss that they questioned whether they wanted to continue teaching. Janet shared, “I almost left teaching after my first year. One of the reasons I struggled so much my first year had to do with my [altered] student teaching placement.” Similarly, Marion felt she did not have enough practice teaching to decide if it was right for her. She said, “I have experienced a sustained praxis shock because we haven’t had a truly authentic opportunity to figure out if this is actually what we want to do.” Marie also questioned her strengths as a teacher when she said, “I remember my first year I thought I was doing awful. I was like, I’m going to get fired.” Finally, Rob wrapped up the conversation of ambiguous loss when he said, “I feel like my student teaching was preparing me for an era of teaching that has kind of passed…I feel like I was prepared for yesterday rather than the situation I was walking into at the moment.”

Ambiguous loss is the most relevant term to describe the losses felt by the participants of this study. They had a difficult time explaining what they lost, because sometimes they were unsure of it themselves. The expectations for teaching and learning were unclear throughout the years of the COVID-19 pandemic. As student teachers, they took whatever teaching experience they could get and tried to envision what it may look like when they begin teaching on their own. Then, as new teachers, they had to delineate which challenges were caused by the pandemic, and which challenges were typical first-year teaching issues. Looking back, many of the participants still struggled to put into words what they lost and how it further impacted them a few years into the teaching profession.
SET Role: Vicarious Experience

Vicarious experience, the second role of Bandura’s (1977) SET, refers to an individual’s watching or listening to another person’s stories and experiences while relating them to their own life. Traditionally, preservice teachers utilize vicarious experience in tandem with experiential, hands-on learning as they move from vicarious experience to physical experience. Specifically, preservice music teachers learn from their mentor teachers’ stories and experiences while also observing them teach students in the classroom. Then, they put into practice what they learned from the vicarious experience.

Vicarious Classroom Management

According to the participants, traditional classroom management instruction, typically engaged through experiential learning, had become a vicarious experience. It was an experience spoken through their mentor teachers, but not always enacted in the classroom. Classroom management is the way in which a teacher organizes their approach to engaging students’ attention, addressing behavior, and managing the overall classroom atmosphere. According to the participants, their mentor teachers had to adapt their classroom management due to the COVID-19 pandemic safety restrictions in place. Therefore, the participants learned traditional classroom management techniques vicariously through their mentor teachers’ stories, while witnessing adapted techniques in the classroom.

As the participants in this study spoke about their overall teacher practicum experiences, they referenced the adaptations in the classroom structure and classroom management due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes included smaller class sizes, six-feet social distancing, masking, and overall teaching practice. While the participants learned classroom management techniques in this adapted setting, they found that it left them inexperienced for the traditional
classroom setup and typical student behaviors they later observed in their first-year teaching. This section will explore the theme of vicarious classroom management and how that impacted the participants’ perceived self-efficacy in their first-year teaching.

Seven participants discussed their lack of traditional classroom management practice while COVID-19 safety restrictions were in place. When they visited classrooms for observations and student teaching, the students were distanced in their seats and spaced around the room. For most of this time, students and teachers were wearing masks. These safety restrictions were in place to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus, but they also unintentionally helped teachers manage student behaviors at the time without much additional effort. Providing space between students made it more difficult for them to physically interact and the masks stifled the volume of their conversations. However, once restrictions were lifted, students were closer together and began to physically engage more with each other, all while increasing the volume of their conversations.

**Pandemic Transitions.** Once the participants began in-service teaching in their own classrooms, post-safety restrictions, they recognized the inconsistencies and discussed how they found themselves playing “catch-up” to recall traditional classroom management techniques learned through their coursework and expressed through mentor teachers’ stories, but not explicitly implemented in their practicum. Seven participants, Marie, Stan, Elizabeth, Avery, Erin, Eugene, and Joelle all shared stories which compared classroom management while they were student teaching to classroom management in their current teaching positions. They expressed how different it was, and how their vicarious classroom management practice did not adequately prepare them for physical classroom management.

Marie discussed her student teaching experience with smaller class sizes, including only a
fraction of the students that were spread out across the room. She shared:

There was no [behavioral] classroom management because there were only a couple of kids in the room. I remember my [mentor teacher] telling me, ‘this is not how it is at all; this is completely different. This is all we can do right now.’ And I had no classroom management experience before that either.

The unintentional, classroom management strategy was fewer students and distancing. There was less urgency for traditional behavior management techniques.

Stan echoed Marie’s vicarious classroom management stories when he also spoke of his student teaching experience. COVID-19 pandemic safety restrictions were in place and his mentor teacher described traditional classroom management strategies while he experienced an adapted version. He continued the conversation when he described the difficulties in transitioning students out of the safety restrictions and back to the more traditional classroom setting as he began his first year of in-service teaching. He recalled:

In student teaching, the kids weren’t able to get up and move around and they weren’t really allowed to play the instruments. And now I’m teaching in an elementary classroom where everything that I pretty much do is getting kids up and moving and interacting. So, it was like I had to really figure out and find what works in terms of movement, and especially classroom management.

The practice of trial and error in classroom management, which often begins during student teaching, now started in the first-year classroom without guidance from a mentor teacher.

Additionally, Elizabeth discussed her version of vicarious classroom management and noted that not only did she have to adjust to the proximity of students as they transitioned into the more traditional classroom setting, but the students also had to adjust to the proximity of each
other. Elizabeth said:

> It was just strange going from my elementary placement where things were so spaced out … and now that things have gone back to normal and the students are close together, I’m not really sure how to deal with the proximity because kids are just bumping all over each other.

Elizabeth expressed that while managing the classroom was challenging for her, it was also a challenge for the students to adjust to the post-pandemic classroom atmosphere.

**Pandemic Behaviors.** Furthermore, while discussing classroom management, the participants questioned whether the students’ behavior reflected their vicarious classroom management experience or whether the students’ actions were developed in response to the post-COVID-19 pandemic environment. Either way, they associated their lack of traditional classroom management experience with the challenges of managing a classroom during this time. For instance, in Avery’s first week of teaching elementary music in her own classroom, she had a student get up and proceed to play every instrument in the room without mind to instructions or reminders to sit quietly. Avery did not know how to handle the situation, especially when the student did not respond to her requests to join the class and to stop playing the instruments. She said, “I did not have a lot of opportunities to see [different] behaviors and what teachers do in certain situations.” She called her principal for help, and he was able to assist her in this moment, but she felt unresolved in knowing the best practice for this type of situation. She was not sure what to do the next time it inevitably happened again.

Erin and Eugene continued the discussion of vicarious classroom management and student behaviors when they recalled similar situations as Elizabeth and Avery. Erin’s mentor teacher did his best to explain to her how their current situation was not typical. However, by the
end of her student teaching experience Erin watched him transition students back into the traditional classroom setting as some safety restrictions were lifted. She recalled:

[My mentor teacher] was trying to get used to helping the students coexist with each other again, in-person, and not separated. Just watching him get that classroom management back to normal, or what used to be normal, was really interesting. A lot of the students really struggled with keeping their hands to themselves and interacting in a positive way with other students.

Furthermore, Eugene also reminisced back to his first few months of teaching and how he handled some of the more challenging student behaviors. He recalled:

The school district where I first taught definitely had ongoing behavioral issues. It was a big theme of their year … so it’s up to us to [tell them], ‘hey, that’s actually not a good thing for you to do … you just can’t do that to people.’

While Eugene told this story it was clear that he believed the student behaviors were uniquely challenging, but he was also unsure how best to approach them.

Finally, Joelle’s transition from student teaching to teaching was interesting in that she now teaches at the school where she conducted her student teaching. So, in the spring semester of 2022 she was student teaching and a few months later she was there teaching in her own classroom. During the spring of 2022, the last of the COVID-19 safety restrictions were lifted. Joelle watched her mentor teacher handle the change and then she continued the transition as she began teaching in the fall. She witnessed the same students in two different situations and agreed that they had a difficult time adapting to this new environment. She was unsure which classroom management steps to take when she recalled:

Even though it was the same school and the same students, they were all in-person and
not wearing masks. They didn’t know how to be close together and it was very different.

There wasn’t an expectation I could have built in my head.

Joelle’s situation may have been one of the most controlled scenarios in this study since it was the same school with the same students. Regardless, she witnessed similar outcomes as the other participants.

Learning how to manage a classroom is both a vicarious and physical experience. When the participants lost their experiential learning and hands-on approaches to classroom management, they lost some of their confidence and perceived self-efficacy. Much of their classroom management experience was learned on the job. Additionally, it changed throughout the years following the COVID-19 pandemic due to fluctuating safety restrictions and inconsistent student behaviors. As the participants began their own teaching careers, they noted the effect of vicarious classroom management on their perceived self-efficacy.

**SET Role: Social Persuasion**

Social persuasion is the third role of Bandura’s (1977) SET discussed in this chapter. Social persuasion refers to one person’s influence on another, impacting their perceived self-efficacy. For example, if a student is given positive encouragement while completing an exam, then that support may increase their perceived self-efficacy leading to more accurate answers and a higher grade. Whereas, if a student is given negative feedback, that may lower their perceived self-efficacy leading to more wrong answers and a lower grade. Individuals’ words and opinions can affect our self-efficacy and the ability to carry out tasks successfully.

In this study, the role of social persuasion is identified specifically through two themes: peer mentorship and communal coping. The first theme, peer mentorship, refers to the participants’ seeking out guidance from colleagues in their school community. While they found
it difficult to ask for help, the participants recalled increased levels of perceived self-efficacy once they reached out to their colleagues and began those conversations. The second theme, communal coping, is when individuals go through a challenging time and manage their emotions by having conversations and working together (Afifi et al., 2020). As the participants entered their first year of in-service teaching during or directly after the COVID-19 pandemic, they discovered their colleagues and students were facing similar challenges like online learning, hybrid classrooms, and classroom management. By opening the line of communication to both their colleagues and students, they found reassurance that they were not alone in their struggles.

This section will examine two themes within the role of social persuasion: peer mentorship and communal coping.

**Peer Mentorship**

Peer mentorship was not automatic for the participants. Many of them discussed the struggle to initiate conversations or ask for help. Once they mustered the courage to reach out to their colleagues, most of them were met with understanding and mentorship, and a sense of solidarity and reassurance that they were not alone in their post-pandemic struggles. This social persuasion, in the form of reassurance, made them feel less isolated and more confident in their own abilities, therefore increasing their perceived self-efficacy. Four participants, Marie, Seth, Cara, and Stan shared positive stories of peer mentorship and its benefits in their first year of in-service teaching. Alternatively, two of the participants, Marion and Erin, expressed the challenges they faced without positive peer mentorship. Finally, one participant, Janet, shared two different stories that explored one instance of peer mentorship, and one without it. This section will explore peer mentorship through asking for help, a sense of belonging, and the lack of peer mentorship.
Asking for Help. Marie discussed the transition from university to teaching and how sometimes it feels like you are in a bubble for four years and then suddenly on your own. Despite being an independent person who would have preferred to figure it out, herself, she discovered she needed help. She recalled:

As hard as it was, it forced me to ask for help. I was asking for help from other general music teachers and other primary grade teachers … one of the first-grade teachers kind of took me under her wing and she taught me everything I know about classroom management now. As bad as it was, it taught me how to ask for help and that I don’t have to do everything by myself, because I’m stubbornly independent.

Marie’s openness to seek out help led her to a colleague who worked with her to develop the classroom management skills she desired. She added, “the classroom management, that took a lot of asking for help [and] trying different things, because I just didn’t get that in student teaching and that’s kind of just a huge part of teaching too.”

Next, Seth shared his hesitation to ask his colleagues for help. However, once he did, he was relieved to learn they were happy to provide support. He shared:

I think at the beginning I was scared to ask questions and to bother people about things.

But I think I’ve grown out of that for sure … I feel lucky to be in a super supportive district where we have multiple mentor teachers. I’m always either on the phone or talking in-person with people like, ‘hey, how have you gone about this? How would you do this?’ … I’m not afraid to ask for the help and advice, and people are always super willing to give it, which is super cool.

Seth, like Marie, was fortunate to teach in a supportive atmosphere. But even in those environments, they initially struggled to find the courage to ask for help.
Furthermore, it took Cara a little longer than Marie and Seth to finally reach out for help, but she was glad she did. After a year of teaching on her own in the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, she decided she needed to seek out guidance from her colleagues. She recalled:

I remember sitting down with some mentors of mine, in my second year of teaching, and I was like, ‘I really don’t know how I’m doing because it’s hard to see the results when nothing’s normal’ … it was more about just kind of building culture than anything else in those first couple years.

Because of the safety restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers had to distance from each other, wear masks, and even eat lunch alone. Participants, like Cara, had to find ways to reach out for help in an environment where they could not organically pass each other in the halls or sit down for lunch. It took some extra effort to explicitly ask for help in this kind of environment.

Sense of Belonging. Stan shared how fortunate he was to find a sense of belonging and community among the physical education (PE) and art teachers to whom he felt comfortable asking questions. He said:

I am very much the person who will observe and see what you do and just implement it. I’m not always the “go out and ask when I don’t know” type. I try and figure it out myself first. That’s something that I’ve gotten a lot better at - behavior [management] wise. I know I can still do better because I’m like, ‘I can fix it myself, I can do this.’ But lately, there’s been times where I just need to pick up the phone and call the PE teacher and be like, ‘I have no idea what to do with this child right now.’”

By asking for help, Stan opened the line of communication between himself and the PE teacher providing him a resource for managing challenging, student behaviors. He added:
All the PE teachers have been really helpful with my self-efficacy in terms of classroom management and feeling like I’m part of the school … and that has helped a lot with classroom management, in some ways, that I’ve always been really close with the PE and art teachers in my school. I’ve been able to say, ‘I am having issues with this,’ or ‘I don’t feel confident I’m doing this right’ and they’ve really been helpful.

Stan explicitly connected peer mentorship to his perceived self-efficacy. He believed that his relationship with the PE and art teachers helped him feel like a part of the school community, therefore leading to a higher level of perceived self-efficacy.

**Lack of Peer Mentorship.** Alternatively, Marion and Erin shared stories where they lacked peer mentorship or peer support in their first-year teaching positions. Within the same focus group conversation, Marion and Erin discussed stories of working with colleagues who do not always see eye-to-eye. First, Marion shared:

> Interacting with professionals who practice using a different set of values than you can be quite frustrating because it creates barriers between your students and their own success in any way possible. Learning how to work with people who have values that are in direct opposition, in some cases, to what you feel is your core value, or that are just prioritizing things differently than you, can be quite frustrating.

As Marion concluded her story, Erin nodded in agreement, when she added:

> The frustrating thing is two of my older coworkers, and the way that they’ve been viewing some of my students - my school district is very polarizing … they speak to me about my students and they kind of look down upon those students. They say that they shouldn’t deserve to go to [performance festivals] and be in advanced orchestra and play violin one. And to me that is very frustrating and upsetting.
Both Marion and Erin discussed how their experiences without positive peer mentorship were equally challenging and isolating.

Finally, Janet taught at two different school districts and, essentially, had two first-year teaching experiences. With that, she experienced two different school communities and offered two different examples of peer mentorship: (1) an example in which she did not feel supported by her peers and (2) an example of feeling supported and included within the school community. At her first position, Janet was teaching instrumental ensembles, which she said was out of her comfort zone. Furthermore, there were challenging student behaviors with which she was unfamiliar managing. She recalled, “I had a really, really hard time adjusting … I was the only music teacher in the building … so, I didn’t have anyone else that really understood what I was doing.” After she resigned from that school, she started in her current position and spoke more positively of the peer mentorship experience when she said:

I don’t feel that way now. I have music teachers in my school, and I feel very heard … I was lucky enough to have a co-teaching situation that acted like student teaching for me. I was able to collaborate and work [and] learn a lot about what I need to do to make a classroom successful. And I’m thankful for that.

While Janet also indicated other reasons for her departure from her first teaching position, she referenced the isolation and lack of peer mentorship as one of those reasons.

Peer mentorship became a coping mechanism for many of the participants as they entered their first year in the teaching profession. Although they were hesitant at first, they recognized the need to ask for help. Thirteen of the participants were met with support and guidance which improved their confidence and self-efficacy. The three participants who lacked positive peer mentorship did not reap the same benefits. The participants’ stories of peer mentorship signal its
importance in early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy.

Communal Coping

During the COVID-19 pandemic, communal coping became a topic of conversation in workplaces, friend circles, and among families. Communal coping occurs when people find reprieve talking amongst themselves and sharing their struggles during a difficult time (Afifi et al., 2020). Many of the participants of this study also shared moments of communal coping in their first-year teaching classrooms as they tried to manage their students’ challenges while addressing their own needs. Four participants, Stan, Marie, Champ, and Sheldon shared stories of communal coping between themselves and their students. Two of those participants, Stan and Marie, referred to their instances of communal coping as “community circles”.

Stan observed a form of communal coping during his student teaching when his mentor teacher, who was suffering from personal issues, tried to help her students too. She allowed them insight into her situation so that they understood her story. From that experience, he learned:

Sometimes you just need to have one of those community circles. You need to sit down…and give them the real person that you are and just say, ‘I’m not having a good day, so we’re not going to get a lot done because I can’t do what I need to give you in this lesson that I’m supposed to. But I can still give you some meaningful advice. We can still have a good chat. We can still build a good community within the classroom.

Stan referred to the moment his mentor teacher opened the line of communication as a “community circle”, which became a form of social persuasion.

Marie, in the same conversation as Stan, shared a story of two students fighting in the classroom. Once she was able to stop the fight and remove the students from the room, she looked around and a few of the other students were now upset. She found it difficult to teach as
though nothing happened. She said, “I just had a community circle. I was like, ‘we’re just going to talk about what just happened and how we can make sure that does not happen again.’ So, I started this community circle … it was a really good conversation.” She continued the community circles on days when there were issues that needed addressed or if the class was having an overall challenging day.

Champ, like Stan, learned tools for communal coping from her student teaching mentor teacher. Her school community struggled with addiction and familial issues, so many of the students viewed their school activities as a break from some of that difficult reality. Therefore, she said, “we had an open-door policy where the kids were there during our preps, during our lunches, having those conversations. It’s teaching high school … it’s just a lot of emotional dumping.” Her mentor teacher used to give the kids candy and Champ later utilized this within her own community circles. She said, “I was teaching high school choir and had a whole container of therapy chocolate … for the kids.”

Finally, even the youngest of students found ways to connect with their teachers through a form of artistic communal coping. Sheldon taught Pre-K music classes at his first-year teaching position. One day, a student raised their hand and said they noticed he did not have any pictures on his filing cabinets behind his desk. They thought that might make Sheldon sad. That student drew him a picture to put on his filing cabinet behind his desk. Sheldon hung it up, and the next day a few more students brought him hand-drawn pictures. Each day, it kept happening until his entire filing cabinet was filled with preschool artwork. He said, “it was really nice … by the end of the year my entire filing cabinet was filled with all these drawings … that was one of those moments where it’s like, wow, we really do mean a lot.” For Sheldon, receiving the drawings was a non-verbal form of social persuasion that increased his perceived self-efficacy. He took
their thoughtful drawings as a sign that he was succeeding as their teacher.

**SET Role: Physiological Feedback**

Physiological feedback, the final role of Bandura’s (1977) SET discussed in this chapter, indicates that the emotional, physical, and psychological well-being of an individual can support or hinder their perceived self-efficacy when completing a task. Meaning, the way an individual feels affects their perceived self-efficacy. If one feels confident performing a certain job, then they interpret that confidence as high self-efficacy and are more likely to succeed. However, if one feels anxious or nervous, then they construe that feeling of anxiety as low self-efficacy. In this instance, they might interpret those feelings as a sign they will not succeed in a task. These physiological elements, how a person thinks and feels, can affect their success in each situation.

The participants discussed their most emotionally intense moments as teachers and student teachers. Most of their stories started with an instance of student teaching on their own, without the support of their mentor teacher. During student teaching, the mentor teacher assesses when a student teacher needs to begin teaching lessons on their own, to understand what it feels like to teach solo. Of all the stories the participants shared, it was this first instance of solo teaching that invoked the most emotional and psychological responses. This section will examine the theme of these participants solo teaching and how their physiological feedback impacted their perceived self-efficacy.

**Solo Teaching**

Student teaching experiences often begin with the student teacher observing the mentor teacher, followed by increasingly incorporating more of their own teaching into the classroom. Regardless of how gradually a mentor teacher includes a student teacher in the lessons, there is always that moment when an individual must make real-time decisions without the confirmation
of their mentor teacher. All the participants of this study had emotionally charged instances of teaching on their own, but their circumstances and physiological feedback differed. This section will explore the participants’ physiological feedback organized by three groups: typical solo student teaching, emergency solo student teaching, and first-year teaching.

**Typical Solo Student Teaching.** Five participants shared stories of typical solo teaching and the intensity they felt at the time. Three of those participants, Elizabeth, Cara, and Erin, experienced feelings of uncertainty and questioned their self-efficacy following typical solo student teaching moments. The other two participants, Phil and Sheldon, discussed an increase of self-efficacy after their typical solo student teaching, despite addressing the same uncertainty at first. All five participants acknowledged that their situations were standard, planned, and prepared, however, they still experienced intense moments of uncertainty and nervousness.

Elizabeth discussed how her mentor teacher was heavily involved in a regional conference and knew he would be absent for a few days in a row. Leading up to this, he provided Elizabeth moments to teach and work with students earlier in her student teaching experience than usual, so that she would feel confident teaching while he was absent. He intentionally would sit away from the class and give her space to work with students so that she would understand what that feels like and find ways to respond. However, Elizabeth never quite knew if her teaching was adequate for student learning standards. She recalled:

> It was a really intense feeling. Am I really giving [the students] a worthwhile experience? It felt very much like I had a lot of the responsibility, within a week. I think in the long run it [maybe] helped me out, but it was very overwhelming.

Looking back on the experience, Elizabeth understood it was part of the student teaching process and probably helped her feel more confident the next time she taught, but in the moment, it left
her feeling uncertain about her success.

Similarly, Cara recalled that her university supervisor came in for a formal observation during an autistic support music class. As the lesson progressed, the student reactions and behaviors began to escalate, and their actions became more than she could handle. Cara’s mentor teacher had to step in to finish the lesson as an attempt to deescalate the students’ actions and get the lesson back on track. About that moment Cara said, “that was definitely emotionally intense when it comes to self-efficacy. She had to take over because I could not manage this group on my own.” Cara said the observation left her feeling like she was not ready to teach, and it made her question her classroom management skills.

Erin shared that she, too, had a challenging class of students for her formal observation with her university supervisor. However, unlike Cara’s story, her mentor teacher did not take over the lesson. As Erin began teaching, the students started acting out by speaking out of turn and physically engaging with each other. She recalled, “my mentor teacher [did not] swoop in and redirect the students with those behaviors … What would I do if I was the only person in the room and this turned into a worse situation?” Erin acknowledged her apprehension when tasked with being the adult in charge. This moment helped her realize it was something she needed to address and work on before teaching in her own classroom.

Alternatively, Phil and Sheldon felt intense, but positive, physiological feedback when they experienced typical solo teaching moments. For example, Phil shared that his mentor teacher was absent a few times, so he, accompanied by a substitute teacher, oversaw teaching the lessons and overall classroom management. Phil said, “I looked at the sub plans [from the mentor teacher] and they said, ‘let the student teacher teach.’ On paper, it’s a very intense feeling. I’m the student teacher and I’m the most qualified person to be teaching music.” Phil
recognized the intensity of the situation and the responsibility he held in the classroom but, ultimately, it was a positive experience. He shared, “it was a great opportunity, I got to just do what I do.”

Like Phil, Sheldon shared a moment of positive physiological feedback when he worked one-on-one with a student on a solo student teaching day. The student was working on a difficult music project when he came to the music room for assistance. It was a music assignment for something outside of school, but Sheldon’s mentor teacher helped the student during his free class periods. Since his mentor teacher was unavailable, Sheldon stepped in to assist the student as best he could. The student was frustrated with his work and was losing confidence in his musical abilities. Sheldon worked with the student and helped him move past the hurdles that were impeding his success. With Sheldon’s assistance, the student left the music room feeling more confident and prouder of his work. Sheldon recalled:

It was really that first moment where I felt that one-on-one teacher-student connection, besides just teaching a lesson, but just helping them through something in life. It was really powerful. I feel like I actually had an impact today … I actually helped.

Not only did Sheldon feel positive about his experience solo student teaching, but he felt invigorated by the reward of seeing the student succeed and move past an obstacle. He was surprised, but ready to see what other impacts he could make as a teacher.

**Emergency Solo Teaching.** Three of the study participants, Stan, Aria, and Joelle, each shared instances of solo student teaching during emergency situations. Typical solo student teaching in a controlled setting is challenging, but the added layer of danger and uncertainty, in both the situation and how to handle it, intensified their specific experiences. In the following scenarios, the participants’ mentor teachers were not present, but there were other adults in the
building. All three participants shared that they left their schools on those days feeling anxious about the situations and their futures in teaching.

First, Stan shared how he helped his mentor teacher with the school musical. This included planning, attending after school rehearsals, and general production help. During the COVID-19 pandemic, his mentor teacher had some personal emergencies that needed addressed which led to her missing a few days of after school rehearsals. Initially, Stan was excited for the challenge. He recalled, “my mentor teacher said, ‘okay, you get to cast a show now,’ and left it up to me because she was dealing with things. So, that was a great experience on my end, learning how to cast a show.” However, Stan was unprepared for when the police and paramedics showed up to his school to assist another teacher in an emergency. The teachers who helped with the musical left Stan in charge of the students while they aided the police and paramedics. Not only was it his first time alone in front of the students, but he had to keep calm and help the students stay calm. He said, “it was my first real moment of ‘what’s going on?’ I’m in charge now, the training wheels have come off. It was intense. It’s an emotionally intense moment that I will never forget.”

Aria experienced a similar situation. One day during her student teaching, she stayed after school to work on lesson plans. Although not under her supervision, she could hear the students at play practice down the hall. Shortly after play practice began, there was an announcement that there was an intruder, and all students and staff should go into lockdown. There were some students in the hall, so Aria brought them into the nearest classroom. It was a classroom different from her own, and she realized quickly she left her keys and cell phone behind, which created more panic for herself. Still, she understood the students were relying on her and she had to meet the challenge and keep them safe. She recalled, “I didn’t really know
what was going on, but I had to be the adult there. It was hard and it was scary.” Aria completed many lockdown drills as a student, but now she had to lead her own students to safety, without her mentor teacher or any guidance.

Finally, Joelle’s solo student teaching moment occurred when her mentor teacher was absent, and it was just herself and the substitute teacher in the classroom. A student came to music class a few minutes late and was visibly agitated. Joelle sensed their anger but continued with her lesson as planned. Another student began making comments to the distressed student, upsetting them more, and the two students began fist fighting in the middle of class. She recalled, “that was very emotionally tense because the building sub and I were just shocked. It was intense not only for the students’ safety, but I was like, ‘oh my gosh, am I going to get in trouble?’” While deescalating the situation, Joelle was reeling in additional worries that she did something wrong and would also get into trouble. As she finished her story she said, “I left that day and felt like I wasn’t ready to be a teacher,” a sentiment shared and echoed amongst many of the participants when they thought of their own solo student teaching experiences.

**First-Year Teaching.** When asked to share an emotionally intense moment from their first year of in-service teaching, three of the participants, Aria, Cara, and Joelle, continued the discussion of solo student teaching. However, now they addressed it within the context of their first year of in-service teaching. They discussed moments of looking around the room for a mentor teacher to tell them how they did, even though they were now teaching on their own, in their own classrooms. They yearned for that feedback and questioned their teaching efficacy in the absence of a mentor teacher. Aria, Cara, and Joelle discussed those emotional moments which challenged their confidence and self-efficacy.

Aria was from the 2020 student teaching cohort who had their second eight-week student
teaching placement cancelled at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. She discussed how that created unresolved feelings as she entered her first-year teaching. She recalled:

At the beginning I was always questioning whether I was doing a good job, and you don’t really get a lot of feedback or praise as a teacher … I was like, ‘I have no idea what I’m doing. I have no idea if I’m doing it well. I have no one to tell me if I’m doing it well,’ because no one’s watching me and no one’s helping me. It was a struggle.

Even during her teaching evaluations, Aria received ambiguous suggestions from her administrators. She said, “they didn’t really give me any praises or positives.” A lot of the trial and error that she should have experienced during student teaching, happened in that first year of in-service teaching, and it was a pressure-filled time as she questioned whether she was adequately leading her lessons.

Cara, another 2020 student teacher, echoed Aria’s concerns of first-year teaching and the feeling of unresolved feedback. When she finished teaching a lesson, she found herself looking for a mentor teacher or supervisor, someone with whom she could check in, to make sure she correctly taught the lesson. She shared:

One of the other challenges I had … was not having that mentor when you’re first starting [to teach], because I didn’t have those last eight weeks of somebody watching me teach and saying, ‘hey, that was really effective or, hey, why don’t you try it this way?’

So, I had to be my own judge of my self-efficacy because I never had that … I never had [those last] eight weeks of getting off the podium being told, ‘okay here’s how you did.’”

Cara mentioned that she was not assigned a first-year mentor, a colleague in a new teacher’s school who helps them navigate their first year of teaching. This, in addition to a cancelled student teaching placement, left her unresolved and wanting more supervision.
Joelle reacted to Cara’s story in the same focus group conversation by adding that she had similar feelings, even though she had her full student teaching experience and a first-year mentor. She recalled, “I felt like sometimes in those first few weeks … I wanted to look around the room like, ‘how did I do? How did I do?’ Like, where’s the adult who’s going to be like, ‘okay that was good.’” The other participants of that focus group nodded in agreement signaling that this was a common concern for first-year teachers. Joelle took it upon herself to find colleagues who could help her over this hurdle. She said, “I made it a point in my first year to try and seek out other mentor figures, [to] see if I could observe other teachers.”

Physiological feedback is an important factor in a first-year teacher’s career as it is another indicator of perceived self-efficacy. The participants’ stories were not all directly associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, but rather more universal stories aligned to the transition from student to teacher. The discrepancies related to the COVID-19 pandemic may have intensified their physiological feedback, but only Aria and Cara explicitly attributed their emotionally charged moments to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their student teaching experiences.

Summary

The participants of this study shared their stories and experiences of music teacher practicum, student teaching, and first-year teaching while also providing insight into their perceived self-efficacy at each of those milestones. All 16 participants’ music education degree programs were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, but each of their experiences were unique to them. Regardless of their own personal experience, themes emerged throughout the conversations. Themes such as pandemic practicum timing, ambiguous loss, vicarious classroom management, peer mentorship, communal coping, and solo teaching were addressed and
emphasized across the participant discussions. These themes aligned with the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET: experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. Associating the themes with Bandura’s (1977) SET provides a more meaningful pathway to assess perceived self-efficacy. Chapter 5, the final chapter of this dissertation, will present an interpretation, discussion, and implications related to the study’s findings.
Chapter 5

Chapter 5, the final chapter of this study, summarizes and interprets the findings discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter is organized by six sections. First, I present a summary of the overall research questions and the study’s findings. Second, I discuss insights related to the findings presented in Chapter 4. Third, I examine how the data gathered in this study relate back to the theoretical framework that guided this inquiry. Fourth, I discuss the limitations of generalizability and methodology. Fifth, I examine the implications of this study on future research and practice. Finally, I present a conclusion to this study.

Summary of Study

This study aimed to determine early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy following their pandemic teacher practicum. More specifically, this study was designed to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted preservice music teachers’ practicum and how that disruption impacted their perceived self-efficacy moving forward as early career music teachers.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, “what are the perceptions of early career music teachers regarding the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic on their teacher practicum and overall music teacher training degree program?” Throughout the focus group conversations, participants shared the unique ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their teacher practicum and music education coursework. After transcribing and coding their conversations, two themes emerged that best summarized their answers: pandemic practicum timing and ambiguous loss.

Participant experiences revealed that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic varied based
on the year in which they completed their student teaching experiences. This was due to the changing nature of the pandemic. For instance, in 2020 the world was in crisis, but by 2021, the global community had found ways to slow the spread of the virus. And by 2022, only a few safety restrictions were still in place. PK-12 schools and universities, like many institutions, adjusted their safety restrictions, accordingly, therefore impacting each cohort of participants differently.

The 2020 cohort of student teachers lost eight weeks of their 16-week student teaching experience, but generally felt fortunate that most of their overall teacher training degree program was unaffected, reflecting a mostly traditional teacher practicum. Then, the 2021 cohort of student teachers had their teaching methods courses moved to virtual learning and lost their classroom observations prior to student teaching. Eventually, there were safety restrictions and adapted classroom settings in place as they conducted their student teaching experiences. Finally, the 2022 cohort of student teachers also had their teaching methods courses moved to virtual learning and most classroom observations were cancelled, with some exceptions. They entered their student teaching placements with modified safety restrictions and, in most cases, watched their mentor teachers transition their students back to more traditional classroom settings.

Additionally, participants shared their feelings of ambiguous loss during their teacher practicum. On the one hand, they were able to easily define the concrete losses they experienced, like cancelled student teaching placements and missed classroom observations. However, they found it more difficult to describe losses like virtual methods coursework and the impact of safety restrictions on their student teaching practice and classroom observations. They went back and forth on feeling fortunate that they had some experiences, but they also addressed how the modified versions were not as helpful as traditional practicum.
The use of focus group conversations allowed the participants to validate each other’s statements, encouraging one another to continue sharing despite their uncertain feelings. In doing so, they shared that they felt loss, but could not always articulate it as succinctly as they could with concrete losses. After completing member checks and two rounds of coding, I could see this was a theme but did not know how to address it myself. Upon further research I discovered the term, ambiguous loss (Boss, 1999), which best described the participants’ unresolved emotions.

This first research question is significant because the answer revealed and illuminated the importance of in-person, experiential learning during teacher practicum. The 2020 cohort of student teachers made a point to say how lucky they were to have received half of their in-person student teaching experience instead of a full experience that was virtual or hybrid, as it was in 2021 and 2022. Educators and researchers have reported the importance of experiential learning in teacher practicum (Ballantyne, 2007b; Conway, 2015; Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002) and this study reaffirmed their claims.

Answering this research question also produced the resurgence of the term ambiguous loss to describe the unique losses of these participants. Boss (1999, 2002) defined ambiguous loss and used it in the context of unexplained or unresolved loss. Afifi et al. (2020) revived the term to reflect the losses from the COVID-19 pandemic. In this study, I continued to support the term and recommend its use when referring to higher education and teaching and learning. The COVID-19 pandemic renewed the awareness of ambiguous loss, but it can be applied to instances beyond this study, as Boss (1999) reported well before the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Research Question 2**

The second research question asked, “how do early career music teachers perceive their self-efficacy in the PK-12 music classroom, after the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their
teacher practicum?” When asked this question outright, the participants reported low self-efficacy in their first-year teaching but improving levels of self-efficacy with each year of teaching experience. They also reported that they felt unprepared to teach within the continually changing landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The participants provided numerous reasons for their initially low perceptions of self-efficacy. Many participants discussed various elements of teaching that they learned through coursework, but did not practice in teacher practicum, like traditional classroom management. Essentially, student teachers watched their mentor teachers use adapted classroom management techniques during practicum, but as they began in-service teaching, and as safety restrictions were lifted, they felt unprepared to manage their own classrooms. The participants recalled their mentor teachers explaining the differences of classroom management in a virtual setting. Mentor teachers shared insights and stories of traditional classroom management. However, the participants had to learn these methods vicariously instead of through experiential learning, which was the more traditional practice. This left the participants feeling unprepared and inexperienced, creating lower levels of self-efficacy as they entered their first year of in-service teaching.

One indicator of strong teacher self-efficacy is knowing when it is necessary to seek help or guidance (Huang et al., 2007). Many participants of this study reported that they struggled to ask for help from their colleagues or mentors. They waited until it was critical to the success of their job. However, they also reported the relief they felt once they did reach out. Those collegial interventions and collaborations reverberated back and continued their escalation of self-efficacy. Supporting teacher self-efficacy not only encourages early career teachers to seek out assistance sooner (Huang et al., 2007), but it increases teacher retention by improving their
motivation and job satisfaction, while decreasing emotional fatigue (Skaalvik, 2010; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014).

**Research Question 3**

The third research question asked, “what are early career music teachers doing to increase their perceived self-efficacy moving forward?” The participants discussed two strategies which increased their perceived self-efficacy in their first few years of in-service teaching: peer mentorship and communal coping.

Peer mentorship can be a formal or informal experience. In this study, the participants experienced a combination of both. Many individuals sought out assistance from their colleagues and were met with support and guidance. Out of the 16 participants, 13 reported strong peer mentorship and attributed that to their increased self-efficacy. These 13 participants also discussed their desire to continue teaching in their current positions.

The remaining three participants said they lacked peer mentorship or had weakened experiences. These participants reported a more stagnant, or sustained, growth of self-efficacy. They did not explicitly fault their lack of peer mentorship for the delayed growth of self-efficacy but referenced it as a hurdle they had to overcome. Additionally, two of those participants expressed that they planned to leave the field of education within the next two years. The third participant shared their desire to stay in education, but said they were open to moving to a different school district.

The participants discussed various forms of communal coping as another means to increase their perceived self-efficacy. Communal coping is a term that describes individuals conversing and supporting each other while sharing alike struggles (Afifi et al., 2020). While the participants sought out mentorship from their colleagues, they also found ways of connecting to
their students. When the class would experience a challenge, the participants used those moments to create what some of them called “community circles.” They stopped the lesson and talked through the challenge at hand. The participants reported that when they took the time to listen to their students, they built a stronger relationship with them and increased their own perceived self-efficacy as they continued teaching their lessons. Furthermore, one mentor teacher faced a personal difficulty, so they used class time to share with the students some of the challenges they experienced. By sharing their feelings, the teacher provided a space to encourage the students to share their struggles too. Communal coping builds camaraderie and connections between people (Afifi et al., 2020). It can create a positive environment in the classroom for both the teacher and students and, in the case of this study, supported and increased the participants’ perceived self-efficacy.

**Discussion of Results**

The following section will further examine the results of this study. In Chapter 4, I explored six themes discovered throughout the focus group conversations: pandemic practicum timing, ambiguous loss, vicarious classroom management, peer mentorship, communal coping, and solo teaching. In this section, I will summarize and discuss each of those themes and how they fit into the overall results of the study.

**Pandemic Practicum Timing**

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect teaching and learning even to this day. However, in the first three years of the pandemic – that is, 2020, 2021, and 2022 – the impact changed from crisis and closed buildings to safety restrictions and in-person learning. The stages of the pandemic were reflected in the experiences of the participants of this study. When preparing for this study, I predicted that the participants would share a variety of experiences, but
I did not anticipate how those experiences would align by cohort. Additionally, once I recognized that the participants were sharing similar stories among cohorts, I was surprised at which cohorts shared the lowest levels of perceived self-efficacy due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus group conversations included participants from across the three different cohorts which provided context for each of their experiences. The participants understood this context and discussed how it put their own experiences into perspective, allowing for a consensus including cohorts and levels of perceived self-efficacy.

2020 Student Teaching. The participants who completed their student teaching experiences in 2020 discussed the loss of their second placements, which included eight weeks of student teaching. Prior to the focus group conversations, I expected this cohort of participants to have the lowest levels of perceived self-efficacy of all the participants, but in their discussions, I discovered the opposite was true. They were disappointed to lose eight weeks of student teaching but felt fortunate that every other part of their teacher training curriculum and practicum was in-person, traditional, and unaffected. While they reported low perceived self-efficacy during their first-year teaching, through their conversations they suggested that it was higher than that of the other cohorts.

2021 Student Teaching. The participants who completed their student teaching in 2021 discussed the lowest levels of perceived self-efficacy. Much of their teacher training curriculum and practicum was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the effects was different at each stage of the pandemic. For example, in 2020 their teaching methods course was moved to virtual learning and their classroom observations were cancelled. Then, when they completed their student teaching experiences in 2021, they were met with safety restrictions like hybrid learning, six-feet distancing, smaller class sizes, and masking, which all affected teaching and learning.
This cohort of teachers shared the lowest levels of perceived self-efficacy as they experienced uncertainty and ambiguity throughout their coursework and practicum. As they began their first year of in-service teaching, they entered a different phase of the pandemic and found they had to transition students out of the safety restrictions and back to the more traditional classroom setting. They reported that this delayed the increase of their self-efficacy until their second year of teaching, when the routine of traditional classroom teaching began to exist again.

**2022 Student Teaching.** The participants who completed their student teaching in 2022 discussed levels of perceived self-efficacy between that of the 2020 and 2021 student teaching cohorts. These participants shared similar experiences to those who completed their student teaching in 2021, but as they were closer to the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, they observed their mentor teachers transitioning students out of the safety restrictions and back to the more traditional classroom setting. Participants addressed the unclear expectations for classroom management at such an unprecedented time. When the participants began their first-year teaching, they were placed in traditional classrooms without safety restrictions, however they lacked much of the hands-on classroom management training they needed to lead these classrooms. It took some time to learn what worked in terms of classroom management.

**Ambiguous Loss**

Ambiguous loss is a term I learned while researching a name for how the participants were discussing their educational losses. Ambiguous loss is loss without closure, leaving an individual to feel uncertain about an experience and confused about the loss itself (Boss, 1999). The participants of the 2020 student teaching cohort clearly stated that they lost eight weeks of their student teaching requirements. They shared some of the other responsibilities required of them by their university, but otherwise it was a clear loss of practicum. However, the 2021 and
2022 student teaching cohorts had a more difficult time putting their losses into words. They completed their student teaching experiences, but they were so modified that it did not feel like an accurate depiction of teaching. They discussed that when they began their first year of in-service teaching, they struggled to understand if what they were feeling – those feelings of uncertainty and lack of preparation – were typical for first-year teaching or if everything was different amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants had a difficult time describing their losses and how they felt, or how they should feel. The term ambiguous loss captures the losses of this pandemic time, in education and beyond.

Identifying the participants’ losses as ambiguous loss is significant because it puts a name to what they were feeling. They questioned their experiences and their self-efficacy because they could not adequately describe their feelings of loss. Ambiguous loss is essentially the phrase for indescribable feelings. Additionally, it is a term used in research associated with the COVID-19 pandemic (Afifi et al., 2020). Therefore, ambiguous loss is a useful, relevant phrase to better understand the participants’ experiences.

**Vicarious Classroom management**

Lack of adequate classroom management practice during preservice teachers’ student teaching experiences negatively impacted their perceived self-efficacy as first-year teachers. Classroom management is an integral part of a preservice teacher’s experiential learning during their teacher practicum. Individuals who completed their student teaching experiences in 2020, 2021, and 2022 did not have traditional practicum experiences, including classroom management practice. Instead, they implemented modified versions of classroom management that they observed from their mentor teachers. These modified versions were created as responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and the safety restrictions in place in PK-12 schools, however, they did not
adequately prepare preservice teachers for the classrooms in which they began their first few years of in-service teaching. Mentor teachers reminded the preservice teachers that what they observed and practiced would most likely change, but that vicarious form of experience was not enough physical practice to support their self-efficacy.

As preservice teachers moved from student teaching into their first years of in-service teaching, they witnessed the discrepancies which caused them to report a lack in confidence, reassurance, and perceived self-efficacy. This is important because it shows the inconsistencies of pandemic practicum compared to traditional practicum. Classroom management practice is an essential part of student teaching. However, the participants of this study learned it vicariously and practiced it in modified settings. Vicarious classroom management practice is a drastic modification from traditional classroom management practice, and a critical influence on the experiences of the participants in this study.

**Peer Mentorship**

Early career music teachers reported finding support through peer mentorship. Once they discovered the discrepancies between student teaching and first-year teaching, new teachers recognized the need to ask for help. They looked to their colleagues and fellow teachers for guidance and were mostly met with support. Their colleagues addressed the issues they faced and offered advice to improve their teaching skills and classroom management. Once enacted, this advice led to an increase in the new teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. The early career music teachers continued the process of peer mentorship whenever they ran into a new issue or concern and, if they were met with positive support from their colleagues, continued to increase their perceived self-efficacy.

Discovering the positive impact of peer mentorship is a significant finding in this study.
because it acknowledges a path forward for early career music teachers who experienced a pandemic practicum, or for early career music teachers in general. The participants who reported peer mentorship explicitly stated how important it was to their self-efficacy and sense of belonging in their new schools. Understanding strategies to assist new teachers, like the participants in this study, is essential for creating professional development and adapting curricula for the next cohort of student teachers regardless of whether their experiences are traditional or impacted by outside factors, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Communal Coping**

Early career music teachers found support and increased perceived self-efficacy through communal coping. While they worked with their colleagues through peer mentorship, they found connections to their students, through conversation, creating a collaborative effort to improve both their, and their students’, perceived self-efficacy. Students and early career music teachers found common threads of anguish whether it was the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic or school issues. These teachers found ways to empower their students in conversation through community circles and class dialogue. Through communal coping, participants discussed feeling less alone in their struggles and created an understanding of support amongst their students.

Communal coping is a significant finding of this study, because it creates a different type of classroom management strategy that could directly benefit new teachers, like the participants of this study. During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers across the globe struggled to manage their jobs, families, and homes. When they had the opportunity to share some of these struggles with their students, they were met with understanding and camaraderie. The participants of this study discovered this connection and realized communal coping was a strategy to assist with their classroom management practice, of which they were still developing.
Solo Teaching

When asked, the participants spoke about their most emotionally intense moments as student teachers. Solo teaching, or teaching on their own without their mentor teachers, was the unified answer to this question. While I predicted that this would be a big moment for student teachers, I was somewhat surprised to hear it was the most emotionally intense moment they experienced. There were varying circumstances for their answers like solo teaching during an emergency or typical solo teaching, but in each case, it was discussed as the most intense moment. Some of the participants mentioned solo teaching their first year of in-service teaching in the classroom, post student teaching. They discussed looking around the room for a mentor teacher or someone to tell them if they were adequately teaching.

Solo teaching is traditionally regarded as a challenging moment for student teachers. However, the intensity at which solo teaching was felt by the participants was significant. It demonstrated how much they relied on their mentor teachers during their student teaching experiences. It also supported their need for peer mentorship, as discussed above, when they transitioned from student teaching to in-service teaching.

Application of Theoretical Framework

In Chapter 2, I presented the theoretical framework used to guide this research. This framework combined Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) with Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET). Overall, the data reported that the participants’ experiential learning, identified by Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC), was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This impact disrupted their ELC by changing the order of stages or, in some cases, completely omitting stages from Kolb’s (1984) ELC. Following their teacher practicum and experiential learning, the participants reported low levels of perceived self-
efficacy as discussed across the four roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET. The focus group questions and reported data aligned with the roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET. This allowed me to analyze the participants’ answers for each role, creating a better understanding of their overall perceived self-efficacy. In this section, I will further define the two theories which created the theoretical framework of this study and how I applied them to the research.

**Experiential Learning Theory**

Kolb’s (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) was based on the idea that learning is a transactional relationship between an individual and their environment creating both subjective and objective learning experiences focused on process, not outcome. Kolb’s (1984) ELT was a continuation of numerous behavioral theories attributed to Kurt Lewin (1946), John Dewey (1938), and Jean Piaget (1952). Kolb (1984) created a model for the Experiential Learning Cycle (ELC) in education, for which he credited Lewin’s (1946) Action Research Theory. In this model, Kolb (1984) proposed a four-stage learning cycle of abilities: concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This cycle, combined with shared human experiences, is an important part of teaching and learning, as it allows personal experience to give subjective meaning to abstract concepts (Kolb, 1984).

The participants’ traditional practicum, pre-pandemic, typically consisted of classroom observations and student teaching according to Kolb’s (1984) ELC. First, student teachers engage in concrete experience. They observe mentor teachers in the field and begin to lead lessons of their own. Then, they move on to reflective observations. At this stage, they think back on their lessons and consider what went well and what needed improvement. Next, they enter the abstract conceptualization stage. At this stage, the student teachers work with their mentor teachers to plan for the next lesson while implementing the changes they learned from
their concrete experience and reflective observations. Finally, the student teachers reach active experimentation. At this stage, they teach the next lesson applying everything they learned from the other three stages of Kolb’s (1984) ELC.

The participants of this study, however, reported disruptions to their experiential learning during their teacher practicum due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessity of safety restrictions. As the participants discussed their experiences, I noticed the absence of certain stages of Kolb’s (1984) ELC. For example, the participants reported the cancellation of one or more phases of their teacher practicum. Therefore, the participants had missing concrete experiences, an essential step of Kolb’s (1984) ELC. Furthermore, the participants discussed their vicarious classroom management experiences, where they had to learn traditional classroom management techniques through their mentor teachers’ stories, without their own application. This voided the active experimentation stage of Kolb’s (1984) ELC regarding classroom management. The two middle stages of Kolb’s (1984) ELC, reflective observation and abstract conceptualization were possible for the participants of this study, however each stage is necessary for the cycle to continue and to produce a full experiential learning situation. Therefore, missing one stage disrupted the overall cycle, preventing full, uninterrupted experiential learning.

**Self-Efficacy Theory**

Bandura’s (1977) Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) stated that a person’s abilities and performance outcomes are based on their perceived self-efficacy, or what they believe they can achieve. Bandura’s (1977) SET is a subset of his Social Cognitive Theory, previously named Social Learning Theory (1977). In Social Cognitive Theory, Bandura (1986) suggested that learning occurs in a social context with an interaction of the person, environment, and behavior.
Bandura’s (1977) SET is comprised of four roles in human behavior: experience, vicarious experience, verbal persuasions, and physiological feedback. These components determine an individual’s levels of self-efficacy which determines their behavior (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Bandura’s (1977) SET roles influenced this study in two ways. First, I created and categorized the focus group questions around these four roles. This allowed me to center my focus group conversations in a way that supported the theoretical framework. Second, during data analysis, I used deductive coding following Bandura’s (1977) SET roles as my source. By doing this, I was able to compare whether the participants’ answers aligned with the same SET roles (Bandura, 1977) as the focus group questions.

**SET Role: Experience.** Experience is the first role of Bandura’s (1977) SET. The participants of this study shared their experiences as student teachers. I asked them to discuss the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their student teaching and overall practicum experiences. It was with these experience questions, that I recognized the participants’ stories characterized them as cohorts for the student teaching years of 2020, 2021, and 2022. It was also during this question that I noticed the participants having some difficulty putting into words the losses that they felt. This caught my attention, but I had not yet found the term ambiguous loss.

**SET Role: Vicarious Experience.** Vicarious experience is the second role of Bandura’s (1977) SET. As the participants discussed their experiences, I asked them to identify the adaptations and changes they observed from their mentor teachers and how that differed from their current practice as music teachers. Essentially, I was asking them to report any experiences they did not get to have with their mentor teachers but from which they learned through conversations or stories. Most of the participants used this question to identify classroom management as the biggest adaptation they observed from their mentor teachers. The participants
did not witness traditional classroom management, nor did they get to actively practice it in their student teaching placements. Therefore, traditional classroom management practice became a vicarious experience, one learned through their mentor teachers’ stories and experiences. The participants cited this vicarious classroom management as an indicator of their low perceived self-efficacy once they entered the teaching profession. They reported that it was a lot of on-the-job training that continued to change with the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**SET Role: Social Persuasion.** Social persuasion is the third role of Bandura’s (1977) SET. Social persuasion was the only role in this study where the intended focus group question did not produce the anticipated theme. Rather, the themes associated with social persuasion, peer mentorship and communal coping, emerged from the questions in different categories like physiological feedback and perceptions of self-efficacy. The participants found the most effective forms of social persuasion through their first-year colleagues and students. The participants discussed the positive impacts of peer mentorship on their self-efficacy. They shared examples of peer mentorship including classroom management support, curriculum guidance, and general camaraderie. The social persuasion of positive peer mentors increased the participants’ perceived self-efficacy. And vice versa, the participants who experienced no peer mentorship did not perceive an increase in self-efficacy through social persuasion.

Furthermore, the participants shared stories of communal coping as a social persuasion on their self-efficacy. I found the term *communal coping* as I was researching ambiguous loss in the experience role of Bandura’s (1977) SET. Afifi et al. (2020) used the terms ambiguous loss and communal coping when they discussed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, which led me to research both phrases independently. A few of the participants referenced “community circles” as a classroom management strategy that involved the teacher sharing with
students something challenging in their lives that was affecting their ability to teach in the classroom. I found that communal coping best described the community circles and other various coping mechanisms described by the participants.

**SET Role: Physiological Feedback.** Physiological feedback is the final role of Bandura’s (1977) SET. I asked the participants to share a story about their most emotionally intense moment during their student teaching experiences. Referring to physiological feedback, I asked them to explain what happened, what made it difficult, and what they did to manage the intensity. In most cases, the participants discussed the first time they taught on their own without the support of a mentor teacher. I referred to this as solo teaching in Chapter 4. Some participants reported typical moments of teaching a planned lesson on their own and others discussed unplanned solo teaching in emergency situations. In both cases, the participants claimed it was the most emotionally intense moment in their student teaching experiences. Some participants questioned their self-efficacy following those instances of solo teaching and shared that they did not feel prepared to teach in those moments.

**Theoretical Framework Modifications**

The theoretical framework of Kolb’s (1984) ELT and Bandura’s (1977) SET provided a solid foundation for this study. In a traditional practicum setting, the combination and application of these theories adequately examine experiential learning and perceived self-efficacy. However, based on the findings of this study there are modifications to these theories that would better account for situations that include outside influences and disruptions, like the pandemic.

Kolb’s (1984) ELC is an important guide for experiential learning. However, in some situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic, it will have gaps and missing stages. Based on this study, and the concern for future global crises, it is important to adapt the learning cycle moving
forward. When student teaching experiences were cancelled or drastically modified, some of the participants of this study sought out alternative teaching experiences. Perhaps, the definition of concrete experience can elaborate to include nontraditional teaching experiences outside of the physical classroom. This might include virtual teaching or small group and private lesson teaching. Once the concept of concrete experience is expanded, it becomes more inclusive to various situations that threaten to disrupt the cycle.

Furthermore, Bandura’s (1977) SET is a sufficient guide to perceived self-efficacy in teacher practicum. However, it does not account for extenuating influences. In this study, the COVID-19 pandemic would be one such influence, but there are other factors that influence an individual’s perceived self-efficacy that are outside of their control. Some of these factors include racial discrimination, gender bias, ableism, and ageism. While these elements affect an individual’s perceived self-efficacy, the ownness is not on them, but rather on our society and the systems in place. The addition of a fifth role to Bandura’s (1977) SET could include outside influences. Identifying these influences would provide a more inclusive and fuller picture of how an individual perceives their self-efficacy, beyond the four established roles. It would also provide the space to account for additional crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Limitations of the Study

As is typical in research, there were limitations to this study. Some of these limitations were anticipated and addressed in Chapter 3. However, within the scope of the study they were inevitable. Generalizability and methodology are the limitations addressed in this section.

Generalizability

Generalizability, a form of external validity, is what allows a study’s findings to apply to other settings or situations (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As discussed
in Chapter 3, generalizability is a threat to qualitative research because the sample population is often smaller and less diverse than that of quantitative research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Qualitative approaches to research are often, by nature, not generalizable. They are meant to study a specific issue or phenomenon in a certain population. Regardless, I employed maximum variation as a strategy to recruit as many participants as was possible. Maximum variation is an approach meant to increase generalizability by selecting a broad, diverse sample pool or creating multiple settings within a study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I created multiple settings within my study by conducting four focus group conversations with options to meet in-person at Southeastern State University (SSU) or virtually on Zoom. The Zoom location encouraged participation from anywhere across the U.S. Additionally, in the demographic survey participants could select their choice of location and time of focus group conversation creating more flexibility for participation.

Regardless of my attempts of maximum variation, all sixteen participants were alums from SSU. While they reported similar experiences, there were variations within their stories based on the year they completed their student teaching and the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Their stories reflected universal issues occurring throughout the pandemic which one can infer as generalizable, but the limitations of the participant pool cannot support the implication.

In the future, other studies could schedule in-person focus groups at various colleges and universities which have music education degree programs. If the recruitment comes from within the university, and the focus group conversations are held in university classrooms, then alums from those institutions may feel more connected and willing to participate. Including participants from other locations would increase the generalizability of the study.
Methodology

In qualitative research, the researcher becomes an instrument for interpreting data through data analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While this study was grounded in its theoretical framework and aligned with Bandura’s (1977) SET, I also served as a tool for data analysis. Although I closely followed the roles of Bandura’s (1977) SET and utilized member checks to ensure my own researcher bias did not impact the results, the data analysis was left to my interpretation. As a human with experience in the subject matter, I come to the research with a certain bias. A mixed methods approach would provide two angles from which to analyze the data, both qualitative and quantitative. For example, the use of the teachers’ self-efficacy scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) could provide quantitative data in conjunction with the qualitative focus groups, thus creating multiple instruments for data analysis. Unfortunately, time limitations did not allow for me to employ a mixed methods approach. In the future, scholars could incorporate the teachers’ self-efficacy scale (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001) into the initial demographic questionnaire. The researcher could analyze this quantifiable data and use it to revise the focus group questions to create a more directed study. Then, the survey data, along with the focus group answers, would create a more robust analysis of the participants’ answers.

Implications

From this study, there are important, relevant implications to both higher education and overall music education. The findings suggest tangible ways to improve early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy, especially in the wake of a global crisis. The following section includes implications for future research and implications for future practice.
Implications for Future Research

Future research should further examine music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. There are numerous sources regarding perceived self-efficacy, however the research on teacher self-efficacy, especially music teacher self-efficacy, is limited. In Chapter 2, I addressed some of the literature but found it challenging to come up with a variety of accessible sources from which to cite. Furthermore, future research regarding the perceived self-efficacy of individuals transitioning from student teaching to in-service teaching would provide a closer examination of the process from student to teacher.

Additionally, future research could examine just one of the cohorts of participants identified in this study. The findings showed that different cohorts of participants had different practicum experiences based on the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic. Future research could examine one of those cohorts, exclusively, asking questions to further explore their experiences. The 2021 student teachers are an ideal cohort to further research. They were unique in their experiences since their entire practicum and first-year teaching occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic therefore impacting both their preservice and in-service teaching. Further research into this cohort would provide a closer examination of how that disruption specifically impacted their perceived self-efficacy.

A future study could also include participants whose practicum was not impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This additional cohort could serve as a control group from which to compare the experiences of the participants of this study. Throughout the focus group conversations, the participants had to delineate which experiences impacted their perceived self-efficacy and if they were specific to the COVID-19 pandemic, or typical first-year concerns. Creating a control group that meets separately from the participants like those in this study,
would allow the researcher to analyze that information for them.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study provided several implications for future practice in both higher education and PK-12 music education. These implications include suggestions for future practice in higher education curriculum, university response to future global crises, teacher training, and music teachers.

**Higher Education Curriculum.** In Chapter 2, I examined pandemic-informed pedagogies like relational pedagogies (Gravett et al., 2021), pedagogy of care (Noddings, 2005), and compassion pedagogy (Burke & Lamar, 2020; Vandeyar, 2021). Utilizing the foundation of these pedagogies, academia could construct additional curricula that prepares its students for crises, on both a large and small scale. Specifically, teacher education courses could implement the concept of communal coping as a teaching tool in two ways. First, they could learn the importance of communal coping as a student, implemented by their professors. The professors would essentially demonstrate examples of communal coping, like the community circles discussed by the participants of this study. Then, the teacher education students would incorporate versions of communal coping into their practicum in PK-12 schools. While the stories discussed by the participants of this study occurred in more intense situations, future preservice teachers could find simple ways to introduce the concept into their practicum, allowing them to understand its use in practice.

**University Response to Future Global Crises.** Although we are out of the crisis phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is much to learn and enact from the yearslong experience. It is possible there could be another global crisis and preparation for that now would enhance results later. Based on the findings of this study, there are ways universities can attempt to prepare
students both physically and emotionally in the case of another large, or small, scale crisis. Three such ways include instruction on ambiguous loss, peer mentorship, and flexible instruction days.

Afifi et al. (2020) discussed ambiguous loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, depicting the indescribable feelings of loss. The participants of this study struggled to put into words how they felt during the pandemic. They questioned their self-efficacy and whether they were truly meant to teach. If these participants had a word to identify these uncertain feelings, then maybe they would know the emotions were temporary and they could work through them. Educating students on ambiguous loss at the university level and providing coping strategies to students, could better prepare them for another crisis.

Peer mentorship is another strategy universities could employ. In this study, the participants found peer mentorship as a coping mechanism to improve their feelings of ambiguous loss and increase their perceived self-efficacy. While they discovered peer mentorship on their own, it took them time to reach out to their colleagues. Avoiding the task of asking for help is an indicator of lowered self-efficacy (Huang et al., 2007). If universities anticipate this need, then they can work with students to create peer mentorships prior to a crisis. Students would not have to wait until the need arises but would have the strategy in place.

Many PK-12 school districts have enacted flexible instruction days (FID) to continue learning from home when they cannot come in to school for various reasons. Essentially, if there are a multitude of snow days or other events that typically force school districts to cancel school and add school days to the end of their calendar year, they can instead anticipate those days and create FID so students can learn from home. Universities have the capacity to implement FID as necessary. However, since many college students live in dormitories which are not always conducive to virtual learning, universities would need to find communal, accessible space from
which its students could learn. Universities would also need to anticipate these days so that students and faculty can adequately prepare for virtual learning. Utilizing FID would not only allow for students to continue their learning, but it would provide a working model of a PK-12 FID to preservice teachers who will most likely experience them as in-service teachers.

**Teacher Training.** Teacher training includes teaching methods coursework, observations, and student teaching, among other various facets of the teaching profession (Conway, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Because peer mentorship was a strong indicator of perceived self-efficacy in this study, it may benefit preservice teachers to access it throughout their practicum. Specifically, a mentor program that connects preservice teachers with in-service teachers, outside of course work and practicum, could provide preservice teachers access to peer mentorship beyond their university sanctioned mentor teacher. This peer mentor would not grade them or provide them with teaching opportunities, but rather exist as an in-service teacher with whom they could ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking their assigned mentor teachers. It could also be someone with whom they could share ideas before presenting them to their mentor teachers. This peer mentor could also share classroom management strategies outside of what they learned in practicum as another resource to for active experimentation. Creating a more low-stakes version of mentorship in those early years could help preservice teachers build their self-efficacy prior to entering their first year of in-service teaching.

**Music Teachers.** There are nonverbal forms of communal coping, in addition to having what the participants in this study referred to as, “community circles.” Performing music in groups is one such activity. The benefit of a music teacher is that they can perform music while teaching it as a subject area. Performing music can be a coping mechanism for an individual or a group of people. Using music performance in the classroom, beyond the set curriculum, could
support their classroom management through a nonverbal form of communal coping. Sometimes music teachers focus so much on teaching music concepts, that they forget music, itself, is a process that can heal. Instead of ending a music lesson to enact a community circle, teachers can ask students to use music performance as an alternative healing strategy that connects the class.

Conclusion

Experiential learning is an essential part of music teacher practicum (Abdulwahed & Nagy, 2009; Bouij, 1998, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Mason & Matas, 2015). When preservice music teachers’ experiential learning was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, there were consequences for teaching and learning (Atkins & Danley, 2020; Delamarter & Ewart, 2020; Hill, 2021; Ressler et al., 2022). While global crises are rare, they are imminent, and it is important to learn from the experience to prepare better for the next one. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed with stark clarity the importance of ongoing education for children and youth. The most effective way to continue education properly is through teacher training for such events. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated teacher attrition rates (Koner et al., 2022; Pressley, 2021; Westphal et al., 2022), further providing more reasons to better prepare our future educators now.

This study examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy. I used qualitative focus group conversations to collect data on sixteen early career music teachers who experienced a pandemic practicum. The participants discussed various practicum experiences based on the phases of the COVID-19 pandemic and their student teaching experiences. Participants, especially those who completed their student teaching in 2021, expressed feelings of ambiguous loss when discussing their classroom observations and student teaching. Participants reported a lack of traditional classroom
management practice in their practicum, referring to it as a vicarious experience, instead of the concrete experience as it was traditionally intended. Overall, the participants revealed low levels of perceived self-efficacy as they entered their first year in the teaching profession. However, through communal coping and peer mentorship they were able to increase their perceived self-efficacy within the first year of in-service teaching.

While this study explicitly researched the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early career music teachers’ practicum and perceived self-efficacy, future practice could include any global crisis or outside influence. Universities can prepare their students for such incidences by including communal coping in their relational pedagogies. They could also provide strategies to help students cope with crises, like informing them of ambiguous loss and providing peer mentorship opportunities. Additionally, teacher training programs could incorporate mentorship beyond practicum - mentor teachers to connect preservice teachers with additional in-service teachers in the field. Finally, music teachers can use performance as a nonverbal form of communal coping with their students. Music is a shared, global experience, present in most cultures and human activities (Goble, 2010). Performing music with others is an historic and collective form of healing.
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Appendix A: Recruitment Flyer

**MUSIC EDUCATORS NEEDED**

**RESEARCH STUDY ON EARLY CAREER MUSIC EDUCATORS**

**PARTICIPATION REQUIRES:**

One focus group (in-person or on Zoom)

**INCLUSION CRITERIA**

You must be:

- At least 18 years of age
- A Pennsylvania Certified PK-12 music educator
- Someone who experienced a modified teacher training practicum due to the Covid-19 pandemic (i.e. virtual or hybrid learning, modified supervision)

**TO PARTICIPATE:**

Please complete the questionnaire [here](https://wcupa.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1NCIDWuJaoTInQO) or at the link below, to provide background information and scheduling options for the focus groups.

[Redacted]
Subject - Your voice matters! Research Study on Early Career Music Educators

Hello music educators,

I am conducting research on early career music educators who experienced a pandemic teacher practicum - classroom observations or student teaching that were somehow impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I know that was a difficult time for student teachers and students in methods courses that were meant to be out observing classroom teachers. I'm hoping to find alumni, like yourself, who experienced this unique practicum, to follow-up and see how you are doing now. Did you decide to teach after all that and, if so, how was that first year?

A big part of my study is creating focus groups of early career music educators, like you, to meet and discuss how the pandemic affected your practicum and your perceived self-efficacy in the years after. Focus groups will be conducted on Zoom or in-person at [Redacted], depending on your availability. The focus group will last approximately two hours during which time we'll talk about your practicum, the pandemic, and how you're doing now.

If you are interested in participating in this research, please complete the brief questionnaire linked below. This will help me gather some basic information and check your eligibility to participate. Once the questionnaire is completed, I will contact you to schedule your focus group. Participating in this study is voluntary. If you have any questions, please contact me at this email address or by phone at [Redacted].

Sincerely,
Aubree Windish
IRB Approval #IRB-FY2023-306
Appendix C: Music Conference Email Exchange

[Redacted]

Good Morning Aubree,

Yes! We receive numerous requests throughout the year for help with research projects and have set up a page where we’ll post the info. We then direct members to that page in our all-member emails. Here’s the form to complete with the info you'd like us to

[Redacted]
Appendix D: Permission to Conduct Research

July 21, 2023

Dear Members of the Institutional Review Board,

Aubree Windish has permission to conduct her research on the self-efficacy perceptions of early career music educators at [Redacted]. I have been advised of the purpose and scope of the research and how the data will be collected. I also understand that all information and data will be collected and stored in a confidential and appropriate manner. The research will be conducted between August 15, 2023, and May 31, 2024. Participants include early career music educators who experienced a modified teacher training practicum due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand permission is contingent upon approval from West Chester University’s Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Appendix E: Informed Consent

Project Title: Pandemic teacher practicum: Early career music educators’ perceptions of self-efficacy in the classroom

Investigator(s): Aubree Windish; [Redacted]

Project Overview:

Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Aubree Windish as part of their Doctoral Dissertation to explore the perceived self-efficacy of early career music educators in order to produce interventions that may counteract praxis shock and teacher burnout. If you would like to take part in this study, West Chester University requires that you agree to and sign this consent form. Your participation in the focus group will take approximately 120 minutes and you will have the option to participate in a focus group discussion, either in-person or through Zoom. The researcher will follow-up with you after the focus group to perform a member check to confirm their understanding of your focus group responses.

There are minimal risks to the participants which include loss of free time and mild, emotional discomfort with the content of the questions that may recall difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will have the opportunity to express their views and speak openly about their current positions and undergraduate programs. Some individuals may enjoy the debriefing process and find solidarity in discussing the topic with fellow music educators. The data gathered in this study will inform future research and programming for higher education institutions potentially benefitting preservice teachers by better preparing them for their first years of teaching. The data could also prove useful to PK-12 curriculum instruction as targeted professional development opportunities presented to early career music educators.

You may ask Aubree Windish any questions to help you better understand this study. If you don’t want to be a part of this study, it won’t affect any services from West Chester University. If you choose to be a part of this study, you have the right to change your mind and stop being a part of the study at any time.

1. What is the purpose of this study?
   - The purpose of this study is to examine how undergraduate preservice music teachers who were enrolled in their degree programs during the COVID-19 pandemic transitioned into the profession of music education. More specifically, I will explore their understandings of perceived self-efficacy in the classroom during such a turbulent time in their professional training.

2. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:
   - Grant informed consent to participate.
   - Participate in one focus group discussion, either in-person or through Zoom.
   - The researcher will follow-up with you after the focus group to perform a member check to confirm their understanding of your focus group responses.
This study will take 120 minutes of your time.

3. **Are there any experimental medical treatments?**
   - No

4. **Is there any risk to me?**
   - Possible risks or sources of discomfort include loss of free time and mild, emotional discomfort with the content of the questions that may recall difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic.
   - Privacy risks include audio and video recordings to be used by researcher only.
   - Privacy risks include the possibility that participants will know one another.
   - If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Aubree Windish.
   - If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time. There will be no repercussions from West Chester University.

5. **Is there any benefit to me?**
   - Benefits to you may include: The opportunity to express your views and speak openly about your current positions and undergraduate programs. Some individuals may enjoy the debriefing process and find solidarity in discussing the topic with fellow music educators.
   - Other benefits may include: The data gathered in this study will inform future research and programming for higher education institutions potentially benefitting preservice teachers by better preparing them for their first years of teaching. The data could also prove useful to PK-12 curriculum instruction as targeted professional development opportunities presented to early career music educators.

6. **How will you protect my privacy?**
   - The focus group will be recorded via audio and video and records will be kept private. Only Aubree Windish, [Redacted] and the IRB will have access to your name and responses. Participants will choose pseudonyms to use during the duration of the focus group. For in-person focus groups, participants will receive a name tag with their pseudonym. For Zoom focus groups, participants will be asked to change their screen name to a pseudonym of their choice.
   - Your records will be private. Only Aubree Windish, [Redacted], and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
   - Your name will **not** be used in any reports.
   - Records will be stored:
     - Password protected laptop
     - Password protected mobile device
   - Records will be destroyed Three Years After Study Completion.

7. **Do I get paid to take part in this study?**
   - No

8. **Who do I contact in case of research related injury?**
   - For any questions with this study, contact:
     - **Primary Investigator:** Aubree Windish at [Redacted]
     - **Faculty Sponsor:** [Redacted]

9. **What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimens?**
Identifiable information, such as your name and email address, will be kept in a password protected file on Aubree Windish’s computer. This information will not be shared with anyone other than the Faculty Sponsor. Any reference to you in future publications will employ a pseudonym and all individually identifiable information will be removed.

No biospecimens are collected as part of this study.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at [Redacted].

___ Yes, I agree to participate in this study.

___ No, I do not agree to participate in this study.
Appendix F: Demographic Questionnaire

Pandemic teacher preparation: Early career music educators’ perceptions

Start of Block: Welcome

Q1 Welcome! Thank you for your interest in this research study.

Please read through the Informed Consent form below and indicate your willingness to participate in this study. This should take less than 5 minutes to read and complete.

Please remember that you do not need to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable answering it.

Please contact Aubree Windish at [Redacted]

End of Block: Welcome

Start of Block: Block 1 - Eligibility Requirements

Q2 Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes, I am 18 years of age or older. (1)
- No, I am less than 18 years of age. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you 18 years of age or older? = No, I am less than 18 years of age.

Q3 Are you an alum of a U.S. undergraduate music education teacher training program?

- Yes, I am an alum of a U.S. undergraduate music education teacher training program. (2)
- No, I am not an alum of a U.S. undergraduate music education teacher training program. (3)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you an alum of a U.S. undergraduate music education teacher training program? = No, I am not an alum of a U.S. undergraduate music education teacher training program.
Q4 Did you experience a modified teacher practicum experience while enrolled as a music education undergraduate student during the COVID-19 pandemic? ie. virtual learning, hybrid learning, virtual supervision/feedback, limited observations, etc

- Yes, I experienced a modified teacher practicum while enrolled as a music education undergraduate student during the COVID-19 pandemic. (1)
- No, I did not experience a modified teacher practicum while enrolled as a music education undergraduate student during the COVID-19 pandemic. (2)

Q5 Please add your first and last name below.

Q6 Informed Consent Form

**Project Overview:** Participation in this research project is voluntary and is being done by Aubree Windish as part of their Doctoral Dissertation to explore the perceived self-efficacy of early career music educators in order to produce interventions that may counteract praxis shock and teacher burnout. If you would like to take part in this study, West Chester University requires that you agree to and sign this consent form. Your participation in the focus group will take approximately 120 minutes and you will have the option to participate in a focus group discussion, either in-person or through Zoom. The researcher will follow-up with you after the focus group to perform a member check to confirm their understanding of your focus group responses.

There are minimal risks to the participants which include loss of free time and mild, emotional discomfort with the content of the questions that may recall difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants will have the opportunity to express their views and speak openly about their current positions and undergraduate programs. Some individuals may enjoy the debriefing process and find solidarity in discussing the topic with fellow music educators. The data gathered in this study will inform future research and programming for higher education institutions potentially benefitting preservice teachers by better preparing them for their first years of teaching. The data could also prove useful to PK-12 curriculum instruction as targeted professional development opportunities presented to early career music educators.

You may ask Aubree Windish any questions to help you better understand this study. If you


1. What is the purpose of this study?
- The purpose of this study is to examine how undergraduate preservice music teachers who were enrolled in their degree programs during the COVID-19 pandemic transitioned into the profession of music education. More specifically, I will explore their understandings of perceived self-efficacy in the classroom during such a turbulent time in their professional training.

2. If you decide to be a part of this study, you will be asked to do the following:
- Grant informed consent to participate.
- Participate in one focus group discussion, either in-person or through Zoom.
- The researcher will follow-up with you after the focus group to perform a member check to confirm their understanding of your focus group responses.
- This study will take 120 minutes of your time.

3. Are there any experimental medical treatments?
- No

4. Is there any risk to me?
- Possible risks or sources of discomfort include: Loss of free time and mild, emotional discomfort with the content of the questions that may recall difficult times during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Aubree Windish. If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time. There will be no repercussions from West Chester University. Privacy risks include audio and video recordings to be used by researcher only. Privacy risks include the possibility that participants will know one another. If you become upset and wish to speak with someone, you may speak with Aubree Windish. If you experience discomfort, you have the right to withdraw at any time. There will be no repercussions from West Chester University.

5. Is there any benefit to me?
- Benefits to you may include: The opportunity to express your views and speak openly about your current positions and undergraduate programs. Some individuals may enjoy the debriefing process and find solidarity in discussing the topic with fellow music educators. Other benefits may include: The data gathered in this study will inform future research and programming for higher education institutions potentially benefitting preservice teachers by better preparing them for their first years of teaching. The data could also prove useful to PK-12 curriculum instruction as targeted professional development opportunities presented to early career music educators.

6. How will you protect my privacy?
- The focus group will be recorded via audio and video and records will be kept private. Only Aubree Windish, [Redacted], and the IRB will have access to your name and responses. Participants will choose pseudonyms to use during the duration of the focus group. For in-person focus groups, participants will receive a name tag with their
 pseudonym. For Zoom focus groups, participants will be asked to change their screen name to a pseudonym of their choice.
- Your records will be private. Only Aubree Windish, [Redacted], and the IRB will have access to your name and responses.
- Your name will not be used in any reports.
- Records will be stored on a Password protected laptop and a Password protected mobile device.
- Records will be destroyed Three Years After Study Completion.

7. Do I get paid to take part in this study?
- No

8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury? For any questions with this study, contact: - Primary Investigator: Aubree Windish at [Redacted] or
- Faculty Sponsor: [Redacted]

9. What will you do with my Identifiable Information/Biospecimens?
- Identifiable information, such as your name and email address, will be kept in a password protected file on Aubree Windish’s computer. This information will not be shared with anyone other than the Faculty Sponsor. Any reference to you in future publications will employ a pseudonym and all individually identifiable information will be removed.
- No biospecimens are collected as part of this study.

For any questions about your rights in this research study, contact the ORSP at 610-436-3557.

☐ Yes, I agree to participate in this study. (1)
☐ No, I do not agree to participate in this study. (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Informed Consent Form Project Overview: Participation in this research project is voluntary and i... = No, I do not agree to participate in this study.

Q7 Please provide an email address which I can use to contact you in case I have further questions.
________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Block 2 - Informed Consent

Start of Block: Block 3
Q8 Please fill in the following information:

☐ Age (1) __________________________________________________

☐ Gender Identity: (2) _______________________________________

☐ Racial/Ethnic Identity: (3) ____________________________________

Q9 What is the highest level of formal education that you have completed?

☐ Associate's Degree (3)

☐ Bachelor's Degree (5)

☐ Master's Degree (4)

☐ Other (6) __________________________________________________

Q10 Please indicate which teaching practicum was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in some form. ie virtual learning, hybrid learning, virtual supervision/feedback, limited observations, etc. Mark ALL that apply.

☐ Elementary Observations (1)

☐ Secondary Observations (2)

☐ Student Teaching (3)

☐ Other (4) __________________________________________________

Q11 Are you currently teaching music at a PK-12 school?

☐ Yes (1)

☐ No (2)
Q12 How many years have you been teaching music at a PK-12 school?

- Less than one year (1)
- 1 year (6)
- 2 years (7)
- 3 years (8)
- I do not have any PK-12 teaching experience (10)
- Other (9) __________________________________________________

Q13 What was your main reason for choosing music education as your undergraduate degree program?

________________________________________________________________

Q14 Do you have any immediate family members who are also music educators? If yes, please list their relationship to you below. (ie. mother, father, brother, etc.)

________________________________________________________________

End of Block: Block 3

Start of Block: Block 4

Q15 Thank you for volunteering to participate in a focus group conversation. Which of the following options work for you? Mark ALL that apply.

- Yes, I am available to meet in-person at [Redacted] (1)
- Yes, I am available to meet on Zoom (2)
- No, I am not available (3)

Skip To: End of Survey If Thank you for volunteering to participate in a focus group conversation. Which of the following o... = No, I am not available
Q16 We will schedule the focus groups sometime between this October - January. Please indicate the days and times you are most available to meet for one, 2-hour focus group, whether on Zoom or in-person.

- Weekday afternoons (2)
- Weekday evenings (11)
- Weekend mornings (3)
- Weekend afternoons (9)
- Weekend evenings (10)
- These days/times do not work, but the one below does: (8)

__________________________________________
End of Block: Block 4
Appendix G: Focus Group Guide

Surviving pandemic practicum: Early career music teachers’ perceived self-efficacy following the COVID-19 pandemic

In-Person Focus Group Script: [Individually, before entering the room] Good evening and thank you for attending my focus group. All participants must use a pseudonym, or a made-up name, by which we will address you throughout the focus group and in the study. Please choose a pseudonym and write that name on your name tag before affixing it on your shirt.

[Once all participants are in the room] Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today for this focus group. My research team members are also here to help with anything you need throughout the course of this focus group. They can assist you with water, restroom locations, or anything else you may need. Today, I hope to gather a bit more information about you as early career music educators and your undergraduate practicum experiences, as they were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to ask your permission to record this focus group and review the consent form with you. If you agree to be recorded, you may stay here. If you do not agree to be recorded, I ask that you excuse yourself from the room. Please remember, you can skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may stop participating at any time. All participants here have chosen a pseudonym by which they should be referred throughout the duration of this focus group. Please refrain from calling participants any name except the pseudonym provided on their name tag. [Begin recording.] [Begin the Focus Group Questions]

Zoom Focus Group Script: [As participants enter the Zoom Room] Good evening and thank you for attending my focus group. All participants must use a pseudonym, or a made-up name, by which we will address you throughout the focus group and in the study. Please choose a pseudonym and change your Zoom name to that pseudonym.

[Once all participants are in the Zoom room] Thank you so much for agreeing to meet with me today for this focus group. Today, I hope to gather a bit more information about you as early career music educators and your undergraduate practicum experiences, as they were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

I would like to ask your permission to record this focus group and review the consent form with you. If you agree to be recorded, you may stay here. If you do not agree to be recorded, I ask that you exit the Zoom room at this time. Please remember, you can skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may stop participating at any time. All participants here have chosen a pseudonym by which they should be referred throughout the duration of this focus group. Please refrain from calling participants any name except the pseudonym provided on their Zoom account. [Begin the Focus Group Questions]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Let’s go around the room and please start by sharing your pseudonym, what you taught/are teaching (grade level and musical domain), and how long you taught/have been teaching?</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Okay, now, let’s go around again, and think back on your student teaching experience. Tell me (1) how your experiences were altered due to the pandemic, and (2) how they were adapted for you, your institution, and the PK-12 school.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Okay, now, we’re not going around the room anymore. Let’s just have a couple of people respond to this next question. Many practicum experiences include observing in-service teachers in the classroom, specifically their teaching pedagogy and classroom management. During the pandemic, however, many teachers had to adapt their practice to new conditions. What adaptations and changes did you observe your mentor teacher making? How does what you observed differ from your current practice?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Praxis Shock is the shock experienced by teachers when there are discrepancies between their expectations of school life and the realities of teaching for real. Did you experience praxis shock? Do you think your praxis shock was somehow more intense because you had a pandemic practicum, or do you perceive this to be typical first-year praxis shock?</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Perceived self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their capacity to achieve something – in this case, your ability to be a successful teacher. This could refer to either pedagogy, content, classroom management, or your ability to work with district and community members. Tell me about your self-efficacy now, and when you first started teaching.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Now, let’s move out of the pandemic practicum time, and into your first job in the actual classroom. Tell me about the most emotionally intense moment you encountered during your first or second year of in-service teaching? What happened, and what did you learn?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>(Hand out blank notecards). Feedback from your mentor teachers and supervising professors are an important element of your teaching practicum. They may comment on your classroom teaching, classroom management, or basic organizational skills. Think back on your student teaching and, on the small notecard to your left, list some of the feedback, whether statements provided on your written evaluations, or verbal comments you received, from either your mentor teacher or supervising professor. (4 minutes individually). Now let’s look down at our notecards. Out of all the main feedback comments you received, can</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
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you circle the one that you believe was the most important (1 minute individually).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physiological Feedback</th>
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<th>Closing</th>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
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| Total | 120 |