

SUCCESSFUL URBAN ELEMENTARY MUSIC EDUCATORS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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

by
G. PRESTON WILSON, JR.
Dr. Wendy Sims, Dissertation Supervisor

JULY 2021

© Copyright by G. Preston Wilson, Jr. 2021

All Rights Reserved

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SUCCESSFUL URBAN ELEMENTARY MUSIC EDUCATORS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

presented by G. Preston Wilson, Jr.,

a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

Professor Wendy Sims

Professor Brian Silvey

Professor Brandon Boyd

Professor Jennifer Fellabaum-Toston

DEDICATION

To my parents, thank you for your unwavering love and support.

To Mrs. Jane Bruer and Mrs. Scott Hill, thank you for introducing me to the world of music education and instilling in me a love of music and teaching.

To my former students in Toledo Public Schools and their families, thank you for revealing to me my purpose.

And thanks be to God: I will forever be grateful for God's great faithfulness.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Sims; thank you so much for your support and nurturing through this process. I will always be appreciative and humbled that I had the opportunity to work under your model scholarship and leadership. Your time, consideration, and patience are things I count as a blessing. Thank you for believing in me. Thank you to my committee members Dr. Brian Silvey, Dr. Brandon Boyd, and Dr. Jennifer Fellabaum-Toston, for challenging me to see my research through a much broader view; and thank you for being a part of my dissertation process.

I would also like to thank my best friend and mentor, Dr. Braxton D. Shelley. Thank you for seeing what I was capable of and pushing me toward that end; thank you for your refusal to allow me to doubt in myself. Thank you to my colleagues Carlot Dorve, Leah Gumbel, and Kendra Franks for your assistance and support of me in this work. Their time, efforts, and words of encouragement were so greatly appreciated.

Lastly, a mighty thanks to entities outside of the School of Music that kept me grounded during my doctoral journey: The MU Writing Center, the Association of Black Graduate and Professional Students, the Xi Epsilon Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., and Urban Empowerment Ministries. Thank you for providing balance to my life.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....ii

ABSTRACT.....vi

Chapter I: Introduction.....1

 Need for the Study.....6

 Purpose Statement.....7

 Research Questions.....7

 Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study.....8

Chapter II: Review of Literature.....9

 Defining Urban.....9

 Defining Urban Education.....11

 Defining Urban Music Education.....14

 Urban Music Teachers.....16

 Urban Music Students.....18

 Music Teacher Preparation.....21

 Successful Music Teachers in Urban Schools.....27

 Summary.....34

Chapter III: Methodology.....36

 Research Questions.....36

 Research Question 1.....36

 Research Question 2.....37

 Research Design.....38

 Positionality Statement.....41

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Participants..... | 43 |
| Participant Profiles..... | 45 |
| Procedures..... | 49 |
| Analysis..... | 52 |
| Coding..... | 52 |
| Trustworthiness..... | 53 |
| Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations..... | 53 |
| Chapter IV: Analysis..... | 56 |
| Definitions of Urban..... | 56 |
| Definitions of Success..... | 57 |
| Theme 1: Relationships are Key..... | 61 |
| Relationships with Students..... | 61 |
| Relationships with Parents..... | 63 |
| Relationships with Administration..... | 65 |
| Theme 2: Understanding How Music Functions for Students..... | 68 |
| Theme 3: Willingness to Perform Unofficial Job Duties..... | 70 |
| Advocacy | 71 |
| Theme 4: Concerns About Urban Teacher Preparation..... | 75 |
| Theme 5: Curricular and Pedagogical Decisions..... | 78 |
| Continuity of Education..... | 83 |
| Content is Secondary..... | 87 |
| Theme 6: Urban Music Teacher Characteristics..... | 89 |
| Race and Racism..... | 92 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Frustrations of Urban Music Teachers..... | 97 |
| Summary..... | 98 |
| Chapter V: Discussion..... | 100 |
| Definitions of Urban..... | 102 |
| Definitions of Success..... | 103 |
| Key Findings..... | 104 |
| Relationships are Key (RQ 1.1).... | 105 |
| Understanding How Music Functions for Students (RQ 1) | 107 |
| Willingness to Perform Unofficial Job Duties (RQ 1).... | 108 |
| Concerns About Urban Teacher Preparation (RQ 1)..... | 109 |
| Curricular and Pedagogical Decisions (RQ 2)..... | 114 |
| Characteristics of Urban Music Teachers (RQ 1.2)..... | 115 |
| Implications..... | 124 |
| Recommendations..... | 125 |
| Future Research..... | 129 |
| Final Thoughts | 130 |
| References..... | 132 |
| APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL..... | 154 |
| APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT..... | 155 |
| APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT..... | 158 |
| APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS..... | 159 |
| APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS..... | 161 |
| VITA | 162 |

SUCCESSFUL URBAN ELEMENTARY MUSIC EDUCATORS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

G. Preston Wilson, Jr.

Dr. Wendy Sims, Dissertation Advisor

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the characteristics and experiences of teachers who have been successful in urban elementary music classrooms. I aimed to garner an authentic picture and capture the essence of what it means to be a successful urban elementary music educator. This hermeneutic phenomenology was guided by two research questions: (1) What are the lived experiences of urban music educators who have been successful in teaching music at the elementary level? (2) What are the pedagogical approaches used by elementary music educators in urban contexts? The related sub-questions were as follows: (1) What characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom? (2) What are characteristics of these educators (e.g., personal, educational, interpersonal)?

Data collection included approximately 60-minute semi-structured interviews from eight participants. A constant comparative method was utilized to examine the coded transcripts. Trustworthiness was established through data triangulation, participant checking, and peer checking.

Through the three-part analysis, six themes emerged: (a) relationships are key; (b) understanding how music functions for students; (c) willingness to perform unofficial job

duties; (d) concerns about urban teacher preparation; (e) curricular and pedagogical decisions; and (f) urban music teacher characteristics.

The findings of this study, as well as that of other scholars in music education, suggest that being a successful urban elementary music educator is the result of a composite set of skills. The teachers who participated in this study use creativity when making curricular and pedagogical decisions, possess a complex knowledge and understanding of their students, their students' families, and their students' community, and have a deep affection for what they do and whom they serve. Successful urban elementary music educators can serve as valuable resources to provide understanding and offer suggestions for improving urban music education, including ways to nurture and develop the next wave of music educators.

Chapter I: Introduction

Urban communities have become more prevalent in the United States since the middle of the 20th century. According to the Center for Sustainable Systems (2020) there is an estimated 83% of the U.S. population that lives in urban areas; this is an increase from 64% in 1950. The Center projects that by 2050, 89% of the U.S. population and 68% of the world population will live in urban areas. Because of this, there is a renewed interest in discovering ways to best serve the students and teachers in these urban locations (Wiggin, 2020). Various organizations, including federal entities, have offered funding and resources in the hopes that these learning communities experience success (Kraehe et al., 2016).

What is *urban*? The U. S. Census Bureau defines urban areas as places that represent densely developed territory and encompass residential, commercial, and other nonresidential urban land uses. The Census Bureau also identifies two types of urban areas: “urbanized areas” of 50,000 or more people and “urban clusters” of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, p. X).

While the Census Bureau definition of urban is clear, among educational researchers, practitioners, and policymakers there is no universal definition of urban education (Welsh & Swain, 2020). In the Handbook of Urban Education, editors Milner and Lomotey (2014) suggested that there was a “definitional gap” because “research has failed to provide a comprehensive, uniform definition of urban education” (p. xix). An examination of various academic journals that focus on urban education reveals a rich array of topics pursued under the rubric of urban education, but they do not offer any singular definition of what urban education means (Coloma, 2020). The vast majority of

studies ground their definitions of urban education in location, size, and population (Schaffer et al., 2018). Additionally, the shifting demographics of neighborhoods, increasing diversity of students, and widespread disparities across and within districts and schools nationwide have further complicated the categorization of urban versus nonurban districts (Welsh & Swain, 2020).

Over the past 10 to 15 years, there has been an increase in published scholarship concerning urban music programs. When accessing the Research tab on the National Association for Music Education website, music educators can peruse academic and practitioner journals. For example, using Sage Journals publishing, a search of “urban” in the *Journal of Research in Music Education* returned 249 articles; *Journal of Music Teacher Education* returned 73 results; and *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* returned 72 results (obtained in February, 2021). The majority of these articles address the problems of urban schools and communities, perceptions of pre-service and in-service teachers, skills needed to address urban students, or how urban schools are so different from suburban schools. A similar search of practitioner-oriented periodicals yielded 66 results for *General Music Today*, while *Music Educators Journal* yielded 589 results, with many articles regarding topics involving a description of urban music contexts or preparing new teachers for urban music classrooms.

Teaching in an urban setting offers unique challenges as compared with rural and suburban schools. Anderson & Denson (2015) asserted that urban school districts were frequently underfunded, understaffed, and overpopulated. Additionally, students’ socioeconomic status, religion, culture, family structures, and educational values usually differed from those in schools in rural and suburban settings. Although schools in rural

America are disproportionately White, like urban schools, they are disadvantaged relative to suburban schools in terms of poverty and standardized assessment (Logan & Burdick-Will, 2017). Understanding and adapting to these differences is integral to the success of urban school teachers (Anderson & Denson, 2015). Urban schools, their students, and their teachers are often characterized by overarching descriptions related to deficit and crisis, causing the complex realities of urban education to remain vague behind a collection of assumptions and stereotypes (Martinetti et al., 2013; Salvador & Kelly-McHale, 2017).

The negative ideas specifically are a challenge to urban education: they are counterproductive for all stakeholders involved. Connotations of the term “urban” may involve conditions of cultural conflict grounded in racism and economic oppression (Shaw, 2018). Welsh and Swain (2020) found that attitudes towards urban education embodied deficit perspectives. Examples of these assumptions and stereotypes include characterizing the students as participating in negative social behaviors like drug abuse, violence, and/or staying away from school without good reason (Doyle, 2009); or as children with behavioral problems, parental noninvolvement issues, and possessing skills and understandings that do not readily transfer to meet teacher or school expectations (Benedict, 2006). When some educators, parents, politicians, or philanthropists say “urban” or “urban schools” or “urban students,” they are usually referring to schools with a large and visible proportion of students of color, particularly African American and/or Latinx students from low-income or working-class backgrounds (Coloma; 2020).

It is important to recognize the historical context and events that likely had an impact on the creation of urban schools. One event in particular is segregation, as it had a

major impact on education in American schools. The Supreme Court's ruling of the *Plessy v. Ferguson* case in 1896 that made it legal for schools to be separated by race as long as the conditions and facilities were equal, upholding the legal doctrine "separate but equal" (p. 552). Given that this court decision occurred during the Jim Crow era, Jim Crow laws mandated racial segregation in all public facilities in southern states, ergo schools continued to be segregated and unequal (Sterns, 2021). The monumental 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court ruling overturned *Plessy v. Ferguson* and made school segregation by race unconstitutional. However, over 60 years later, segregation continues to trend along race and class divisions in both schools and communities (Rushing, 2017). One scholar offered the conflicting notion that since the 1990s, this persistence can be seen as resegregation of urban communities and suburban communities (Billingham, 2019).

Currently, there are mitigating variables in assessing segregation or integration in communities. One is gentrification in geographic locations. Gentrification is the process of improving poorer neighborhoods with better/more expensive housing and newer businesses, that often results in population migration and displacement because rents are raised and wealthier people move in, thus altering the racial/ethnic composition and household income of those neighborhoods. Another is the increased presence of non-White families in suburban communities (Billingham, 2019), increasing the diversity in those schools. With respect to education, segregation can be perceived of as occurring between various schools in adjacent school districts (Billingham, 2019).

Although segregation has left its mark on American education, it did not seem to have an effect on stratifying the teaching workforce. In 2003, the National Center for

Education Statistics reported that 90% of American public-school teachers were White, while 40% of the students were of color. While many urban schools are situated in underserved communities where the majority of pupils are students of color, the majority of teachers in those communities typically are White, female, and middle class (Hess, 2017), from small towns or suburbs where limited experiences with diversity may have resulted in negative attitudes and beliefs about people whose backgrounds differ from their own (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). As a result, teachers or researchers who do not consider the cultural context of minority students often suggest solutions that, despite good intentions, are short-sighted and not centrally relevant to the problem (Kindall-Smith, 2004). Diversifying the teacher pool is a goal, but many traditional university-based education programs have been challenged in attracting high academic achievers and teacher candidates of color (Gormes, Sr., 2017). This potentially presents a problem if new teacher candidates are not adequately prepared to teach children in urban schools (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon, 2012).

This information leads me to believe that the field of music education is reasonably informed about urban schools and urban students, is attempting to stay current and even ahead of educational trends, and ultimately wants success for urban music students and urban music teachers alike. But does the field really know what it means to *be* an urban music educator? Outside the perceptions and biases, the known lack of resources and funding, and the assumptions and codewords: what is that lived experience? It is impossible to know about urban music education without knowing the urban music *educators*. Once this information is obtained, what is the next step? If reform is the trajectory of the field, then true reform can only take place when the real experts

are consulted: the individuals who are in the trenches of urban music education, the individuals who have thrived in that world.

Need for the Study

Urban music education is exceptionally nuanced and complex, as are urban music educators. To explore those complexities and acquire a better understanding of urban music education, I believe it is fitting to begin with exploring urban music educators and their experiences. This brings us to the current research, as this study aims to better understand the of urban music educator. Martignetti, et al. (2013) stated,

Urban youths and the teachers who serve them remain largely misrepresented, misunderstood, and invisible to many Americans behind a wall of stereotypes and assumptions, both positive and negative, that fail to express the complex realities that make up urban public education” (p. 2).

As a former urban music teacher, I am fully cognizant of the “complex realities” that the quote above speaks to, and I believe the field of music education would stand to benefit a great deal from learning about this as well.

It is encouraging that a growing body of scholarship has profiled music educators who have achieved success in urban settings despite challenges present in those environments. Scholarship has been representative of educators that have taught high school band and preK–eighth grade choir (Abril 2006); taught high school instrumental (Fitzpatrick, 2011); or directed high school choir (Shaw 2015). More research is necessary in urban elementary general music classrooms, however. This is the most inclusive music education setting, given that music is typically a required part of the elementary curriculum (NAfME, 2015). While performance-based classes (choir, band, orchestra) or general music in secondary schools are usually optional, elective and/or auditioned, the general music educators teach all students in the elementary grades. Thus,

elementary general music classrooms may be more challenging or may offer a different set of challenges than other contexts (Allen, 2011). The profession should be striving to implement the findings of this research, to better understand the context, knowledge, and skills of the children that are being taught. Scholarship should support the notion that effective urban teaching or success cannot and should not be reduced to a set of pre-specified teacher attributes, behaviors, and practices (Shaw, 2018), and should include perspectives of the successful urban music educator.

The study also adds to the field of qualitative research that currently exists related to urban schools. The lived experiences of urban music school teachers help to shed light on the challenges and rewards of teaching in an urban school.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics and experiences of teachers who have been successful in urban elementary music classrooms. This study aims to garner an authentic picture and capture the essence of what it means to be a successful urban elementary music educator.

Research Questions

Two main research questions guided this research. Each research question also includes sub questions that were designed to assist in answering the main research questions.

1. What are the lived experiences of urban music educators who have been successful in teaching music at the elementary level?
 - a. What characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom?

- b. What are characteristics of these educators (e.g., personal, educational, interpersonal)?
2. What are the pedagogical approaches used by elementary music educators in urban contexts?

Rationale, Relevance, and Significance of the Study

This study adds to the field of qualitative study that exists presently related to urban schools. Learning about the lived experiences of urban elementary music teachers can help to shed light on the challenges and rewards of teaching in an urban school. Ultimately, this research can be used to better prepare pre-service music teachers so they may be more informed about the job they may be undertaking.

The study also offers a chance and framework for teachers to reflect on their experiences in urban music classrooms, both the research participants and other teachers who may wish to ask themselves these questions. Reflections can motivate and help teachers realize the need to adjust current practices to serve all students better; and can also provide an opportunity to self-actualize and celebrate the great work they are doing. These reflections will provide essential insights from which others can learn.

Chapter II: Review of Literature

In the United States, the number of people living in urban communities is on the rise. The Center for Sustainable Systems (2020) estimated that the majority of the U.S. population lives in urban areas, with an upward trend for the future. This has rekindled attention to discovering ways to best serve the students and teachers in these urban locations (Wiggin, 2020). This review of literature explores how urban communities are defined and interrogates the various perspectives around urban education. Following that, the various facets of urban music education are considered, as well as the implications they have on teachers, students, and approaches to teaching.

Defining Urban

Urban is an adjective, defined as something of, relating to, characteristic of, or constituting a city (Merriam-Webster, 2021). The U.S. Census Bureau defines urban as comprising all territory, population, and housing units located in urbanized areas and in places of 2,500 or more inhabitants outside of urbanized areas (UAs); an UA is a continuously built-up area with a population of 50,000 or more. It comprises one or more places—central place(s)—and the adjacent densely settled surrounding area—urban fringe—consisting of other places and nonplace territory (Urban Area Criteria for the 2010 Census, 2011, p. 12-1). Doyle (2014) found that the strict definition of the word ‘urban’ refers generally to a city or town; but also much of the literature uses ‘urban’ as a de-facto euphemism for the politically charged term *inner-city*. Fitzpatrick (2008) conceived that an urban environment in the USA encompasses the following factors: “the majority of its population is non-White, it is located in a city, it has a variety of income levels, and/or has low levels of socioeconomic status” (p. 27).

As the country continues on its path toward increased urbanization with more varied demographic characteristics, groups that were once segregated by geography, race/ethnicity, culture, and socioeconomic status are now living and working together at a fast rate (Doyle, 2014; Legette, 2003). Because of this, student populations in many urban centers are becoming more culturally diverse, and this development is likely to continue indefinitely in all areas of the United States (Kelly, 2003; Legette, 2003; Doyle, 2014). Due to historical, social, and economic issues, however, many students in urban centers in the USA currently still tend to be people of color who come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Doyle, 2014).

The majority of suburban areas in the United States generally have less diverse demographics than urban areas where the majority of suburban students are often White. This occurs because the majority of suburban schools tend to be located in or near the neighborhoods they serve and are attended by children from largely middle-class families (Doyle, 2014). Suburban areas tend to consist of families whose racial makeup generally reflects the national average composition of 75.1% White, 12.3% African American, 12.5% Hispanic, 3.6% Asian, and 5.6% Native American, Pacific Islander, or other race (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), especially in those neighborhoods immediately surrounding urban areas (Kozol, 2006; Reardon & Bischoff, 2014). Highly qualified educators may be drawn to suburban districts where greater funds and resources are available (Abril, 2006) instead of the many problems associated with urban schools at-risk students, the most prevalent problems, and extraordinary negative publicity” (Baker, 2012; Kindall-Smith, 2004).

Teaching in an urban setting offers unique challenges not found in rural and suburban schools (Baker, 2012). Additionally, socioeconomic status, religion, culture, nontraditional family structures, and educational values usually differ from those in schools in rural and suburban settings (Anderson & Denson, 2015). Understanding and being able to adapt to these differences is essential to the success of urban school music teachers. An examination of the state of education in suburban and urban schools reveals many complex and varied issues concerning the availability and equity of quality education. Weiner (2000) characterized an urban school as follows: sizeable, highly diverse population, substantial centralized bureaucracy, inadequate funding, large numbers of cultural and linguistic minorities, and standardized measures of academic achievement. Neighborhoods in the suburbs tend to have schools that “are typically perceived to be academically sound, physically safe, and the best routes to the best colleges, which provide the best career and life opportunities” (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2004, p. 29). Comparisons between suburban, urban, and rural music teachers need to be explored so that the profession may be able to better understand and serve these teachers. Such an exploration allows for the development of better context-specific strategies for the recruitment, retention, and preparation of music teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Defining Urban Education

While the definition of urban is clear among educational researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, there is no universal definition of *urban education* (Welsh & Swain, 2020). Milner and Lomotey (2014) and Coloma (2020) implied that this lack of a universal definition creates a gap, while Schaffer et al. (2018) provides quantitative statistics on urban education. Definitions of urban education are articulated

most frequently using descriptive rather than empirical terms. Urban schools, and the students and teachers within, are often characterized by a metanarrative of deficit and crisis, causing the complex realities of urban education to remain unclear behind a wall of assumptions and stereotypes (Martignetti et al., 2013). Discussions around urban education are filled with complexity, contradiction, and crisis, as if they are permanent characteristics (Kindall-Smith et al., 2011). When imagining urban education, the first images that come to people's minds may include concentrated poverty, cultural heterogeneity, crumbling houses, non-White violence, drugs, low academic achievement, failing schools, absence of family values, bureaucratic organizational structures, transient student populations, and community safety concerns (Baker, 2012; Chou & Tozer, 2008; Fitzpatrick, 2008, 2011; Matsko & Hammerness, 2014; Shaw, 2018; Kincheloe et al., 2007; Kindall-smith et al., 2011)

Frequently, as Emmanuel (2006) pointed out, "discussions of urban schools overlap with discussions of other topics, such as cultural diversity, inner-city issues, and at-risk students, that often rely on 'sets of assumptions'" (p. 15). The assumptions about the "inner city" have been shaped by media portrayals that often sensationalize the most negative aspects of urban environments (Shaw, 2015). Further, the assumption that urban students are "at risk" carries connotations of a deficit perspective in which youth are viewed as disadvantaged, neglected, or deviant (Benedict, 2006; Shaw, 2015). These assumptions are many times coupled with evidence of malnutrition, inadequate housing, inferior medical care, and family disruptions, which pose risks that severely impact students' academic achievement and ability to concentrate in school (Kopetz, et al.,

2006). Family mobility and limited English proficiency may add to the frustrations that urban students face (Knapp & Shields, 1990).

Racial and ethnic issues are also visibly present in inner-city schools (Doyle, 2012). Due to various historical and economic influences, the majority of people in many urban environments are members of U.S. racial minorities, with African American and Hispanic populations being the most prevalent (Cornbleth, 2008; Delpit, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, the majority of teachers entering the profession are members of the middle class who have not lived in high-poverty environments, and most are members of a different ethnic background than their urban students (Benedict, 2006; Delpit, 2006; Emmanuel, 2006; Kelly, 2003; Kindall-Smith, 2006; Siwatu, 2011). This ethnic and cultural dichotomy has consequences, as Emdin (2017) pointed out that public schools are the main site of the *whitewashing of culture*, defined as the erasure of ethnic or racial attributes in an attempt to merge in the White culture that is perceived as the norm (Pyke & Dang, 2003).

One of the assumptions about urban education is that many schools in urban areas have less resources or have inequitable access to resources as compared with suburban schools. These claims are substantiated by the property tax–based system of public-school funding that distributes resources unequally between neighborhoods, thereby solidifying existing social boundaries (Erickson, 2008). This system is particularly disadvantaging to urban schools situated in underserved communities where teachers are challenged to provide quality educational experiences but are given inadequate resources to do so (Erickson, 2008).

When discussing urban education reform, Boutte (2012) spoke to elementary schools specifically as the starting point. If students in urban schools gain the academic and social skills needed to succeed in elementary school, this pattern could continue thorough middle and high school, assuming that middle and high schools do their part to continue patterns of achievement (Boutte, 2012). Additionally, the author suggested beginning with the improvement of elementary schools as a first step to “change the prevailing image and substance of urban schools from that of endemic nonsuccess to one of success” (Boutte, 2012, p. 525).

Defining Urban Music Education

“Urban,” as used in “urban music education,” can be approached from a number of directions, e.g., popular culture, demographics, socio-economic issues, geography (Eros, 2018, p. 408). Another approach is much more direct, as Farmer (2015) stated:

We seem to have a socially constructed need to emphasize perceived contrasts between education that occurs anywhere else and education that occurs in city schools, places that are so different from their suburban or rural counterparts that they get their own set of adjectives. We seldom label educational practices or people as “suburban schools” or “suburban students” or “suburban music education,” but we may often use “urban” as a label to “other.” The label of “urban” reads as to make foreign or contrasting; school systems, students, teachers, and practices located in cities become a separate group within music education. Such labels, these tags that serve to separate and subjugate, are code for terms that carry weight and mean much more than they say. (pg. 2)

Farmer (2015) continued by discussing the implications of such rhetoric while critiquing Frierson-Campbell’s (1996) two-volume edited work entitled *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom*. She pointed out that subtitle of the first volume reads *A Guide to Survival, Success, and Reform*, implying that *urban music education* is something potentially dangerous, challenging, or life threatening. While the content within the text

are great resources, the title suggests negative connotations that further propert the deficit rhetoric around urban music education.

Salvador & Allegood (2014) indicated that that students from disadvantaged backgrounds may stand to gain the most from sustained, high-quality instruction in the arts. Their study also indicated that schools that serve a high proportion of non-White students and/or students in poverty are also the schools most likely to lack any form of music instruction, meaning music education is nonexistent in some schools (Salvador & Allegood, 2014). When urban music programs are available, many schools are distinctly disadvantaged in terms of music resources and music opportunities. Delorenzo & Silverman (2016) asserted that this not only devalues music as a career, but also hinders students of color from entering college music programs on an even playing field with their peers. Specifically, an urban-schooled student of color would have to traverse an impossibly rugged terrain just for the opportunity, let alone to successfully complete a degree program (Delorenzo & Silverman, 2016). The previous scenario highlights a common tiered or systemic issue of diversity and inclusion: from grade school through college.

Current research in music teacher education often overlooks urban students, mainly students of color, as important voices influencing American musical culture. This occurs by both teacher educators and researchers failing to address the challenge of preparing music teachers to truly understand and appreciate the nuances of diversity found in urban classrooms (Kindall-Smith et al., 2011). The voices of urban music practitioners are often missing from this dialogue, and the existing scholarly dialogue has had a very limited effect on music teacher education (Martignetti et al., 2013). Despite

the gradual flowering of interest among scholars in music education, the fact remains that, “the extant literature provides a limited understanding of an extremely dynamic teaching context” (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 230).

Urban Music Teachers

When defining *what* urban music education is, it is important to identify *who* urban music education involves; one of these entities are the teachers. While many urban schools are situated in underserved communities where the majority of pupils are students of color, the majority of teachers are White, female, and middle class (Kindall-Smith, 2006; Shaw, 2015). Ausmann (1991) found that urban music teachers tended to be predominantly White, 36-40 years old, who attended a suburban school, held a master's degree, attended predominantly White, large, public universities or colleges, and student taught in primarily White, suburban, or large urban settings. Fitzpatrick (2012) corroborated these results 20 years later by indicating these White teachers made up the majority, over 93%, of the music teaching force. She suggested that more work needed to be done to attract teachers of color into the profession in order to diversify the populations of both contexts (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Teacher Attitudes. The attitudes of teachers are tangled intricately with their expectations of students' behavior and performance. (Doyle, 2014). This is important as a teacher's attitude directly influences their classroom interactions and can have a direct impact on the performance and behavior of a student (Love and Kruger, 2005). In 2010, Bernard conducted a study in which teachers reported experiencing great reward in building relationships with their students, while making them feel valued and respected.

Support is an additional factor that has been found to be related to teacher attitudes, expectations and turnover and attrition (Doyle, 2014). Support has often been noted to be inconsistent in many urban areas in the United States due to various school district and community issues, including funding and income disparities (Doyle, 2014). While support discrepancies are generally not intentional, they are nonetheless real and symptomatic of larger issues within the United States public education system (Doyle, 2014). Smith (2006) reported that urban music teachers had to handle lack of administrative support, lack of parental support, scheduling issues, insufficient teaching space, lack of instructional supplies, inadequate instrument budget, classroom management issues, and the transient nature of urban student populations. Similar sentiments were revealed in a related study of urban music educators including scheduling rehearsals outside of the school day, instrumental programs beginning in ninth grade, lack of funding for instruments, materials, and equipment, students with spiral needs being mainstreamed into music classes without paraprofessional aide, no physical music classroom, and large numbers of students (Abril, 2006). Because it has been determined to be an important factor influencing teacher attitudes, expectations, and music program success, support should be included in the dialogue regarding urban issues. (Doyle, 2014)

Teacher attitudes have been reported to impact all areas of student achievement (Barth 2004; Love and Kruger 2005; van den Bergh et al. 2010). Teachers who hold culturally relevant attitudes towards students are often most successful in urban classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2007; Love and Kruger 2005). Conversely, teachers who unintentionally harbor negative attitudes towards their urban students can inadvertently,

but severely, limit their students' achievement (Barth, 2004; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings 2006; van den Bergh et al. 2010). Negative attitudes toward urban students can range from simple ignorance of different cultural norms for communication and behavior to outright intolerance for diversity (Abril, 2009; Siwatu, 2011; van den Bergh et al. 2010; Villegas and Lucas, 2002).

Urban Music Students

Urban schools are characterized by their diverse student populations, serving more students of minority racial and ethnic descent and proportionally more students with physical, emotional, and mental disabilities than schools in other locations (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Performance-based music classrooms and ensembles in urban schools do not always represent the diversity of the student populations, however. DeLorenzo & Silverman (2016) conducted a study of music students from 750 American schools and found that the majority of students participating in school ensembles was overwhelmingly White. According to Elpus and Abril (2011), the absence of students of color in school ensembles “should be of great concern to the music education practitioners and researchers” (p. 141). The research indicates that music education may not be as inclusive and equitable as it desires to be in terms of reaching *all* students.

Urban students, and urban music students specifically, are often connected to the difficulties of teaching said students. Difficulties such as classroom discipline, uninvolved or unsupportive parents or guardians, cultural diversity, students' limited musical training and exposure, and unstable home environments are examples of such difficulties (Baker, 2012).

Developing or refining classroom management skills can be a daunting undertaking for all teachers, regardless of teaching context or discipline (Robinson, 2019). Classroom management and student misbehavior were listed as one of the primary issues urban teachers must confront (Baker, 2012), and a major problem that all teachers frequently identify for which they ask for assistance (Hunter & Haydon, 2019). Managing a classroom includes accounting for routines, schedules, physical arrangements, teacher–student relationships, learning dynamics, and instruction (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2019). Hunter & Haydon (2019) stated that the most common student misbehaviors, such as disengagement and mild disruptive behavior, often consume more than 80% of a teacher’s instructional time. Expert teachers continually refine how they manage their classrooms, but new teachers may feel overwhelmed when managing a classroom of students with a range of individual needs for the first time. Nationwide, teachers reported feeling underprepared to manage classrooms that include students with disabilities or students demonstrating problematic behaviors who disrupt the entire class (Nagro et al., 2020). In terms of preparation, teacher education programs often include one behavior management course which, even with a highly-competent instructor, proves not to be enough (Nagro et al., 2020). Furthermore, new teachers find that the classroom experiences they have in their own classrooms are very different from their student teaching experiences (Simmons, 2019). New teachers lack the confidence of veteran teachers and commonly report high levels of stress, which they attribute to struggles with behavior management and classroom discipline (Aloe et al., 2014). These feelings of pressure and failure leave many new teachers searching for ways to improve their classroom management on their own (Nagro et al., 2020).

Managing student misbehavior may be rooted in antiquated politics of school discipline, or the ways in which positive behavior is conceptualized as a whole. Karvelis (2017) stated that what is envisioned as a *good* student must change. The typical image of students quietly and passively sitting in their seats and receiving knowledge through what Freire (2000) would call the “banking concept” is unrealistic and ineffective; a revisioning of student behavior and engagement is needed (Karvelis, 2017). The unrealistic concept of the *model student* is based on a rather narrow and outdated way in which students are viewed; urban students, especially, may find themselves outside the purview of this perspective.

Knapp and Shields (1990) commented on how students are the most affected by rigid views of student behavior and traditional school expectations:

some children are doubly disadvantaged, first, because their patterns of behavior, language use, and values do not match those required in the school setting; and second, because teachers and administrators fail to adapt to and take advantage of the strengths that these students do possess. (p. 755)

This quote demonstrates how urban students are discredited when they do not fall in line with unrealistic expectations. Instead of looking at what students do not have as a model student, the focus should be on what they do have, and using that to help them be successful. As Knapp & Shields (1990) stated “we are often teaching children of poverty less than they are capable of” (p. 753).

Addressing music specifically, Kelly-McHale (2013) conducted a qualitative collective case study on expression of music in identity and identity in music and how this is influenced by elementary general music teacher’s curricular beliefs and practices. She found that when teachers do not integrate the cultural, linguistic, and popular music experiences of the students, the results are isolated musical experiences that are not

meaningful or supportive to students. She also found that when these skills were taught in isolated experiences they did not transfer to students' musical lives outside of the school setting (Kelly-McHale, 2013). Further, because of this, the students did not consider themselves to be "musicians" despite their participation in a school music program (Kelly-McHale, 2013).

Music's expressive nature can provide a sense of humanity to children who live in modern urban environments, and participating in the arts can help students learn to effectively express their emotions and their individual viewpoints (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). Music instruction could be especially beneficial to urban students because many are from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Doyle, 2014). However, because of various educational factors, enrollment of students of color and low socioeconomic status (SES) are starkly underrepresented in elective music classes (Elpus & Abril, 2011); despite its many benefits (Doyle, 2014).

Music Teacher Preparation

Despite the advantages of a racially and culturally diverse teacher population, the music education workforce, students, and faculty of music departments that prepare these new teachers remain predominantly White (Abramo & Bernard, 2020). The majority of pre-service teachers are White, female, and middle class, from small towns or suburbs, having limited diversity experiences and negative attitudes and beliefs about people who differ from themselves; these attributes may have a negative impact on teacher expectations (Kindall-Smith et al., 2011). Pre-service music teachers were found to have typically been educated in suburban and rural schools (40% each) with far fewer from urban backgrounds (16%) in terms of their primary and secondary education (Howey,

1989). Baker (2012) explained that a positive correlation existed between teachers' backgrounds and where they end up teaching. Siwatu, (2011) found that in general, preservice teachers reported feeling underprepared for teaching in positions in culturally diverse urban environments; Fiese & DeCarbo (1995) reported similar findings specific to preservice music teachers. Having a limited personal experience in urban contexts, they expressed discomfort, anxiety, and apprehension at the notion of working in inner-city schools (Kindall-Smith, 2004; Shaw, 2015).

Legette (2003) surveyed 398 K–12 music teachers and results indicated that although an overwhelming majority (99%) of the teachers felt that multicultural music should be included in public school music classes, and most said they felt comfortable (96%) and prepared (90%) to include music of other cultures in their classes, only 21% of the teachers stated that they actually included music of other cultures in all of their concert performances. Results also indicated that 29% of general music teachers included multicultural music as part of all of their classes, and 63% stated although they included some multicultural music in their teaching, they did not specifically select materials that were reflective of their class' ethnic makeup (Legette, 2003). Most importantly, majority of the teachers in Legette's study indicated that they received no multicultural music preparation at the undergraduate level and cited "a lack of knowledge, resources, and expertise" (Legette, 2003, p. 57).

Teacher education programs should include preparation for cultural diversity if the future teachers are to be successful in urban music classrooms. Preservice music education students will be at an advantage by having been afforded firsthand, real-world, and accurate experiences in a variety of urban classroom settings (Anderson & Denson,

2015). Knowledge of the urban setting has been found to be developed through experience rather than through formal education, a result that is consistent with previous research on urban teaching effectiveness (Lehmberg, 2008). If teacher education programs continue to avoid confronting prejudices and validation of the experiences of students of color, then music education graduates will continue to avoid music teaching in urban schools, wait for suburban openings, or decide to work in another sector all together (Kindall-Smith & Mills, 2008, as cited in Shaw, 2015). While first-hand experience is preferred, in circumstances where that is not feasible, research such as this current study can contribute by sharing the experiences of music teachers currently in the field.

Outcomes of Current Music Teacher Preparation. Teachers may experience “praxis shock” if the practical realities of teaching fail to live up to their expectations for their professional lives (Shaw, 2018, p. 25). In the attempt to manage praxis shock, novice teachers may disregard their preservice education as being irrelevant and switch to survival mode. These experiences of praxis shock may be further intensified by the distinctive challenges encountered in urban contexts (Shaw, 2018).

Olsen and Anderson (2007) reported that “teachers in high-poverty urban schools are as much as 50% more likely to migrate or leave than those in low-poverty schools” (p. 6). The high rate of attrition in urban schools has a negative affect on a student’s education because these vacancies are often filled by inexperienced or uncertified teachers who do not possess the skills and knowledge of relatability required to address the needs of urban students (Baker, 2012). Conversely, many new teachers either avoid urban areas altogether due to their preconceived misconceptions about urban

communities or accept urban jobs and end up becoming overwhelmed by realities that accompany them for which they are not prepared (Doyle, 2014).

Rather than attempting to prepare new teacher candidates for every conceivable context in which they ultimately might become employed, teacher education programs might do better to equip candidates with skills and dispositions needed to cultivate their own contextual knowledge of urban school (Shaw, 2015). Preservice teacher education programs must be broad and comprehensive enough to equip candidates for a range of teaching situations, although the responsibility for fostering urban teachers' professional growth cannot rest solely on teacher education programs (Shaw, 2015). Furthermore, it is important to be mindful that programs that only focus on the challenges of urban music teaching provide an inadequate perspective, one not essentially valuable for the profession (Martignetti et al., 2013). Even though many preservice programs proposit a one-size-fits-all approach to music teaching, effective teachers must be flexible as both musicians and as educators (Martignetti et al., 2013). The researchers suggested that preservice music teachers should continue to learn about how to apply pedagogy, skills, and training in a traditional sense, while simultaneously being guided in re-examining their assumptions held about music and urban students (Martignetti et al., 2013).

Preservice teachers need to have the opportunity to deconstruct familiar pedagogical approaches and synthesize them in a variety of learning environments (Martignetti et al., 2013). Eberly (2014) asserted that there were a few teacher education programs designed to prepare students for teaching in urban, high-poverty schools, but that in order for university students to benefit from these programs, they must already be enrolled in schools that offer such programs (which are often not highly publicized), or seek them

out on their own because of concerns about or the desire to teach in urban programs (Eberly, 2014).

Recruitment and Attrition. Boutelle (2009) reported that school districts nationwide lose approximately 50% of their novice teachers within the first five years of their entering the profession. Attrition rates are even higher in urban school systems which experience higher poverty rates than suburban areas and face unique challenges due to various issues that accompany this poverty (Eberly, 2014). Professional educators have expressed alarm at the impact this rate of attrition may have on the quality of education schools are able to provide (Eberly, 2014).

Not only is retention an issue, but recruitment is, as well. Several negative factors seem to deter teachers from considering urban teaching positions, and principals in high-poverty urban schools are twice as likely to have difficulty recruiting new faculty than other principals (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Many times, large urban districts extend job offers late in the summer, but this is too late because potential candidates have already accepted positions in suburban districts before that time (Fitzpatrick, 2012). Also, incoming teachers may be influenced by involvement in pre-service teaching opportunities that included negative urban school experiences (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

Professional development has been implemented in the hopes of addressing teachers' concerns in urban contexts, however previous research has documented that music-focused professional development offered by professional associations was geared toward "elite, suburban" programs and largely irrelevant to the experiences and realities of urban music classrooms (Shaw, 2015, p. 216). In urban education, an empirical-rational approach to change can be accompanied by a salvationist attitude in which

external “experts” descend on urban schools prepared to “save” teachers and students with “best practices” assumed to be appropriate for and relevant to all students (Benedict, 2006). These researchers would likely agree that these approaches to professional development may not be the most effective.

Baker (2012) concluded that there needs to be more of an effort to provide strategies to prepare students to teach in urban schools in university teacher training programs. But also, there should be a plan for recruiting urban students to be potential urban music teachers, as her results indicated that teachers who attended urban schools themselves had longer tenures in urban schools than those who had not (Baker, 2012).

Retention. With the many obstacles present and the negative connotations associated with it, why do teachers decide to teach music in an urban context? What keeps them there in spite of the challenges they face? Eros (2018) conducted a case study that examined and described the life experiences that led one teacher to pursue urban music education as a career. He found that his participant’s career choice was influenced by (1) feeling a need to be of service to others, (2) experiencing cultural differences, (3) curiosity about the location, which ultimately guided them to (4) being a part of the city (Eros, 2018). It was not merely a career choice for these teachers, but a targeted effort to teach music in a specific context and location (Eros, 2018).

Similarly, Smith (2006) conducted an exploratory case study of six novice urban music educators in or adjacent to the New York City area to describe their best and most challenging aspects of teaching music in an urban school. Emergent themes from the interviews included being student centered, benefits of cultural diversity (characterized mainly in terms of ethnicity), the ups and downs of administrative support, and

challenges in classroom management (Smith, 2006). Additionally, the researcher discovered that a teacher's educational background can influence the decision to teach in an urban school; specifically, the teachers who attended urban schools themselves wanted to teach in an urban school (Smith, 2006).

Successful Music Teachers in Urban Schools

While the deficit perspective looms over urban music, there have been teachers who have decided to work in urban schools, stay there, and thrived during their time there. What is the makeup of these teachers? What are the characteristics of successful urban music educators? In an effort to develop a profile of an effective urban music teacher, Baker (2012) surveyed high school choral directors, middle school choral directors, and elementary/general music specialists, and results indicated that an effective urban music educator was described as being empathetic, patient, knowledgeable, flexible, enthusiastic, compassionate, caring, determined, persistent, committed to working hard, loving and committed to students' learning. Similarly, Buford (2010) surveyed high school choral directors and described exemplary urban music educators as being, friendly, approachable, humorous, and selfless, while Robinson's (2004) six-person case study participants engaged in setting high standards and being sensitive to their student's life outside of the classroom. Smith (2006) determined that "appreciation of the needs and diversity of their students" was a "defining feature" of effective urban music educators (p. 60). Smith's study also revealed that factors contributing to teacher success included loving the students, attending urban schools themselves, coping with racial tensions, overcoming language barriers, and communicating with parents (Smith, 2006).

Benedict (2006) noted responses of the music teacher participants of her study and highlighted the value they placed on the importance of building relationships with students. Sometimes music teachers can view their own culture and ways of living and thinking as normal and the culture of their students as foreign, even disregarding their opinions altogether (Benedict, 2006). Building relationships can aid in mutual understanding of sometimes conflicting cultural understandings. Without building relationships, potential racial and cultural tensions can make the creation of academic connections between teachers and students difficult or even impossible. Furthermore, Benedict stressed the need to “find ways to acknowledge and make sense of how our students live in the world” (p. 11).

In a study of twenty urban music teachers, Fiese and DeCarbo (1995) found that maintaining strong connections with students’ parents, having a support system, and ongoing professional development were important factors leading to teaching effectiveness in the urban music classroom. In his study of three experienced urban music educators Abril (2006) revealed that the one thing that led to their success was the ability to identify and respond to their students’ emotional and educational needs. Additional effective characteristics included participants having attended urban schools, embracing diversity, having flexibility, managing student behavior successfully, writing grants, planning detailed lessons, creating approaches to work with English-language learners, and supplementing school budget with outside funding sources (Abril, 2006).

Non-Traditional Approaches in Urban Music Teaching. Martignetti et al., (2013) discussed the collective understanding of urban music teachers at the beginning of their tenure. The researchers cited Regelski (2005) as he advocated for a departure from

the “pedagogy and curricular assumptions of the conservatory paradigm of musical training” (p. 24) in order to “use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse cultures to make learning more appropriate and effective for urban students” (Frierson-Campbell, 2006, p. xiv). In a panel discussion, secondary urban music teachers shared their intuition, trial, and error, in their search for new and improved ways to “reach” their students (Martignetti et al., 2013).

This quest of finding ways to reach students with their prior knowledge often aligns with the principles of Critical Pedagogy in education. Critical Pedagogy was developed by Paulo Freire in Brazil in the 1960s to teach rural, illiterate adults (he calls them the “oppressed”) to read Portuguese. His goal was to use that knowledge as a bridge to new learning (Diemer, Rapa, Voight, & McWhirter, 2016). The concept of critical consciousness, or *Conscientização* according to Freire refers to “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Mora, 2014). This means taking strong critical stances about history, society, and even politics as the first step to meaningful change. While it seems idealistic in a utopian context, it provides hope by denouncing social inequity and giving purpose for improving our current society (Talbot & Williams, 2016): this is what non-traditional approaches look like and these are the outcomes.

Cultural Competence/Awareness. Urban teaching success may be determined by how teachers navigate the dynamic cultures of their particular classroom environments and the broader communities in which they are situated (Fitzpatrick, 2008). Differences between teachers and students can lead to cultural misunderstandings when they interact (Doyle, 2014). The majority of teachers (who are White) come from small towns or

suburbs where limited experiences with diversity may result in negative attitudes and beliefs about people whose backgrounds differ from their own (Shaw, 2015). As a result, cultural incongruities between teachers and students of different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds can present barriers to successful urban teaching (Benedict, 2006; Robinson, 2006). Teachers or researchers who do not consider the cultural context of minority students often suggest ideas that, despite good intentions, are short-sighted and ineffective when used outside the majority context (Delorenzo & Silverman, 2016). With a macro perspective, cultural incongruity can also exist on an institutional level when students' preferred learning, communication, and performance styles differ from those emphasized in schools (Gay, 2000; Shaw, 2015)

In order to bridge cultural misunderstanding and overcome these barriers to successful teaching, teachers can become more culturally competent or employ culturally responsive teaching. Villegas and Lucas (2002) outlined six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers:

(a) are socio-culturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and
(f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar. (p. 20)

Teachers can be effective when they honor students' cultural heritage while expanding their own horizons, established learning communities within their classrooms,

and meaningfully connected students' home and school cultures (Robinson, 2006). Future music educators need to develop a critical consciousness while simultaneously developing pedagogy and identity as teachers (Kindall-Smith et al., 2011).

Culturally Relevant Teaching. Educators have found success in urban music classrooms when they embraced the culture of urban youth as worthwhile and valuable to the educator (Emdin, 2017). Emdin described this as *Reality Pedagogy*, a term he created. Older scholarship refers to this approach to teaching as *culturally relevant pedagogy* (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Gay (2000, 2002) defined culturally relevant teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (Gay, 2002, p. 106). She identified five of its essential components:

1. Developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity.
 2. Including ethnic and culturally diverse content in the curriculum.
 3. Demonstrating caring and building learning communities.
 4. Communicating with ethnically diverse students.
 5. Responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction.
- (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

Kindall-Smith et al., 2011 emphasized that in order for music education to address cultural issues successfully, new approaches and new conversations must challenge the paradigm of exclusivity in repertoire and pedagogy.

These beliefs lead to “culturally relevant” teacher actions that communicate validation of student culture, and then incorporate said students' cultures into relevant, meaningful learning experiences that grant students the opportunity to critically examine musical, societal, and cultural issues (Doyle, 2014). In music classrooms, culturally relevant pedagogy can manifest through the teaching of music specific to the student population, teaching of music outside of the Western classical canon, offering non-

traditional ensembles (e.g., performing world or popular music), and offering non-performance music classes (e.g., songwriting or electronic music) (Doyle, 2012).

To thwart forcing irrelevant and culturally unresponsive expectations and curriculum onto urban youth, Emdin (2017) encouraged educators to reassess what learning and teaching should look like, and incorporate the preestablished cultural understandings of urban students into the classrooms. Martignetti et al. (2013) concurred, as these authors explained that teachers must break the cycles of frustration, misunderstanding, and power struggles that are characteristic of many urban music classrooms; and urged the field to design new frameworks that challenge the customary model of music education and teacher preparation. The first step towards progress and transformation is acknowledging that all students enter the classroom with existing expertise and knowledge (Delpit, 2006).

Culturally relevant teaching is under-researched in music education, providing many possibilities for future research (Shaw, 2015). Studies on students' perceptions of their teachers' attempts to teach in a culturally responsive manner would allow for a more multifaceted understanding of this complex phenomenon (Shaw, 2015).

Social Justice. A great deal of the scholarship that involves cultural awareness or culturally relevant pedagogy includes a component of social justice. Among early career music educators' learning needs, three are especially relevant to urban teaching: (a) developing knowledge of specific urban contexts, (b) evolving as culturally responsive teachers, and (c) embracing roles as social justice educators (Shaw, 2018). Nieto and Bode (2008) affirmed that social justice is “a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity” (p. 11).

Additionally, the authors posit that social justice in education functions to challenge cultural misconceptions, untruths, and stereotypes that lead to structural inequality and discrimination based on race, social class, gender, and other social and human differences; provide all students with equitable access to instructional and educational resources; draw on students' talents and strengths to increase learning; and foster a learning environment that promotes critical thinking and supports agency for social change (Nieto & Bode, 2008).

Even as social justice has become a prominent theme in teacher education and music education research, the precise intersection of music teacher education, social justice, and culturally diverse student populations remains underexplored (Shaw, 2020). Although music education scholarship can research social justice, until there is movement to create more socially just conditions (such as by valuing the expertise, experiences, and knowledge of all peoples), the field is simply pontificating without any practical ends (Delorenzo & Silverman, 2016). The researchers continue by posing a question to consider: what are the values, expertise, and experiences of urban students of color and do higher education institutions consider such knowledge bases valuable? (Delorenzo & Silverman, 2016). Urban teachers might further aim to develop students' "socio-political consciousness," a process that "is designed to help students ask larger socio-political questions about how schools and society work to expose ongoing inequity and social injustice" (Ladson-Billings, 2002, p. 111).

Contextual Nature of Urban Contexts. To successfully navigate the urban context, several models of teacher knowledge are employed that utilize the knowledge of learners and their characteristics (Shulman, 1987), knowledge of context (Grossman,

1990; Shulman, 1987), and personal practical knowledge (Clandinin, 1989). Clandinin (1989) defined *personal practical knowledge* as knowledge that is “practical, experiential, and shaped by a teacher’s purposes and values” (p. 122). Researchers have suggested that effective urban music educators draw on this specialized contextual knowledge to design instruction that is relevant and specific to their learners, school, community, and sociocultural contexts in which they are situated (Shaw, 2020).

Recognizing the importance of specialized, contextual knowledge contradicts the notion that effective teaching can be reduced to a set of predetermined behaviors, traits, or characteristics (Barnett & Hodson, 2001; Shaw, 2018). Teaching music in an urban school appears to require a specific skill set different from those used by suburban teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2008).

Summary

Scholarly research and discussion regarding urban music education are happening and have been on a steady increase in recent years. Although there is research on the characteristics of urban music education (both actual and perceived), urban music teacher preparation, urban music teachers’ attitudes and perceptions (both in-service and preservice), research on urban music teachers’ lived experiences is scarce to date. The profession at large does not often hear the voice of music teachers in urban schools, even though “the music teachers who deal with the realities of urban schooling on a daily basis are in many ways the experts” (Frierson- Campbell, 2006, p. xiv). Positive stories from the *real experts* have been noticeably absent from published writings about urban music education (2014). Credentialed music specialists are doing important work in urban schools nationwide, and we must share the best of their work with the rest of our

profession. Doyle (2014) highlighted how sharing the best work happening in urban music programs benefits multiple entities, and how these benefits are sustainable:

With a better understanding of these phenomena, tools can be created to help foster improved urban music teacher attitudes towards and expectations of their students. Positive teacher dispositions could lead to enhanced access to and experiences with quality music education for all urban students. (p. 437)

More research about successful urban music educators will not only benefit the domain of urban music education by shifting attitudes and perceptions of its teachers but will also be of benefit to the students in urban music classrooms.

The literature presented in this review provides many different descriptive perspectives of the various facets of urban music teaching: assumptions, attitudes, demographic makeup of teachers and students, and pedagogies and approaches to be used in urban music classrooms. More literature is needed to help create a more authentic image of those urban music educators, and for this current study urban elementary music educators that have been identified as effective and successful. My hope is that the field of music education can move beyond the assumptions and stereotypes of urban music teaching by changing ways of thinking as well as processes and pedagogical approaches in urban music classrooms. To help achieve this, my research will aid in answering the question: what does it mean to be a successful urban elementary music educator?

Chapter III: Methodology

The intent of this study is to contribute to the body of research on urban music education by investigating the experiences of successful urban elementary music teachers. The availability of scholarship about context-specific experiences and strategies used in the real urban classroom can assist in the recruitment, retention, and preparation of music teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Because the interview data collected for this study were based on the participants' lived experiences, a phenomenological design was employed (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Research Questions

In order to gain an understanding of what it means to be a successful urban elementary music educator, two main research questions guided this research, and six sub-questions were developed to assist in answering the main research questions. The sub-questions were designed to illuminate the multi-faceted reality of teaching in a urban school. RQ 1 and 2 are described and very broad

Research Question 1.

What are the lived experiences of urban music educators who have been successful in teaching music at the elementary level? As much of the research around urban music education addresses descriptive elements, more data is needed from a qualitative view: not just knowing what urban music educators are, but also knowing *who* they are. This question explores quite simply, “what it means to be a successful urban music teacher.”

Sub-question 1.1. What characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom? Because of the contextual nature of urban music programs, it was important

to interrogate the teacher's view of their success; or if they even deem themselves as successful. The term *successful* also possesses a subjective definition, so an exploration of different conceptualizations of success was paramount to the study. The antithesis of success, often lack of success or even failure, is just as important and worthy to be investigated. This requires not only describing a teacher's positive experiences, but also those that were not successful, and asking how they coped with those situations. Failure is a very real part of teaching (Peroff, 2019), and in urban setting, some teachers feel this is attributable to lack of preparation (Shaw, 2018; Robinson, 2017).

Sub-question 1.2. What are characteristics of these educators (e.g., personal, educational, interpersonal)? More pointedly, are there common traits that successful urban elementary music educators possess? This question investigates the features of successful urban music educators. Fitzpatrick (2012) provided demographic data on urban music educators, reporting that they were mostly White, female, with educational backgrounds from suburban areas. Baker (2012) and Buford (2010) described effective urban educators as being knowledgeable, empathetic, compassionate/caring, patient, flexible, enthusiastic, determined/persistent, selfless, and committed to students' learning. Answering this question will identify common characteristics, while also providing validity to previous research findings.

Research Question 2.

What are the pedagogical approaches used by elementary music educators in urban contexts? Fitzpatrick (2008) stated that successful music teaching in an urban school requires a specific skill set that differs from that used by suburban teachers; the urban setting offers unique challenges not found in rural and suburban schools (Anderson

& Denson, 2015). However, school preparation programs and professional development in school systems are many times geared toward “elite, suburban” programs and largely irrelevant to the urban experience (Shaw, 2015, p. 216). Furthermore, when urban music teaching is mentioned, it is often isolated tips, techniques, and “survival” strategies that are assumed to be transferable to any setting (Cochran-Smith, 2010). Ergo, examining the pedagogical strategies that reach urban students and cause a teacher to be successful is an important part of this research.

In that same vein, what experiences and influences shaped these approaches to urban contexts? Because much of the research indicated that preservice and new music teachers feel vastly unprepared to teach in urban school (Delpit, 2006; Doyle, 2012; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Martignetti et al., 2013), it is intriguing to discover what influenced the participants’ changed or non-traditional approach. Both Kindall-Smith et al. (2011) and Martignetti et al. (2013) advocated for new approaches in the classroom, and in music education at large, so discover why these teachers changed their approach can assist to that end.

Additionally, why do the teachers believe the approaches they use are successful with their students? What feedback are the teachers receiving from students concerning these different approaches? This line of thinking supports student-centered instruction which is paramount in urban music classrooms (Hanson, 2020).

Research Design

In order to gain an understanding of what it means to be an urban elementary music teacher, researchers must gain an understanding of their experiences and interpret the meaning of these experiences. Because the problems faced by urban music teachers

are complex and contextual, the research that explores these problems may best be studied through a qualitative lens (Glasser & Strauss, 1967). Of the varied qualitative approaches, this research will be phenomenological, following Heidegger's (1994) hermeneutic or interpretive philosophy. The origins of the word hermeneutics can be found in the Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which is commonly translated as "interpret" or "understand" (Crotty, 1998; Palmer, 1969); in Greek mythology, Hermes was wing-footed messenger of the Gods, gifted with the ability to translate or interpret messages from the gods to the humans on earth in a way they could understand (Holroyd, 2007). The main purposes of phenomenological research are to seek reality from individuals' narratives of their experiences and feelings, and to produce rich interpretations of the phenomenon in question (Yüksel & Yıldırım, 2015).

Hermeneutic phenomenology is context-bound as the researcher moves past pure description of perceptions to understanding and interpreting the study of lived experiences (Joubert & Van der Merwe, 2020). I desired to interpret what it means to be an urban music educator. To obtain this meaning, dialogue was used, in agreement with Heidegger's view that language and understanding are inseparable structural aspects of human 'being-in-the world,' (Lavery, 2003). Gadamer (1960/1998) stated "Language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs. Understanding occurs in interpreting" (p. 389).

Language, such as the language of the interview, provides the means for data. The data are then considered using the process of the hermeneutic circle or hermeneutic circle of understanding (van Manen, 2016). Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasized that the process of building understanding of text is inherently circular, with parts informing the

interpretation of a phenomenon while the whole phenomenon informs the interpretation of the parts . Understanding is achieved through an ongoing circular analytical process that moves from analyzing parts of an experience to considering the whole of an experience, and back and forth again and again (Farrell, 2020; Laverty, 2003). If data are removed from the circle and just the parts alone considered, the phenomenon is lost as a whole (Peoples, 2021).

The use of a reflective journal is one way in which a hermeneutic circle can be engaged (Heidegger, 1927/1962). I kept a reflective journal, writing down thoughts during or immediately after interviews, which I referred to before each analysis took place as part of the reflective circle. In a hermeneutic phenomenological study, personal biases need to be made explicit, and journaling is also an adequate way to do this, allowing researchers to write down any of their biases, or their pre-understandings about the phenomenon prior to analyzing data (Peoples, 2020).

I realize, in taking a hermeneutic stance, that there are no such things as absolute truths, and that what I understand and know today is forever in the process of changing (Holroyd, 2007); this is true to all who engage in hermeneutic research. Understanding this, the research community must replicate many studies in a variety of contexts in an effort to build a grounded theory of urban music education (Conway, 2001), as it too will continue to evolve.

A defining unique feature of this study is that it is representative of urban elementary music educator's lived experiences and realities; it is not a description to be generalized. The nature of this investigation is not to attempt to formulate a theory of urban music teaching, but to illuminate practices through the teachers' experiences. The

hope is that this study will normalize urban elementary music education and the educators whose experience and reality remain outside the realm of knowledge for a great many (Hein, 2017).

Positionality Statement

The term positionality both describes an individual's world view and the position they adopt about a research task and its social and political context (Foote & Bartell, 2011; Rowe, 2014; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As Holmes (2020) explained, positionality can affect the totality of the research process. This acknowledges and recognizes that researchers are part of the social world they are researching. Holmes advocated for the use of a reflexive approach, where researchers do not eliminate or remove themselves from the research, but acknowledge and disclose themselves in their work (Holmes, 2020). Heidegger (1994) believed that biases and judgments should be included, and made explicit, in capturing the essence of the phenomenon.

Heidegger's (1994) framework employs pre-understanding and I believe that is important to my positionality. Pre-understanding is the meanings or organization of a culture that are present before we understand and become part of our historical background; as it is understood as already being a part of that world, it is not something a person can step outside of or put aside (Lavery, 2003). In other words, pre-understanding is the innate knowledge about a culture that a person cannot be separated from. Because of my pre-understandings of urban music teaching, Heidegger's framework is best suited for this study. The opportunity to engage in hermeneutic understanding is likely to arise when individuals undergo any experience that serves to disrupt the ordinary, the aspects

of existence that may be taken for granted (Holroyd, 2007): this is the state of urban music education.

My previous teaching experiences lead to my interest in this topic and are likely to affect my interpretation of the findings. I am a product of an urban public school system that I attended from grades K-12. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience, especially because of my music teachers. In my experience, I wanted to become a music teacher so that I could recreate the inspirational experiences I had as a music student with my own students. The music my teachers selected, the way they taught, and who each was as a person attracted me to pursue a career in music education.

Because of my experience as an urban music student and the impact of my music teachers, I was ready and happy to accept the challenge of being an urban music teacher myself. I taught elementary general music and then high school choir for three years each, with both settings in a large, ethnically diverse, Title I public school district in northwest Ohio. Because of my experiences in this context, there are many things I believe that I “just know” about urban music teaching. Some examples are how to modify lessons to meet my students’ current musical understandings, how to handle disruptive or disrespectful behavior, and recognizing the importance and necessity of relationships with students and various stakeholders. This idea of “just knowing” aspects of urban music teaching is an example of pre-understanding that I brought to this research.

My role in this research was two-fold: as a researcher, and as a reflective practitioner. As a researcher, I appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the participants and their own personal, musical, and educational journeys. As a reflective practitioner, I appreciated the opportunity to reminisce on my experiences as former

urban music educator, and also to call attention to the need for exposure to these kinds of authentic experiences in urban music programs for the field of music education at large, which was the motivation for this dissertation. These roles are compatible with my selection of a hermeneutic phenomenological framework, because the emphasis is placed both on interpretation of both emic issues (those of the participants) and etic issues (those of the writer) (Bresler & Stake, 2012).

Participants

To answer the research questions, the general population for this research study was successful elementary general music teachers working in urban public schools in the United States. Participants were selected through critical case sampling (Patton, 1990). For phenomenological studies, Creswell (1998) recommends 5 to 25 participants and Morse (1994) suggests at least six; for this study, there was a total of 8 participants, because by the eighth participant's interview, I felt that saturation had been met.

The elementary general music context was selected because it is the most inclusive music teaching area; general music educators teach all the students in the school. In the elementary setting, general music is a required special subject (along with art and physical education) (NAfME, 2015), while music in secondary schools is typically optional and an elective subject, meaning participation is more selective either by student choice or required auditions. Because *all* students are included in elementary general music classrooms, this may be more challenging, or may present different challenges than other contexts (Allen, 2011).

Eligible participants met specified criteria. They had to be currently employed in an urban school system. Urban areas are places that represent densely developed territory

and encompass residential, commercial, and other nonresidential urban land uses (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012, p. X). For the purposes of this study, I used Fitzpatrick's (2008) definition of urban schools, those schools located in or around a metropolitan area and whose student populations bring significant diversity and richness of culture, race, language, and socio-economic status (SES) to the school setting. I extended the definition to include schools having Title I status or high percentages of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch (<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>). I included this to ensure that diversity in SES was addressed, because not all urban schools are lacking funding or resources. Additionally, I selected this definition because the assumptions and deficit connotation often connected to urban areas and schools are not the focus—actually, not present at all.

Each participant must have been teaching general music to students in grades K-5, for three or more years in the same school. I desired participants who represented diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender, because those identifiers may have an impact on teachers' interactions with their urban students and I believed that was worthy of being explored.

To speak to a teacher's success as an urban music educator, participants were be selected from a pool of individuals that were nominated and/or a finalist for a Music Educator Award (through the Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Museum) or a Music Teachers of Excellence award (the Country Music Award Foundation) within the past 5 years. Although the individuals selected ultimately did not receive the award, the combination of their location, teaching context, longevity and recognition from an outside music entity qualify them as a successful urban music educator. In fact, I

purposefully did not choose participants who were award winners because winners can have more “perfect,” rehearsed, or sanitized answers. I felt that *nominated* individuals would provide more candid and authentic experiences.

Participants Profiles

Phenomenological research is based on specified knowledge of the lived experiences of each participant and how this impacts the data gathered during the study. The participants that accepted the invitation to participate in this study were carefully selected. The following information will help the reader gain a deeper insight into the background and personality of each elementary teacher, to help contextualize their responses and the findings of this study. Note, all participant names are pseudonyms and potentially identifiable details are purposefully vague.

Amber. Amber is a 45-year-old female teacher, not native to the United States. She identifies as Latinx but commented on the complexities of the term: her mother is Indian, and her father is Afro Caribbean. She attended the public school system in her home country and explained how there were similarities to urban schools in the United States, except that they were much worse there. She holds music education certification from her home country, with flute as her principal instrument, and music teacher certification in the United States. She completed a Bachelor of Music in performance, a Master’s in Music Education, and was currently pursuing a master’s in arts administration. She shared that her intentions post-graduation were to return to her home country and teach music, eventually with plans to open up her own school. At the time of this study, she had been teaching for 24 years and stated that she enjoyed working with her population of Black and Latinx students in a southern state.

Bradley. Bradley is a 50-year-old male teacher. He hails from a midwestern state and identifies as Greek. He attended public school in the midwestern region of the United States, where he also attended college. However, his matriculation was non-traditional, as he took breaks to perform as a guitarist full-time. Once he did obtain his undergraduate degree, he moved to the South to pursue a full-time performing career. It was not until he had children that he decided to come off the road and teach in the public school system. He said he never had any intention of teaching music, especially in the way he does now, in a general music classroom. He has 17 years of teaching experience in a southern state, explaining that he found much unexpected joy teaching young students that he calls “musicians.”

Christine. Christine is a 35-year-old Black female teacher that has been teaching for 10 years. She grew up in a rural community in the South, attending the public school system there. Upon graduation from high school, she attended a public university on a music scholarship, obtaining a Bachelor of Science in music education, with an emphasis in vocal performance. Initially she had a desire to work in commercial music but made the switch to music education as commercial music was too competitive for her taste. She revealed that she always wanted to teach music and is happy teaching her students in the southern state where she resides.

Daniel. Daniel, who identifies as White, is a 31-year-old male. He grew up in a small rural community on the East coast, attended public schools throughout his K-12 experience. Altogether, he has 15 years of teaching experience (teaching lessons part time) but has been teaching elementary school for 9 years. He holds a bachelor’s degree in music and his principal instrument is the saxophone. Post-graduation, his intentions

were to get “a job at one of those big well-funded high schools...in the suburbs,” however the jobs were scarce. Yet he was determined to have a full-time teaching job: this led to him taking a job with Teach for America (TFA), teaching math. He decided to take the position because of the performing opportunities at his location in a southern part of the country. Through networking and the power of connection, he obtained a music teacher position at his current school just two years after arriving in his TFA site.

Elijah. Elijah is a 25-year-old White male, has only teaching for three years. He grew up in a small, rural area in the south, attending the public school system there. He holds a Bachelor of Music (principal instrument was the clarinet) and is currently working on his Master's in Education, Curriculum, and Instruction with an emphasis in music. He attended a public university for both his undergraduate and graduate experiences. After graduation from undergrad, his plans were to enroll directly into a graduate program: teaching was always the end goal but wanted to get his masters first. He ended up teaching first as he needed a job and decided to take an elementary job in the south so that he could teach and complete his graduate coursework simultaneously.

Francis. Francis is a 29-year-old white female from a large urban city in the South. She is a product of the public school system and was interested in student teaching in an urban school, with the intention of working in an urban school. She attended a small public university and then transferred to a small private university to ensure that she had a well-rounded musical and educational experience. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Music Education with a specialization in string bass, but also has extensive voice and piano experience. She is now teaching in the same district she attended as a child and has been for seven years.

Geneva. Geneva is a 46-year-old female that identifies as “Vanilla” or White. She is from a southern state and has been teaching in that same state for thirteen years. Her journey to teaching was untraditional, as she started out as a musical theater major. She had to stop due to health issues and changed her major to hospitality. Upon graduation, she began working by managing hotels, and then selling housing. Going to her ten-year school reunion she saw how her classmates were doing what they were passionate about, so she decided to go back to school to obtain her Bachelor of Music Education. Now she is teaching elementary school at the same school she student taught in, and very active in the state Orff community.

Heather. Heather is a twenty-year teacher, with one year in administration. She is a 46-year-old African American female from a Southern state and taught in the same city and public district that she was a student in for her K-12 experience. She attended a large public institution for her Bachelor of Music Education and Performance as a clarinet player. She taught for some years before obtaining her Master’s in Educational Leadership from a small private institution. Post-graduation she wanted to play in a major symphony orchestra, just like my clarinet teacher; but she also wanted to ensure job security as securing a symphony job can be challenging. Once she was hired at her elementary school, she remained there for twenty years, until leaving the position for her current administrative position.

Procedures

I contacted the Country Music Award Foundation to procure a list of the finalists and semi-finalists for the Music Teachers of Excellence award; the listing of finalists and semi-finalists for the Music Educator Award (through the Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Museum) was accessible through their website (<http://www.grammyintheschools.com>). The total number of names was 1363. After removing duplicates, those not teaching in elementary schools, and schools not in urban areas, 26 names remained. After receiving IRB approval (found in Appendix A) to recruit via email, each teacher was sent a recruitment email, with a recruitment flyer attached (found in Appendix B). Respondents who met the criteria were e-mailed to schedule their interview. Of the 26 emails that were disseminated, six responded, with one not able to participate. To increase the population, I expanded the criteria to include individuals that were specifically identified and referred by eligible participants or respected colleagues, which resulted in three additional participants.

Because interviewing is the primary method of data collection for understanding the meaning of an experience, for this phenomenological study, each participant was interviewed in a one-on-one setting via Zoom, a free online conferencing program. Using Zoom removed limitations of geographical location and scheduling from the sampling process, and provided a convenient way to record the sessions. All interviews took place in a location and at a time of the participant's choice to ensure their comfortability to talk (Creswell, 2013). Each interview was approximately sixty (60) minutes. For security, each interview utilized a randomly generated room with passcode protection.

Phenomenological research has traditionally relied on multiple interviews involving open ended questions (Beven, 2014; Lauterbach, 2018). Within hermeneutic phenomenology methods, van Manen (2016) described interviewing as having two purposes: (1) as a means to explore and develop a rich understanding of the phenomenon; (2) to develop a conversation around the meaning of experience. Thus, van Manen (2016) encouraged conversational interviewing. While conversational interviewing is often seen as a more flexible interview format than structured interviews, van Manen (2016) cautioned against using completely unstructured or open-ended interviewing. Instead, semi-structured interview formats are recommended as the primary data collection method. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to construct interview questions relevant to the research questions so the key aspects of the study are sure to be covered, while still allowing for participants to discuss other information that may end up being relevant to the study (Giorgi, 1985). Semi-structured interviews also allow researchers to keep a balance between focusing on the research topic and allowing for a disciplined naturalness, or structured freedom in phenomenological research (Giorgi, 1985).

Bresler & Stake (2012) asserted that interviews are conducted not as surveys of how people feel but primarily to obtain observations that the researcher is unable to make directly, to capture multiple realities or perceptions of any given situation, and to assist in interpreting what is happening. When standardized information is needed from large numbers of people, the written survey is more efficient, but most qualitative researchers want to probe more deeply than is possible with questionnaires (Bresler & Stake, 2012).

The interview questions I created addressed and answered the research questions and sub-questions. There were 48 questions divided into seven (7) sections: background

information, schooling/preparation, teaching, students, success, challenges, and inspiration. Occasionally impromptu questions were inserted based on the direction of the responses because some responses warranted a deeper, more detailed investigation or because of a related tangent. The interview became less rigid after the first 2 sections, as the participants became more comfortable. An interview protocol comprised of open-ended questions was used for the semi-structured interviews (found in Appendix D).

Several days before each interview, I provided the participant with a copy of the interview protocol to maximize our time frame and allow the participant to feel comfortable during the interview process (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). The interview protocol was sectioned into seven categories. The first category addressed background information, such as name, age, race, gender, and the participant's definition of urban. The second section detailed their educational background, how they ended up teaching at their particular school, and how they felt their schooling and training prepared them for teaching urban music students. The third section addressed the participant's teaching and pedagogical choices, their opinions on the characteristics of a good music teacher, and their goals as a music teacher. Section four dealt with students: describing their students and describing how they maintain relationships. This section also inquired about how students respond to the participant and what personal identifiers may impact their interaction with students. Sections five and six asked participants to discuss their perceived successes and failures, respectively. The final section inquired about the participants' inspiration: what causes them to persist?

Analysis

Because the form of data collection used for this study was through interviews, data analysis began with transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Zoom interviews were recorded to the Zoom cloud, under the auspices of the University of Missouri systems, and the audio from the interviews was captured through the Voice Memos application on my personal iPhone 12 Max as a backup precaution. After the interviews, the recordings were downloaded to a personal external hard drive. All interviews were transcribed using Otter (<https://otter.ai/signin>), an online platform integrated through Zoom that transcribes speech to text using artificial intelligence. The verbatim, electronic notes were downloaded and securely stored on the researcher's personal computer. The researcher edited the transcripts using the audio recordings to ensure accuracy, resulting in a total of 124 single-spaced pages of transcripts.

Coding

Open coding was the selected analysis technique because of the dense volume of data (Punch, 2009). After line-by-line open coding was applied to the transcripts, a chart was created to cross-reference the codes, then grouped them into categories. By doing this, I created an axial code matrix to aid the sorting process, combined categories, and develop emergent themes. A second analysis of the axial coding and categories was done to further refine the data. I used a constant comparative method to examine the coded transcripts, memos, video observation logs, and artifacts. The initial round of coding produced 488 open codes, which I then grouped into 22 categories. From these categories, six themes emerged.

Trustworthiness

Credibility and dependability underline the strength, transferability, and usability of the conclusions drawn from qualitative data analysis. Data were collected based on established interview research techniques.

Trustworthiness was established through participant checking and peer checking. Each interview was transcribed and presented to the participant for feedback and any necessary clarification or changes. All participants were satisfied with their representation and contribution to this study and offered no corrections or alterations.

After a final coding of all interviews was completed and the axial coding matrix was created with open codes and categories, the coding was peer reviewed by two independent colleagues for accuracy and comprehension (Krefting, 1991). The peer review process consisted of a comparative analysis of coding assignments and the axial coding matrix. My colleagues reviewed my data and analysis and suggested that some of my initial themes could be parsed more and placed into categories. Upon their recommendation, I agreed that some of my themes were too specific, and I placed those items into categories, therefore allowing for my themes to cover a wider range.

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations

One assumption in this study is that the sample studied was representative of the population. Although the sample was small, a diversity of social identifiers were represented: race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and location. Another assumption is that the participant's interview responses honestly and accurately reflecting their lived experiences as urban elementary music educators. However, in doing my interviews, I did consider the possibility of response bias. Glen (2021) defined response

bias as the tendency for a person to answer questions untruthfully or misleadingly, as they may feel pressure to give answers that are socially acceptable or responses that are to the interviewer's liking. Although all participants desired to be 'good interviewees,' I believed the participants provided honest responses to the best of their ability.

The delimitations for this study created boundaries for the researcher as the study only included participants connected to Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Museum or the Country Music Award Foundation. To that point, a representative from the Country Music Award Foundation laments about a major issue with the Music Teachers of Excellence program: "many teachers who are teaching in Urban hubs do not apply because, as you can imagine – their days are filled with higher priorities. It is something we are trying to make more equitable so we can have more urban districts represented in our recipient pool" (F. Keith, personal communication, December 2, 2020). The delimitations stated above may not have permitted the researcher to obtain an extensive insight into the urban elementary music educator experience.

An additional limitation is the way that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the participant teaching and lives. While the participants' answers were sincere and candid, many of the teachers were still getting adjusted and acclimated to online learning. Some participants commented on using the school-sanctioned software and producing lessons that maintained student engagement, and some commented on the withdrawal they felt from not being in the physical presence of their students. Interviewing them while they were engaged in normal, in-personal teaching contexts would have been the ideal circumstance. It should be noted, however, that virtual learning may be a new normal moving forward and gave credence to the responses.

The location of the participants also presents a limitation. Although this was by sheer coincidence, all participants are teaching in southern states. This may have been because the Country Music Awards foundation is headquartered in a southern state. This could have been because the south occupies 38.3% of the country's population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Population Clock from 2019 (U.S. and World Population Clock, 2020).

Ethical concerns

The factor of hunter to each participant was minimal. This research was approved by the IRB of the research institution through which the project was conducted. Each participant was informed of their rights to confidentiality and the IRB-approved procedures that were in place to protect them as research participants. They were also instructed of the right to withdraw from the study at any time. The informed consent was read verbatim in each interview with verbal affirmation to continue with the interview and study. All printed analysis and interpretations of this research identified each participant with a pseudonym to provide confidentiality, and each participant reviewed their transcripts, at which point they would have been able to request the removal of any information that they believed compromised confidentiality.

Chapter IV: Analysis

Urban communities are becoming more prominent in the United States, and this has brought an increased attention to urban schools, and specifically urban music programs. With the increased attention to urban music programs, I believe it is important to know more about and glean insights from the individuals who are teaching in urban music programs and have been successful while doing so. The purpose of this study is to investigate characteristics and experiences of successful urban elementary music classrooms. I sought to gather an authentic picture and capture the essence of what it means to be a successful urban elementary music educator.

In this chapter, I present the findings of my study, with the intent to provide answers to the primary research question and related sub-questions. As described in Chapter 3, data were collected through semi-structured interviews. Throughout the narrative, I will provide descriptions and vignettes of the participant's thoughtful comments and recollections in order to help situate the reader in the participant's experience as an urban music teacher. Through my three-part analysis, six themes emerged: (a) relationships are key; (b) understanding how music functions for students; (c) willingness to perform unofficial job duties; (d) concerns about urban teacher preparation; (e) curricular and pedagogical decisions; and (f) urban music teacher characteristics. Each theme includes several subthemes, which are discussed in detail.

Definitions of Urban

Although it was not a formal theme, I believed it apropos to begin by discussing the participant's definitions and understandings of the term urban. I asked this question because research in urban music education indicates that urban can be defined in a

number of different ways (Eros, 2018). I wanted to understand my participants' thinking about this, and compare their responses to the related scholarship. When asked, "what does urban mean to you?", the participants had similar yet different responses.

Amber, Christine, and Francis all agreed that urban is a complex combination of many different things; moreover, they agreed that urban is different from rural (Anderson & Denson, 2015). Daniel, Elijah, and Francis also defined urban as "in a city," with Elijah specifically using the terms *inner city* or *metropolitan* area being a part of the definition. Heather believed that urban meant the heart or the core of the city. Geneva stated that urban means city, but more so a tight-knit community that is within proximity to resources and culture. Christine mentioned that urban can mean culture as well, as it relates to ethnic demographics of those in urban areas.

Almost all participants' definitions were consistent with the operational definition used for this dissertation. They described urban as a location in a city or metropolitan area, and one participant included the aspect of ethnic diversity. However, Bradley had a very different definition because he felt that urban means "nothing," explaining that he was not a proponent of using identifiers and labels.

Definitions of Success

While also not an emerging theme, having participants define success was within the scope of this project because this speaks directly to a sub-question of Research Question 1: what characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom? By dictionary definition, success is "the accomplishment of an aim or purpose; the attainment of or a person or thing that achieves fame, wealth, or social status" (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Success in music is conceptualized as a summative activity (Bruenger,

2010). For example, success in music may be considered to be achieving high ratings at contest or high visibility for a performance. Given that these are performative definitions of musical success, can they be achieved in an urban elementary general music classroom?

Given that each participant had been deemed successful by the criteria I established, I asked them their definition of success. Each one of their responses was completely different, with a few instances of overlap.

Success for Amber is when students have “music in the lives; an emotional connection with music.” She does not expect her students to be not to be full-time musicians, and she is fine with that. She only cares if they are involved in music in some way and are connected to the music: that is success.

Bradley conceptualized success in a non-musical way. He stated,

So, I think I define that as success and I think at a very basic level, the fact that kids *know* me. And this is no joke. If students, they come in [the classroom] and I'm in the bathroom and I come out in a kindergarten teacher is sitting the class down for me and I'm not in there and I start talking to the teacher they start chanting my name, like a rock star: that's success. They are done with me having adult time and they want me in there, yeah.

In this example, Bradley shared how his students wanting his presence and ready for class to start is success. Even at such a young age at kindergarten, the students not only desired their music class time, but they desired to be with Bradley. To Bradley, success is that students know him and want to be around him.

Christine provided a definition of success that is personal to each individual. She explained,

My definition of success is not what the world thinks success is. Success is what you believe, what you've accomplished as your success from deep within. I mean, I graduated college with my bachelor's degree in music education: that's

success. To somebody else who graduated with their masters or their doctoral degree, they're still successful, you know. Success is how you define it and I believe it's defined by how you make it. I mean, it's hard to explain what success is.

Christine detailed how success is determined by the individual. Whatever accomplishments a person deems as successful, it is success. She further explained success is not on a hierarchy. Meaning what is successful to one person is not more or less successful than another person. For example, obtaining a high school diploma is not more successful than obtaining a masters degree.

Daniel defined “success as being able to provide my kids with the types of opportunities that they weren't getting previously...like my job is to try to get them access to all the things they deserve to have access to.” Daniel understands that because of the urban community his students live in, they do not ready access to various opportunities, musically or otherwise. He felt success is when he can provide those opportunities and options for his students. For example, providing the experience of going to a concert with an up and coming artist, or playing in a concert with a celebrity.

Elijah’s definition of success is one that can change and fluctuate. He believed that success,

is really day to day, and sometimes you don't really know like what was successful or not until the end of the day. Like yesterday I had a really rough start with third grade, first grade was crazy. But fourth grade rocked it. They never rock it for real because they're at this point now where they're just kind of over it. But you know, like the highlight of the day was fourth grade, like that was a win, that was successful. Then sometimes it's as simple as Jeremiah [student] came in, sat down, was quiet: Win, because maybe Jeremiah doesn't come in and sit down and be quiet.

Elijah defined success in the context of his daily teaching schedule. In his examples, success is when students met his specified expectations of behavior; and it was especially meaningful when a class or a student who usually do not meet those expectations do.

Francis believed that success is when she knew how to alter her instruction or learning activities so that students can accomplish a goal. She stated “knowing where your kids are at and adjusting” so they can feel successful about and still grow is the definition of success to her.

Success to Geneva is when her relationships with students continued beyond elementary school. It is very significant for her when “the people that consider me, you know, a part of their family, because I’ve taught this kid and now this kid and now this kid.” She also connected success to the experiences that she has been able to give her students. Especially when “they remember them and their parents remember them and they’re all grateful: that to me is a success.”

Heather’s definition of success was similar to Geneva’s definition,

Well, I define success know by having students remember the experience that you taught them. For example, I’ve had kids (now I was at the school long time) and most of my former students have grown, moved on, going to college, they got jobs and doing really well. And they’ll come back and say, ‘Ooooo, Ms. Heather, Ms. Heather, do y’all still do this song, or do y’all do that story?’ Or, ‘yeah I remember I played the wood block on that story’... to be able to know this so vividly and describe the experience, remember it like it was yesterday, even though they’re 20-something years old and grown.

Like Geneva, Heather was really touched when her former students could vividly recall memories from her classroom after so many years. She continued to explain how her former students would have families and those children would be in her class, and they would tell Heather during class, “my mama says she remembers this when you taught

her.” Success to her is knowing that those experiences were positive and had such an impact.

Theme 1: Relationships are Key

For the purposes of this study, relationships are defined as the interactions between two or more entities. Each participant spoke to relationships being a facet of being an urban music educator: relationships with administration, students, and parents/families. And whether those relationships were positive or negative had a pronounced impact on the participants’ success at their respective schools. The codes were based on the participants mentioning how relationships are established, maintained, and cultivated.

Relationships with Students

Researchers have found that teachers reported experiencing great reward from building relationships with their students (Eberly, 2014). Benedict (2006) also highlighted the value teachers in urban schools placed on the importance these relationships. The responses of the participants in this study support these notions. Codes that contributed to support the subtheme relationship with students included: knowledge of students, understanding that students are needy/have needs, students' outside life, meeting students' needs, home life affects school life, listening/talking with students, cultivating long lasting relationships, and difficulty cultivating relationships.

All participants indicated that they have a keen knowledge of their students, and actively seek out opportunities to get to know them. Examples of this included being attentive to student’s needs. Daniel discussed the importance of meeting students’ basic needs before anything else, citing Abraham Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs.” Bradley

said he attempts to be aware of his student's outside life, and Heather believed that home life has a direct impact on school life. Christine, Daniel, and Elijah stated that they spend time simply listening and talking to their students about music, about their lives, about what they like, "about anything." Christine disclosed a story about using the school sanctioned social media platform to learn about her students:

Like my friend, I showed her video yesterday from a girl [student], and she says "she just literally had girl-time with you on the screen." She [student] literally recorded herself talking and she was like 'I just had to tell you about my favorite song, my favorite group, and I'm going to show you.'" Like, I fostered an environment that lets them feel like they can talk to me. I'm not a robot you know, like you can talk to me any time you want. I'm free, I'm open to have conversation with you. And I believe that just builds a better relationship.

These relationships are not superficial and short lived. As Geneva stated, "I am in these children's lives for the long haul....and it's not just the kid that I'm teaching: it's their family and what's going on." She continued by emphasizing her enjoyment of student relationships, "I know my love for my son, I know my love for my husband, but a love for humanity like it's just, it's so different. I am mom to like 752 students."

Although building relationships is paramount to success, it does not come without its challenges. Elijah did stress that it is sometimes difficult to cultivate meaningful relationships because of the number of students, because he teaches all the students in his building, as opposed to teaching the same group of students every day like the general classroom teachers do.

While interpersonal relationships are very important to success in an urban elementary school, participants also acknowledged their relationship to the surrounding community was integral as well. Elijah believes that knowing the student means knowing the whole child, explaining "I want to see where they live, I want to know what the

community is like where they live, you know.” Having a better understanding of the students’ lives outside of the classroom and knowing where they come from positively impacts the teacher’s relationships. Daniel made a similar assertion as he discussed understanding his students, stating “I am a student of the culture: I’m a student of the people, the kids, the families.” As a student of the culture, Daniel uses the information acquired to better understand his students and be knowledgeable about what they endure as a student outside his classroom.

Research has indicated that a relationship exists between where urban teachers have lived and where they choose to teach, namely that teachers often teach in areas that resemble those in which they grew up (Eros, 2018). Half of the participants stated that they were a product of urban, public schools and was partly a factor in deciding to teach in an urban school (Smith, 2006; Abril, 2006; Baker, 2012).

Relationships with Parents

As a teacher, it seems that having a relationship with students would be most important, however having a relationship with the parents or guardians of students is equally as important. Parents and guardians are important because of the role they play in a child’s development: academically, socially, and interpersonally.

Maintaining strong connections with parents has been found to be a factor in the effectiveness of urban music teachers (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Knapps & Shields, 1990). Several of the participants in this study identified this aspect in their responses. Codes that contributed to this subtheme were parental needs, parental sacrifice, parents want what is best for students, parents as problems, and parents fit stereotypes such as engaged in violence or drug abuse (Doyle, 2012).

When describing what an urban music teacher is, Heather stated it “is someone who knows the demographics of the school, has had a chance to really build relationships with those students and the parents. And that just knows what those students need, what those parents need.” Elijah shared that he is not as connected to his parent population as he should be but notes its importance. He tries to cultivate these parent interactions by willingly participating in bus duty or attending student’s extra-curricular activities such as athletic games.

Many of the participants shared that the parents of their students are very supportive, reporting that parents have respect for their child’s teacher and often do what they can to support the teacher’s efforts in educating their child. Smith (2006) and Baker (2012) detailed the prevalence of uninvolved and unsupported parents as characteristic of the urban music teaching experience. However, Bradley contradicted this, sharing that his students’ parents “come in and want nothing but the best for their kids but they're not working with a lot.” Daniel made a similar comment and took a step further:

You know, one stereotype of low-income parents is not being involved in the kid’s education. I find a lot of the literature just blames the parents, which is BS. I find that that problem does exist more often than not, but because the parents are busting their asses to provide for their kids.

Amber stated more plainly, “it's not that they [parents] don't care, they can't...many of my parents, they work at minimum wage jobs, they have to work night and day. Like they can't, not because they don't want to.” According to these participants, lack of participation from parents is not because they are willfully uninvolved or disinterested, rather, that they cannot be physically present because they are taking care of necessary responsibilities to support the family.

Relationships with Administration

Regardless of subject matter specialty, relationships between teacher and administration can have a major impact on how teachers navigate their classroom, school, and district. The codes that contributed to this theme included negative experience with administration, positive interactions with administration, obstruction, and loss of faith in students. These topics were based on the experiences and opinions teachers had about their administration, and how these experiences influenced the participants' success. Codes that contributed to this subtheme were both negative and positive experiences with Administration, and obstruction, loss of faith in students.

Administration has dual meanings as it relates to the participants: referring to building-level administrators (principals and assistant principals), and to district leadership (superintendent, fine arts coordinators). Participants' responses indicated that when their administration allowed them the agency and autonomy to teach freely, their job was much more enjoyable.

Geneva stated that she has a fairly new principal. She really enjoys working with her principal because she feels like the principal listens to her, and even enlists Geneva's help as she navigates her new role because she values Geneva's knowledge and connection to the school community. For example, Geneva is often asked to read off the birthday names during the morning announcements because the principal could not pronounce all of the children's names.

Francis shared how she credited her principal for the position she currently has. Francis was incredibly unhappy at her previous school (School A) due to a toxic relationship with a colleague in the music department. She decided to transfer to School

B, only to discover that same toxic colleague had also transferred to that very same school. Within 24 hours, her current principal (School C) found some loopholes, “pulled some strings and broke the rules,” to get her out of the contract and bring her to her current assignment (School C). Because of this, Francis is much happier.

Elijah discussed some of the aspects to which he attributes to his positive relationship with his building administrators. He and his principal both attended Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), both were in the band and played the same principal instrument. In addition, his assistant principal was a third-generation educator, with their grandfather being a retired well-respected local middle and high school band director. Because of these connections, the administration is well informed about the need for students to be successful inside and outside of the music room. Elijah mentioned how difficult teaching can be when the administration is oblivious and not musically inclined.

Contrarywise, negative relationships have negative consequences. Geneva shared how she is a big dreamer as it relates to her students, and she does not enjoy being told no:

I wrote all those Donors Choose things, and I had gotten up to five Donor Chooses every year. I got my hand slapped and was told the whole district couldn't do Donors Choose anymore: and it was like “my fault.” The district said because I did so many of them and because I was reaching out to the community for assistance who was already poor for funding to help get my kids places when I've already been given \$300 in my budget...so now we can't do Donors Choose, so we can only get money from our PTC [Parent Teacher Committee] to pay for our field trips because we're not allowed to ask parents to pay for our field trips. But our PTC is funded by the families of the community, so essentially, we're asking our parents and the community to pay.

Because the administration did not understand how Donors Choose works, it affected not only the relationship Geneva had with the district, but also caused resentment because of the opportunities she could no longer provide for her students.

Amber shared an anecdote describing how her administration made her working environment toxic to the point of departure. When she first took her position at her Title I school, it was the first performing arts school in the city. Because of this, the school had almost limitless resources: instruments, equipment, rehearsal spaces. After a successful year, the administration changed, and the new administration switched from a lottery-based enrollment to holding auditions for admission to the school:

And that's when everything changed: they were hand-picking the kids they wanted. I was part of the process and I couldn't finish. I left in the middle of the day because they were hand-picking kids, so they were trying to have the least amount of African American kids, the least amount of kids with any kind of issues, you know ADHD or ADD.... My administrators they wanted the least amount of minorities, including myself....The Assistant Principal even went to the district's ESL [English Second Language] office, and he asked that they would not send any more ESL students to the school.

These participants described how their relationship and interaction with administration was correlated with their success in their programs. While Francis's story may be more likely to happen in any large school district, the other stories seemed to be related to issues of school SES or minority status. It seems that administrators who were more involved or connected to the community in which they served tended to have better interactions with the participants. Support for teachers from administration has been noted to be inconsistent in many urban areas in the USA due to various school district and community issues (Doyle, 2014). These issues of lack of administrative support seem to be more prevalent in urban schools compared to others (Smith, 2006).

Theme 2: Understanding How Music Functions for Students

Music had such an impact on the lives of the participants that it would only seem natural that those same sentiments would trickle down to their students. Codes that contributed to this theme included positive activity for students, music as savior, music as an outlet, lack of access to positive outlets, and robs students of opportunity.

Amber shared how music was a savior to her, and she saw how music could be a savior for her students; this realization gave her purpose. As she recounted:

I think music saved my life; I really think so. You know, I could have done drugs or I could have, I don't know, commit suicide. I mean, so many things could have happened to me. But the thing that actually saved me was music. So when I started teaching and I realized that there were so many kids that were having the same struggle that I was having: that they couldn't find themselves into the schools because the way the system is. You have to excel in the academics and there's no way really to find what adds to you. You don't have to get a college degree, you don't have to go to college, you know you don't have to study you don't have to be a lawyer, you don't have to be you don't have to be all the things that society is telling you have to do. And besides that, you know teaching in a country that is you know it's so poor, I realized that my mission was to not only to inspire my students but to be an outlet for them; to get music to be the outlet; for them to really excel and feel well about themselves and it's like a little light and in their lives...

For this participant, music had a deep, intrinsic function.

Although elementary general music is a class that students were required to take, the participants reported that it served as a positive outlet for the children. Daniel stated:

my kids don't have access to as many positive outlets as they should, as they deserve. Whether it's arts, sports, you know, or different things like that. And they do have access to some negative outlets that I know growing up in my small town I didn't.

In this quote, he details the realities of some urban communities; how opportunities and outlets are available, but not all of them are positive. In the community where he works, in particular, he noted that there is gang violence, drug use, and poverty (which can result

in crime). Inner city students often live in neighborhoods that are riddled with crime and violence. This, coupled with evidence of malnutrition, inadequate housing, inferior medical care, and family disruption pose risks that impact severely on students' academic achievement and ability to concentrate in school (Kopetz, et al., 2006; Delorenzo & Silverman, 2016; Benedict, 2006; Shaw, 2015). Music gives Daniel's students options.

Francis also stated that music provides students with options for positive activity, and that when urban students are denied a quality music education, they are "robbed of a potential future." She explained that,

So that option to be a musician, to be a music teacher, to be a music producer, like to be a composer, to be a singer you know, or to just be a well-educated church musician you know artists participate in music, in a way that is life fulfilling throughout their entire life, even at just a like a for fun level like we take that option off the table without them having to choose. And I feel like so much in life is already against a lot of our kids, especially in like an urban area; if you don't come from money there's so many options that are already off the table that you have to climb up and work. I feel like that's the whole point of us music teachers to put that option on the table so that kids can make their own choice, can make their own way, because they want to do this, or they want to do something else; not because they can't. The conversation is never, 'Oh I can't do this because I'm not competent enough to do this.' It should be I *choose* not to do this; I choose not to be a musician. But even though I could do that, that is an option.

Francis believed that her job as a music educator was to provide students with options for life. When a quality music program is not provided to a student, potential options may be non-existent. One of these potential options for students is going to school for further study of music.

Both Bradley and Christine shared that receiving a music scholarship music provided them with the necessary funds to attend college. They wish for their students to have that option. Even if the students decide not to major in music, having a music scholarship removes some of the financial burdens of attending college and provides

access to more opportunities in the future. This finding supports research that indicates urban students who partake in music have better social and academic outcomes than those who do not (Mattulke, 2019). Because many students in urban areas are from low socioeconomic status (SES), music instruction could be particularly beneficial (Doyle, 2014).

Outside of tangible rewards such as music scholarships or jobs in music, these teachers were able to provide their students with experiences that would expand and broaden their view of the world. Amber shared a story about taking her students to perform at a large conference of elementary administrators:

It was the first time that they have a standing ovation, you know. I mean, they [the students] couldn't believe it, you know; it was just so beautiful....I mean, it was the first time that they were riding an escalator! So, we got a picture on the escalator because they've never been there. That will always be in my memory: the escalator.

That experience is cemented in Amber's memory. The beauty of this memory is two-fold: on the one hand she was so happy that she was able to provide her students with such an opportunity to perform at a large conference, but on the other hand, she was humbled because she was able to be a part of that experience. To her, that was the true reward. Abril (2006) found that many teachers choose to work in urban schools for the distinct rewards it offers, including perceived satisfaction of making a positive difference in the lives of their students.

Theme 3: Willingness to Perform Unofficial Job Duties

Specific job duties may differ based upon the location of the school and the particular needs of the school. There are duties that can be expected at any school. These might include delivering standards-based lessons, administering assessments to monitor

student growth, and facilitating performances to showcase student work. In addition to this list of teaching-related obligations, each participant shared about the “unofficial” job duties; things that are not required by contract, but necessary for success. In general, the participants expressed that they enjoyed these informal responsibilities. Codes that contributed to this theme included going above and beyond, music builds community, music has a deeper meaning, knowledge of school culture, love of the job, love of students (which included descriptions of students).

Advocacy

Advocacy is a subtheme because it was one of the unofficial job duties described by the participants. In this study, advocacy is defined as speaking up for or taking action in support of another person or people. Codes that contributed to this subtheme included advocating for students, family advocate, teacher as motivator, going above and beyond, building up the music program, love of the job, and love of students.

Often when music education and advocacy are mentioned together, the discussion is centered around policies at various levels and/or justifying music education’s desired presence in educational spaces (Kos, 2018). However, when participants discussed advocacy, it was centered around providing assistance for students and their families. Amber advocates to take her students on field trips, Bradley constantly advocates for additional resources for his student programs, Daniel advocates for his students by doing presentations at local colleges and universities and national organizations, and Geneva advocates for her student by providing additional programming.

Connected to advocacy is the idea of *going above and beyond*. Amber shared how many of her students and their families look to her assistance to meet some of their basic needs. Because many of her students are English as Second Language (ESL) learners, and a great deal of those are undocumented immigrant students, those families look to her for places to find food, housing, and clothing. Because of the parameters of the COVID pandemic, she often found herself assisting families with technology concerns.

Another example of advocating for students by going above and beyond is thinking about students in the future and helping them get there. Bradley shared how he found ways to help his students achieve their future goals, such as going to college:

And that's my elementary kids: a lot of them going to be first generation college goers. But I'll follow them and I'll get into their heels and help them how I can. I'm used to that. I had a lot of high schoolers when I was at the high school or when I was in the middle school, the middle school kids would go to the high school and I'd follow them and they'd say "I don't know Mr. B if I'm going to go to college or not, we don't have any money." Man, we'd fix that, you know we'd get on it: we'd find grants, we find this, and we'd find a way. If they wanted to go, they went. So that's kind of where my head is.

Although going above and beyond the call of duty is conventionally considered a positive thing, Heather offered her frustration about advocating for students at times:

So for me it's just kids who were disrespectful when you go above and beyond. And I'm like, how you treat your teacher like this? She's doing everything she can to try to help you? I mean, it just it's so sad, it really is it; it was hurtful. But you know. A lot of kids come from a lot of broken situations at home, and they just don't have the support, so you know, you really can't expect anything else.

Here, Heather provided an example of how despite a teacher's best efforts, some students will not appreciate what teachers are doing for them and what is being provided to them. She shared how that hurts because she really loved what she did and really loved her students.

Sometimes advocacy looks like building a music program from scratch. Christine, Daniel and Francis briefly discussed getting to their school and having limited resources: little to no instruments, small budget. They had to go above and beyond to procure what was needed for their school to be successful. However, they all found solace ultimately by creating a program that looked exactly as they desired. While it required sacrifice, the reward was worth it to them.

The foundation of advocacy for the participants was love. The reason that the participants advocate for their students is because of love: love of their students, love of their job. Each participant spoke with passion and joy as they answered my questions. It is quite evident that each and every one of these teachers has a deep and genuine love of their job, and an even deeper and sincere love for their students. Here, Heather shared a tender interaction with a student who had to be redirected for misbehavior. She recounted telling with the student:

But you know I worked hard, I went to college, you know I made it, and you can too, but you have to know that these teachers have your best interests so just know that whatever it is we are doing for you it's out of love.

Heather continued by explaining,

And that's what I feel like people that teach urban schools don't get that: they have to learn those kids and do it out of love and be intentional. And that's what I really feel: I mean it's a very special place.

According to these teachers, the love that the participants have for their job and their school is sustained through reciprocity: the students return the love back to their teachers. Christine shared how love is the driving force behind her teaching:

What keeps me teaching? Honestly, the children and not the money. The children and just being able to pour into them the love that I received from my elementary teacher through music...and their love teaches me love; their love for me teaches me to have more love for others.

While love is an emotion (and a complex one at that), it seems almost necessary for teachers to have in order to advocate for their students. Moreover, love seems necessary for teachers to be successful in their classrooms.

Several of the participants talked about how they advocated for their students to be seen just as they are: as kids. In spite of some of the obstacles stacked against their students, these teachers desired that their students be offered the same humanity and grace that is afforded to students who may go to school in a different context. Daniel detailed his feelings about well-intentioned people who say harmful things about his students:

I wish, more people knew that kids are kids. And I wish more people viewed our kids and not, as all of those various stereotypes, you listed before. It hasn't happened so much in the last several years because people know their head might get bitten off, but like especially early in my career, I'd have people ask questions like, "oh, do you have any good kids?" What?!? I mean, I know what you mean by that, but I would have people ask questions like that. Or another thing that I've had multiple well-meaning people say is like, "oh that's great you know that you're that you have this program that you're teaching" and stuff you know, because if a kid is holding an instrument, they can't hold a gun. I'm like okay, what makes you think that, if my child puts down his horn the next thing he's going to pick up is a gun, you know.

Researcher: And this is from very well-meaning people?

Daniel: Yeah, that's the crazy part. It's like people who don't even realize what they're saying is super messed up. But yes, I just wish that people saw our kids as kids, you know; saw them as young human beings with all of the things that comes with who, you know, live in love and learn and make mistakes and all that type of stuff. Yeah, I think that's it.

Here, Daniel provided an example of how the assumptions about his students can be so pedestrian in his conversation with other people. He also discussed how the conversations would be very different if they were discussing students in the suburbs, students of a different race, or students in a different socioeconomic bracket.

Theme 4: Concerns About Urban Teacher Preparation

When I asked participants about their educational background, I also inquired about their preparation to teaching in urban settings. Preparation to teach in urban schools, or lack thereof, seems to be a source of contention in music education (Doyle, 2014; Eros, 2018). Several studies indicated that preservice teachers and new teachers felt unprepared for the classroom, and especially in the urban context (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Kindall-Smith, 2004; Shaw, 2015; Shaw, 2020; Siwatu, 2011).

Codes that contributed to this theme included “Trial by fire,” life experiences, negative homelife experiences, similar struggle to the students, sharing experience with students, sales experience helped teaching, made teacher more progressive, feeling unprepared, behavior problems, praxis shock, provide real experience for preservice teachers, and filled in gaps with professional development.

All participants communicated that they received no formal preparation for teaching in this setting. Christine provided reasoning for why teacher candidates do not receive formal preparation for teaching in urban schools:

Researcher: Did you feel that your college prepared you for teaching urban students or students with those traumas and circumstances that make them act a certain way?

Christine: No, I don't believe any university prepares you for the things you deal with in public schools.

Researcher: Do you think they could? Do you think there's a way that universities could better prepare teachers?

Christine: Yeah, I kinda believe so. But most of the time, professors or the people who are teaching in college, they have not taught in public school. They're teaching off of whatever they learned in college, but they never experienced teaching in those schools. So how can they teach us if they've never gone through teaching a kindergartener or an eighth grader? They prepared me I think musically but they didn't prepare me for the other side of it.

When asked about his preparation experience, Elijah's comment were consistent with Christine's sentiments:

People think it's very model, textbook answers all the time; it's not but I also blame teacher service [teacher education courses] for that, because I don't know why they teach from a textbook when that's not how that works...

Furthermore, Elijah felt that the lack of preparation in music schools had a much deeper, covert cause, specifically, related to preparing preservice teacher to teach at the elementary level. He felt as if colleges and universities treat elementary positions as subpar, and treat jobs at the secondary level *better* and therefore that receives more attention in coursework and preparation:

When you go to college, the goal is not...I've never heard one person say when you graduate and become a music teacher. I've always heard this: when you graduate and become the band director, you're going to need to know how to do this; when you graduate and become a choir director, you're going to need to know how to do this. Why was it that nobody ever said when you graduate and become a music teacher, this is what you're going to need to do? Not one time. For years in band, he never said anything about when you get an elementary music job, you're going to need to know how to do this and that. No, it was always when you get that band position, you are going to need know how to write this drill and place them on the field; or how to do a dance routine, or how to run a budget, or how to make a handbook. And choir is the same way: didn't nobody prep them for how to do that [general music teaching], they were prepared to be a choral director. The focus is essentially like band teacher or choir teacher, and then anything that falls out of that is considered third party or not in the major leagues.

Heather shared a similar experience. She was prepared to be a secondary band teacher, but there were no positions available upon graduation:

I felt like I was well prepared: I had all the courses, I had student teaching, I had all the pedagogy courses, I knew how to run drills and shows for marching band. I felt like I was ready to be a middle or high school band director, however, there were no positions available when I graduated. But I got hired. So, was I prepared to be an elementary music teacher? No, I don't really feel like I was.

Heather initially desired to be a middle or high school band teacher, however she ended up teaching at an elementary. As she reflected on her teacher preparation, she did not feel prepared for an elementary job; she felt she was only prepared for a middle or high school ensemble

If the participants did not receive formal training to prepare them for the urban classroom, how were they prepared? The participants all spoke to the concept of *trial by fire*: "...the actual doing. The teaching of or teaching in an urban school prepared me for an urban school" (Elijah). Bradley offered that nothing really could prepare someone to teach in an urban classroom. One must endure and learn: the definition of trial by fire.

Because the participants felt they were unprepared, in the formal sense, many talked about experiencing *praxis shock*. Praxis shock occurs when the practical realities of the classroom do not align with an individual's perceived expectations (Ballantyne, 2007; Ballantyne & Mills, 2008). Teacher's experiences of praxis shock may be further intensified by the unique challenges encountered in urban classrooms (Shaw, 2018).

Daniel reminisced on his praxis shock on the first day of teaching at his first school, an alternative secondary school in an urban community:

My first day of my entire teaching career day one, I walk into the school, I had a kid come in and like fly off the handle and the school resource officers put her on the ground and arrested her and took her out of the classroom and stuff. As you know, I'm like a young white dude from a small town on the east coast: I'm in a different world now in a lot of ways, you know.

Elijah offered a suggestion on how to better prepare future teachers:

I used to get really upset with the mock teaching that teachers would make pre-service teachers do: get them kids, they need to be in these classrooms, observing and whenever possible in front of live children. Because adults can act like five-year-olds, but at the end of the day, that's an adult. And classroom management (and I'm doing my thesis on classroom management), we're failing teachers, essentially the way we are. We can't do anything now the system fails us from the

district down and then classroom management teachers are failing their pre-service teachers by telling them you're the adult you're in charge: that's not the answer anymore in 2021. The answer is a student is going to throw a chair, but this is how you probably should react to it. Because the reality of the situation is you're not going to stop the chair throwing if that's going to be the situation, or the destroying of the room, or the irate: it's all in how you respond and deal with the situation.

In the above quote, Elijah shared how preservice teachers benefit greatly from being in real classrooms with real kids, not role play in a college course. He also shared his opinion on handling classroom management. Preservice teachers should be prepared on how to deal with student incidents that happen as opposed to trying to control behavior.

As a way to counteract her perceived lack of preparation, Heather shared how she attended professional development but also collaborated with other teachers to fill in those gaps. However, Daniel shared how many of the professional developments or conferences he attended were not relevant to his teaching and his job, and the challenges that he was facing in his classroom.

Theme 5: Curricular and Pedagogical Decisions

Teaching in an urban setting is unique and different than rural and suburban schools (Anderson & Denson, 2015). Ergo, traditional or orthodox strategies to teaching may not be as effective in urban schools. This theme explores how teachers modified or shifted their teaching and learning activities in order to reach their students. Codes that contributed to this theme included different context require different skills, preparing students for the future, student future concerns, “seed planter,” increase involvement in feeder schools, students see themselves in classroom examples, and provide students with new experiences.

As participants stated above, urban contexts are different from other contexts (e.g. suburban, rural); and “different spaces call for different skills” (Elijah). A pedagogical shift is traditionally understood as transformative changes of an educators’ understanding in teaching and learning (Shulman, 1987). Wong and Li (2020) defined pedagogical shifts as moments, scenarios and circumstances in which educators find themselves beginning to accept and experiment with new ways of teaching (activities designed to cater to learners’ learning needs) while departing from conventional educational models. Each participant shared the necessity to depart from what they had learned in their formal educational experiences in order to make content more meaningful to students. For example, Heather talked about how she took a concept like folk dances and made it more engaging and meaningful (and age appropriate) for her students:

We did some real simple folk dances, level one dances (real simple like line dances) kind of stuff. And yeah, they were cute, and it was fun. But do the same dance to a different song, and the kids are like, “hey this is cool.” For example, something real simple as a little dance called *Alley Cat*: it’s a cute little dance, real simple, but the music might sound a *little baby-fied*... but you do the same thing to *Man In The Mirror* and it works just fine because the phrasing matches up exactly the same.

Christine shared how her knowledge of her setting and her students influences what and how she taught. She realized that a traditional approach would not work, so instead she used what her students enjoyed, and made that work:

Sometimes I use this word: I’m an *unorthodox* music teacher, because I don’t like to follow the book at all like they want me to teach. Steady beat and teach this and teach folk music now. I’m going to teach based off of what the environment calls for. So, I’m not going to teach folk music at this school. I’m going to take what they do and use it and turn it into music education.

The process of teachers making content relevant to their student population aligns with Ladson-Billing’s (1995) ideas about culturally relevant pedagogy. Doyle (2014)

defines “culturally relevant” as teacher beliefs that signify value for diverse cultures and a willingness to interrogate common presumptions about teaching and education in general, urban students in particular, and the educational use of music outside of the Western classical canon. These beliefs can lead to “culturally relevant” teacher actions, defined as actions that communicate value for individual student culture, infuse said students’ cultures into relevant, meaningful learning, and allow students to critically examine musical, societal, and cultural issues (Doyle, 2014). Heather shared how she would alter components of classroom activities to make them more culturally relevant and ultimately more engaging and meaningful to her students:

But you know, there was sometimes a presenter may offer something that I couldn’t necessarily use my room. Or I would find someone and say, hey look, you know, this might be a little hard for my kids but maybe I can modify a little bit. Or like you know I really liked that dance but I’m not really crazy about the music; my kids wouldn’t really dig that. But if I do the same dance with something they might relate to, we’ll make it work.

Christine even stated how she would sacrifice her personal likes for the sake of engaging her students:

I actually don't listen to most of the music that they listen to just for religious reasons. But if I know that there's a song that they are familiar with, they love, I will utilize it.

Elijah had no problem making changes to prescribed curriculum:

I don't care how a student gets a concept, just so long as we met the standard and the concept was taught. Did you master steady beat? Yes, great. Did it matter that I use Beyonce? I think it shouldn't. You know, I'm like whatever works; that's how I do it.

Here, Elijah understands how music education is based on skills and concepts that are usually taught in the context of classical music. However, he felt that the concepts were

more important than the music used to teach them. As long as he students were able to master the learning goal, he was content with using non-classical or popular musics.

Culturally relevant teaching is undergirded by listening to students, building relationships, and nurturing rapport. Instead of forcing irrelevant and culturally unresponsive expectations and curriculum onto urban youth, Emdin (2017) encouraged educators to reassess what learning and teaching should look like and incorporate the preestablished cultural understandings of the students into the classroom.

The participants desired for their students to be successful in their class, and therefore made curricular and/or pedagogical changes. Bradley shared some advice he gave to some younger teachers he mentors:

...because they think that they're going to go in and have these kids playing Vivaldi on the recorder by Christmas and that's not A) it's not what elementary school's about B) when you're in a quote unquote urban setting when sometimes you don't have the resources that other schools have when you're, you know, you're scrapping just to get the kids in and quiet and try and get something going, you have to modify your expectations to keep everybody, including yourself sane, happy, and growing.

Once the appropriate understanding level is established, participants then created spaces for students to express themselves in authentic and creative ways. For example:

I'll play a song and just like let them sit there, and they'll just start doing something. And I'm like that's the greatest thing since sliced bread, like why didn't I think that? And then I haven't told them jack nothing and I'm just doing what they're doing, like let's keep doing it and they didn't even know they taught me that...either you learn with them or learn from them (Elijah).

In the example above, Elijah created a space for his students to be creative and free, and then demonstrated that he valued what they can do. When he let his students “just start doing something,” this could mean letting his students vocally improvise over a melody

or create a complex ostinato. Whatever the case may be, the students are driving the instruction, and because of this, it is culturally relevant.

Francis stated that she is mindful of how handles unplanned music moments in her classroom. She wanted to ensure that even in unexpected moments in class, students feel affirmed and empowered to express themselves authentically.

I had one little girl asked to stand up and sing a song and she's sang an entire Arabic litany from her Christmas program where she got to be one of the singers. And sang it just beautifully, and randomly. We have a lot of little moments like that in our class. I think, being an urban music educator, you have to be very aware of where your kids are you know and who they are, and what's important to them and to be very culturally responsive is very important to know (Francis).

In the example above, Francis has cultivated such a safe environment in her classroom, that her students not only want to perform what she asks of them, but the students wish to share their own culture and heritage in conjunction with classroom activities. Francis was not only culturally relevant by teaching to the student, but culturally responsive by embracing and nurturing student's culture.

These examples demonstrate the participants' belief that when given the space and time, urban students will showcase amazing things; revealing unknown talents or sharing parts of their culture, parts of themselves. Relying on their students' knowledge can provide teachers with a wealth of information as well as opportunities for informing culturally responsive teaching. What can seem difficult to one educator might be accessible or even easy for a student (Kruse & Gallo, 2020). This can be especially true when the participant is from a different culture than their students. The examples above model how culturally responsive pedagogy can look: allowing students to share their culture as the participants made it relevant to the instruction.

Continuity of Education

When teachers are making curricular and pedagogical decisions more culturally relevant, they must consider if or how these decisions will impact the quality of instruction. In many classrooms, music centers the western classical canon, with notational literacy and technical knowledge representing the currency required for further education in music. When teachers decenter these skills and knowledge, students may not acquire the background they require to continue their music education (Hess, 2017). Successful urban music teachers must find the balance between what students want to do and what students need to do.

Due to the transient nature of urban student populations (Shaw, 2018) it is sometimes challenging to guarantee a quality music education that can provide students with tangible musical skills for the entirety of their K-12 school experience. The participants discussed the frustration this brings them as they attempt to foster ways ensure the continuity of music education. According to Francis,

In the next couple of years we're going to start a community choir for our cluster, to kind of bridge the gap and get those kids; we have a lot of kids that are not going to the public middle school because middle school is just a hot mess...and then they go to the public, high school and then they've not sung for four years or not been in music for four years. And if you don't sing through that [adolescent vocal] change, it is very challenging: you're just playing catch up, and again rob kids of those opportunities that could like change their life.

Music educators desire for students to receive a sequential method of music instruction from grade school to high school. However, this may not always be the not the case in some urban schools. In this example, Francis is disturbed by the lack of continuity in her school district: students take music in elementary school, might not take music in middle school, and then may not be prepared to take music in high school. If a student decides

they may want to take music after elementary school, they may not have the skills to be successful in a music class due, to a gap in their instruction. Because of this, Francis wanted to provide a way to keep students involved in music and singing, a way of filling this gap in instruction.

Elijah shared an example of how he attempts to establish continuity of instruction by making the skills needed for middle school music a part of his elementary instruction:

Like I got these keyboards this year and I'm going to teach keyboard next year. What's, the first thing I did? I called the middle school and said, 'Hey you teach fifth and sixth grade piano: what would you expect the fourth grader coming to you having had one year of piano?' But those conversations aren't happening, like there's no structure within music education. It's like we have elementary and we have band, and then we have choir and it's not this cohesive thing....

In this example, Elijah shared how he took the initiative to address a gap *proactively*. He contacted the middle school music teacher in one of the schools his students would be attending to ask what students needed to know to be successful in music in middle school. He then used this information and included it in his instruction so that his students would be equipped with the right skills when they got to middle school. He wanted to provide cohesive instruction and a seamless transition into middle school music. However, Elijah shared how many teachers are not communicating with each other, highlighting the lack of continuous instruction.

While asking her to describe one of her most memorable successes, Christine shared a story that demonstrate the results and outcomes of urban students who have experienced continuity of instruction. The first is about a student's successful transition to middle school band:

The middle school band teacher literally just emailed a few days ago, and she says I just want to give you this success story. Your student last year named [student name] came to middle school this year. And he said he kind of wanted to be in

band but couldn't choose an instrument. He was waiting if he wanted to stay in band or not. But he said one day it just clicked in him and he reminded her that he had an elementary music teacher that had him play on the percussion instruments, because you know elementary you're playing xylophones and the other percussion instruments. And she said from there, she gave him some mallets, an instrument, and some sheet music and he just soared; he took off and is just so happy to play. She says he's one of her best xylophone players and some of the best xylophone playing technique: everything is just on point. And he absolutely loves it and he actually wants to come back to the school, to his alma mater which is my school, to talk to the sixth graders (rising) about how he just loves music now in middle school.

Because of the instruction this student received, he not only excelled but wanted to encourage younger students to continue in music in middle school.

She shared another anecdote about a student's successful journey to pursue music beyond high school:

So, I remember a few years back we're being taken over by the state. Band was being taken away and we only had one related arts class: my music class. PE—gone; band—gone; everything was going but music was the only one that stayed. And so all the bands students didn't have a band to go to, so they just put them in my music class; I literally was the music teacher, the PE teacher, we did a little art, which is kind of rotated every other day. Well anyway, one student said to me, "I look up to the band director at This University and the drum major at This University," not knowing I know him [drum major] because you'll find out because you're a Sinfonian: his name is James. And not knowing that I know James, the student said, "I look up to him." So, what I did was talked to James and the band people and had them come to the school to surprise my student. And when they walked in the door, his face lit up and he got up. They were going to just dance through the drum major things for him, but my student got up and knew every routine from the band from beginning to end. He learned it on YouTube! I have the whole video, I kept it. Now that my student has gone through middle school, high school, he is now at [This University], in the band as a trumpeter, and is about to be a drum major.

In this example, Christine described how this particular student was impacted by a music program that provided continuous and cohesive musical instruction. She understood that if this student wished to be a college band director or drum major, he would need to stay involved in music. To encourage this, she used the very person that her student looked up

to: James, the drum major. The outcome of this experience is that this student continued in music throughout middle and high school, and ultimately playing in the band at This University. When students see and receive a quality, continuous education the results are almost always positive.

The participants discovered that they needed to adjust their teaching to create significant experiences for students, not just for the K-12 school experience but in the hopes that they would want to continue music in the future. Bradley, Christine, Elijah, and Francis all made concerted efforts to prepare their students for their feeder middle schools.

My job, and I really honestly believe this, I want my kids to leave my school having at least one or two world class performance opportunities...and you know I believe honestly, you're going to have more success with the kids if they have that (Bradley).

Bradley believes that offering these performance opportunities will “plant seeds” that will bloom and grow in the student’s lives throughout adulthood. He described:

We're seed planters, and we're dream growers. I guess that's what it is, for me. And you know my curriculum, of course, there's all the technological aspects of it and here's our pacing guide, here's the things they need to get and here's this. But that's another thing you know what's more important: the fact that my kids come out of my room feeling happy with a love for music, not the fact that I cram a whole bunch of crap down their throat...

Bradley creates opportunities for his students that he hopes will incite musical involvement long after they leave his classroom. In these vignettes, continuity of instruction is not only about a sequenced, connected approach to teaching music but also the continuation of music interest and participation after the school years.

Content is Secondary

Although the primary job of an elementary music teacher is to teach music, the participants all agreed that there are moments when the music—the content—comes in second place to more pressing matters. Codes that contributed to this subtheme were superficial teaching to teaching with a deeper meaning, teaching more than music, social emotional learning, creating space for students to talk openly, skills and performance based, product vs process teaching, altering instruction for student success, and unorthodox teaching

Daniel shared an example of how content becomes secondary. There are events and circumstances that may more important than making music:

You know when there's another black person killed by police in the news or something like that you know, like when those things happen: A rehearsal or an upcoming concert or a parade is never more important than that and never will be more important than that. You know, sometimes we've had days, where we spend more than half of our rehearsal just talking and talking about different issues like that, and all the kids will say what's on their mind, and you know talk to each other about it and their grievances and stuff. And once some of that weight has at least been lifted off their chest, then we could maybe make some great music.

Especially in the climate of this country, ignoring current events like police brutality could negatively affect Daniel's students. He realized how providing a space for students to share their feelings about the world around them made teaching and music making much easier. While his reflections are connected to his previous secondary school teaching, urban elementary students also need a space to process their feelings about the world around them. They may not have the wherewithal to communicate how they feel, but providing a space for them to ask questions and feel how they feel makes teaching easier.

Bradley understood the importance of developing relationships early in the school year to ensure successful music teaching for the duration of the year and beyond. Even if that means less actual music making happens at the time, it will pay off eventually. He explained,

So, I really feel like you know it takes time because you have to build that relationship, but within that first month I don't really care how much music they get because we have to build trust in a relationship. And there again, you know I've heard it said that you know, sometimes that's more important than anything in an urban setting, but I think it's more important than anything with a kid.

Elijah spoke to a more personal, intimate reason for teaching music. His reason for teaching music does not focus on the teaching of music at all:

I don't feel like I wake up and like have to teach music and that's the sole purpose, I mean that's what I'm here doing. But if I give a child a reason to come to school or to do something with them, so it gives them purpose, then that's good for me.

Of course, Elijah enjoyed teaching music and wanted his students to learn about music, but that was not his primary goal. He was more concerned about making a positive impact on his students' lives, believing that was a more important goal.

Daniel talked about his evolution as a teacher, as the way he reflected on his approach to teaching and how it has changed over the years:

Years ago, I was much more concerned about making sure we were playing in tune, and all of our rhythms were perfect and all that stuff and we still strive for and all of that; we still push them to try and be excellent. But at the end of the day, I'm not beating myself up if something didn't sound perfect if I know that the kids had an experience or an opportunity that really was impactful for them, you know.

Daniel found that musical excellence was not the most important outcome. While he still in pursuit of excellence, he is happier knowing that his students were positively impacted by playing and performing.

The participants realized that there are life events more important than the music and music making. Sometimes, current events and circumstances have an impact on student's abilities and attitudes, so it is necessary that these events are acknowledged and addressed. The participants' statements were in agreement that it made music making easier, and in some ways more meaningful. Furthermore, in doing so they found the answer to their calling as teachers of urban youth.

Amber explained how her perspective on teaching music has been a journey. As she learned more about her students, she learned more about herself:

When I first started teaching, it was very superficial. It was more to entertain: more to showcase and entertain. And then as my population changed and I started to get more deep into who I was teaching to and why I was teaching and what I was teaching, then I had an actual life purpose: For them, and for me.

When Amber shifted her music performance-oriented teaching goals and began to focus on her students and their needs, she was able to find her purpose. She clearly wanted her students to be skilled, competent musicians but realized before they were a musician, before they pick up an instrument or sing a song, they are human first.

Theme 6: Urban Music Teacher Characteristics

Authors reporting on the characteristic of urban educators often rely on statistics concerning demographic differences with non-urban teachers, particularly in comparison to the demographics of students (Ausmann, 1991; Choy, 1993; Kindall-Smith, 2006; McKoy, 2009; Shaw, 2015). However, in response to my question like, "What do you think makes a good music educator? What characteristics would a person who is a good music educator have?", the participants described the characteristics of an urban elementary music educators from a more abstract perspective. While the participants provided various responses, commonalities could be found across their answers. Codes

that contributed to this theme included being open/open minded, flexible, being authentic, expert communicators, and student-centered instruction.

The participants believe that successful urban music teachers student centered. In fact, throughout the interviews, the participants exuded a great level of dedication to their students: as people and as musicians. Geneva emphasized that your teaching has “gotta be kids first.” And to that point, Heather stated that an urban music teacher must teach *every* student. What she meant by this was teaching to every student regardless of social identifier, behavior, interest, or skill level. Elijah shared how his views on interacting with classes and students that misbehave:

I don't like dealing this class, just let me skip them or let me just not deal with fourth block, or I hate this fourth grade class. You know, I've turned that script and now I love those classes, because I feel like when the class gets gangster that's just the time for me to grow. And you grow as an educator with those classes. And so I've really grown to appreciate them...

In this example, Elijah details how some teachers try to avoid or shy away from problem classes. However, he uses those classes as an opportunity to grow and become a better educator, as it relates to managing the class. Yet he does this because he wants his students to be successful; he wants to be the best teacher so he can provide the best teaching to them.

The participants also believed that a successful urban music educator is an effective communicator. This trait is connected to being student centered, because teachers must communicate in a way that all students understand, the concept of teaching or communicating to every student.

It is important and necessary to have a command of content, but a teacher must know how to communicate that content to students. Francis shared how she has to slow

down her speech or speed of content delivery sometimes because her REL (non-native English speaking) students can not follow. She continued by offering a more pointed example of why great communication is needed:

I have learned to be very explicit like in my instructions, so there's no question. Especially working with elementary school kids, I've gotten very good at learning how to scaffold correctly. And one of the things that I've learned is that, if my students are being unsuccessful at a task or at a thing, it means that I need to go back and try again; that my instructions weren't good enough or that my instructions were not what they needed. Or that maybe it's too hard, you know. So being able to push them, but like if I'm pushing them to do something I didn't teach them to do, that's not a realistic expectation: I can't skip steps one, two and three, and then expect them to be successful at five. And they'll try, it's not because they're not trying, especially at my school they're going to try their hardest to do whatever it is I asked them to do, but if they're not successful, that means, oh, I need to try again.

In this example, Francis discussed how students are unsuccessful when she does not communicate effectively. If the instruction or delivery of the content is not at the right pace or not sequenced properly, that blame belongs to the teacher.

Furthermore, the participants agreed that a successful urban music educator is flexible and open minded. Elijah stressed, “not stuck in your ways,” meaning being open to innovation and new ideas and new ways of doing things. Especially working with young students, he emphasized, “sometimes you learn with them or learn from them.” In different ways, each participant expressed that the teacher cannot know everything about music; the teacher must also be in space to learn. Daniel shared his method for balancing his teaching and learning, “coming in to learn and figure out where my own knowledge and my own skills could fit in.” Heather discussed some advice she received as she started her teaching journey:

I remember my college band director told me in one of my own music ed classes, he said, ‘your first year teaching you're going to learn more than your students and if you don't then you've done something wrong.’

While the quote above was provided in the context of building relationships with students, it explicitly underpinned the notion of teachers being in space to learn, and especially from students.

Lastly, the participants shared how urban music classrooms require a delicate balance between being authentic and being aware. Being authentic speaks to being one's self, as Geneva highlighted that authenticity begets student authenticity. Meaning when the teacher is their true self, it causes students to present their true self as well. Awareness speaks to being cognizant of how circumstance may impact others. Daniel shared how he must be mindful of how he navigates spaces with his student:

...I just have to be aware constantly, you know of my own actions, of my own words. I have to be aware of, like the position of privilege that I speak from and I have to be aware of what my kids are going through and as sensitive to that as I can be.

Francis shared how she must be more mindful of what her students are dealing with:

...the kids bring so much more I feel...baggage. As far as my experiences, they are more in tune with what the adults in their life are saying, but yet they don't necessarily have the language to articulate or the emotional maturity to process it. And/or to realize what's real and what's true and what's not. And so they're very reflective of the environment that they're in.

In the examples above, urban teachers demonstrate how they must be aware of how they interact with their students. This, too, is connected to being student centered and ensuring that they are successful in the classroom; which often leads to positive results outside the classroom.

Race and Racism

Scholarship about urban music teaching underscores racial differences between urban music teachers and urban music students. Because of this, I felt it was important to

explore whether there was any tension connected to these racial differences.

Consequently, I wanted to discuss experiences of racism, because one cannot discuss race without racism, and specifically how it influences their interactions with their students.

Codes that contributed to this subtheme included racism defined, racism and privilege are now real, and racism is layered.

Almost all participants agreed that in teaching in an urban setting, race is important, and it is complex. Bradley, however, did not agree with the use of labels and social identifiers, expressing the belief that they do not define who a person is or what they are capable of doing.

Concerning racism, there was a general consensus amongst the participants that racism is wrong, and has no place in the classroom, or anywhere for that matter. While there was agreement the concept itself among the participants, they did defined racism in diverse ways. Elijah, Geneva, and Christine defined racism in a performative way: being discriminated against, being treated differently, feeling differently. Heather's definition likened racism to intolerance of *any* kind, being intolerant of any person "that's different than who you are." Francis provided a definition of racism that was more inclusive of the nuances of race and racism:

Well, I think I'll keep my definition very simple just because there's so many different layers to that conversation. And when we talk about it with the kids...I will explain it as in like if there's any kind of disparity, that is based on that solely based on race. That is where there's not equity and sometimes that or like just injustice and sometimes that looks very different and sometimes it's not something you would necessarily identify immediately: that's why it's such a complicated thing. It's kind of like on the surface, it might look Okay, but then below that there's like this underlying problem.

To that point, both Geneva and Christine shared in their experiences with racism, either directly or vicariously, and how it has been passed down through families and is

sometimes so engrained in a person that they do not realize that their words or actions to be racism. According to Christine,

Some people are racist and don't even realize its racism.... it's so like deeply rooted within people that they don't realize, especially decent, white people they don't even realize that they're being racist because it's just something that's been passed down through generations.

Daniel discussed how his defining and understanding of racism was a journey:

So I define racism as the systems that are set up to keep past but really current racial hierarchies in place. So that does influence my teaching a lot and I didn't always see it that way. You know, when I was younger, I thought that, like racism was being mean to black people you know what I mean. And the area grew up in was super white. We had three black kids in my high school to have more twins and the other one was their older brother. So it was not a diverse area at all. I never had these conversations much growing up. And I feel lucky that I actually was really good friends with those three because they have been phenomenal musicians and we'd make music together and hanging and stuff. These type of conversations and stuffs sort of started to happen, a little bit, but you know as kids we weren't really talking about it that much. And especially I'm sure for them, it would probably be very uncomfortable to bring those things up when there's no other black kids around, no other black families around. So it really wasn't until college was when I started learning about the stuff more on a cerebral level, and then, when I moved to [city] I started to really see it more; I had more of a front row seat, let me put it that way. Obviously, as, obviously, as a white person I never can experience it the same way that people of color can. But you know when you see it in your own neighborhood and when you see it in your own schools, your own jobs and stuff like that, it's so much different than reading it in a book or seeing on TV.

In this vignette, Daniel shared how his understanding of racism is more than a performative act against someone. As Christine shared how people are racist because of actions being passed down through a family, Daniel had limited interactions with people different than himself; he too could have been racist and would have not known.

However, because of his friendship with few Black people in his community growing up, he was able to have a broader perspective on racism. He now understands that racism is a *real* thing and it is much more than what is presented in the media or even in texts.

Once participants had shared their ideas and thoughts around race and racism, I asked if they felt that their understandings of race and racism inform their teaching or how they interact with their students. Francis shared an interesting experience she had at a previous school she taught in as it pertains to race in her classroom:

At a previous school, my students hated me because I was White. There was a lot of racial unrest in the country and even in that specific community, and it was reflected in my classroom. They're like "White teacher"...and I'm like I just want to help you, lets clap and sing. And so, I would have these like kids that didn't want to be in music, and well they didn't want to be in school period.

Francis saw how her race made teaching children of a different race difficult, even though she had the best of intentions. Because of the broad racial tensions in the United States, but also in her urban community, some students had no desire to work with her. She even shared how conversations about race were challenging because young students "don't have the emotional maturity to articulate their feelings."

In another example, Elijah's understanding of race caused him to be as culturally inclusive as possible. He described how he learned not to leave anyone out in his lesson planning:

I would show examples of children's choir to my older kids and they would be really quick to point out like: there are no black students up there and it's only white students, or it's only white boys or white girls like they would be really keen on picking that up. I didn't think about that I just thought oh this sounded nice, this would be a great example for them to listen to. But to them it's more about, no, no, no, I don't see anybody that looks like me and that's important to them, because they need to see that they need to feel empowered like I can be a black boy or a black girl and get on stage and sing in the choir or get a violin and play or being the symphony or be a music teacher or just be successful.

As a white male, Elijah did not realize how his lesson examples were excluding the students he was teaching. He was unaware that using examples of White-only individuals in a classroom full of Black and Brown students was an issue. Because his student called

him out, he changed to using examples of various peoples and cultures. Geneva and Heather also noted that it is imperative that urban students can see themselves in music examples and can see themselves in music.

Geneva had a keen understanding of her community, her students, and their families. Because of this, she was well aware that some of her families tended to lean conservative, and those were often the families that give her obstacles about race. For example, she knew that the conservative families would not expose their children to the music of Black Americans, like jazz. Geneva made it a point to include a wide range of genres and cultures in her instruction because she was aware that she may be the only person to expose some of her students to non-White musics and cultures.

As a Black woman, Christine shared how she experienced racism at her school from other adults. She detailed how most of her racist encounters were in the form of microaggressions, which are defined as comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority) (Merriam-Webster, 2021). Not surprisingly, she is sometimes bothered by those comments or questions. However, when asked how her understanding of racism impacted her teaching she replied that it had no impact. She stated, "I don't let it, like that doesn't affect it at all...because we're adults: they're children, so I have this philosophy, like I don't believe in putting something on our children what I'm going through." Christine believed that the racism she experiences has no place in her classroom and that students were not experiencing it, they had no need to be involved.

Frustrations of Urban Music Teachers

In discussions about what the characteristics of urban elementary music educators were, each participant was adamant about sharing some of their frustrations as well. Codes that contributed to this subtheme included babysitters, underpaid, underrated and misunderstood, Co-worker's support but don't fully understand, and music be respected as a core subject.

Christine highlighted how she felt undervalued as a teacher because she was considered a "babysitter". She believed that she was much more than that: she is a mentor, a motivator. When sharing about her frustrations as an urban music teacher, Francis also used the term "babysitting." She declared that teaching music is "not just babysitting, it's not just oh we're having a good time. Which we are always having a good time, you know..." Both participants expressed that one of the reasons they are associated with "babysitting" is because other teachers do not know really know what music teachers do. For instance, home room teachers or core subject teachers sometimes viewed taking their students to specials (music, art, physical education) as a break for them.

Elijah shared similar thoughts and frustrations around non-music teachers bringing their students to his class:

Underrated as a professional; a lack of awareness of what I do; feeling like what I do everyday matters, not from my administration but more so from peers. I'm dreaming and wishing for music education to matter as much as reading and math and often wonder like if we put as much effort into music, as we did math and reading what kind of society we'd have? Representation, feeling like what I, what I do matters like making sure that my coworkers understand that, like you don't bring the kids late to my class, you're teaching them that it's okay to be late and it doesn't matter. And don't refer to me as the break: it's not a break, it's class and they're here to get a lesson. It's like they go to your class every day for seven hours and they get a lesson, it's not free time.

Here, Elijah advocates for having other teachers treat his class like their own class, at the very least. Sadly, even from the music community, the value of the hard work of teachers or students in urban settings may be unnoticed or pushed aside (Sindberg, 2014). The participants wanted music education to one day be valued as highly as core subjects like math or reading. It should also be said that aspect that a lack of importance for music in school is not type-of-community dependent, given this same issue can be found in suburban and rural schools.

Summary

Based on the analysis of these findings, in conjunction with existing research, the data revealed that successful urban elementary educators are really just *good* music teachers. They possessed a keen understanding of their students, their families, the surrounding community. This understanding informed the participants learning activities, repertoire selections, and experiences they wished to provide to their students. Although they mostly expressed feeling unprepared to teach in an urban setting, they demonstrated a level of finesse and creativity to successfully navigate the urban the urban experience. At the core, the participants were successful as urban elementary music educators because they wanted to be there: they loved their students and they loved what they do. These reasons are why they stay in their urban classrooms and why they are successful.

The participants were honest, candid, authentic, and fairly consistent in their responses. But it must be noted that their experiences are specific to them, meaning these findings should not be generalized for all urban contexts. It can also be said that if any teacher utilized the findings of this study, they would likely be successful in their classroom, regardless of context. In Chapter 5, I will provide further discussion of the

findings, and the implications for music education, preservice teacher preparation, and recommendations for further research.

Chapter V: Discussion

When designing this study, I wanted to gain a better understanding of urban music teachers, and urban music education. Urban music education and the teachers who teach in those spaces are often misunderstood and misrepresented (Martignetti, et al., 2013). Many of the ideologies and discussions concerning urban music education are steeped in the notion of deficit and crisis (Doyle, 2009; Martinetti et al., 2013; Salvador & Kelly-McHale, 2017). The purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics and experiences of teachers who have been successful in urban elementary music education. Because much of the discussion that centers urban music education advocates for improvement, it seems appropriate to have the experiences and opinions of successful urban elementary music educators to inform these improvements. This is what this study aimed to do, as I believe the field of music education at-large would benefit greatly from learning about the experience of successful urban music educators at the elementary level.

I decided to employ a hermeneutic phenomenology of eight elementary music educators who had been deemed successful. Data were collected through interviews (approximately 60 minutes each), which were analyzed through an open coding technique (Punch, 2009). I used a constant comparative method to examine the coded transcripts. Throughout the accounts, I provided rich description and vignettes of the participant's thoughtful responses and experiences in order to help locate the reader in the participant's narrative.

The eight eligible participants had been teaching general music to students in grades K-5, for three or more years in the same school that met my definition as urban.

Five had been nominated and/or was a finalist for a Music Educator Award (through the Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Museum) or a Music Teachers of Excellence award (the Country Music Award Foundation) within the past 5 years. This original criterion was expanded to include individuals that were specifically identified and referred by eligible participants or respected colleagues to increase the participant pool, resulting in three additional participants.

The elementary general music context was selected because of its inclusive nature, given that general music teachers teach all the student in their school, as opposed to middle and high school contexts where music classes are typically an elective and/or enrollment is selective via auditions. For the purposes of this study, I defined urban schools as schools located in or around a metropolitan area and where the student populations bring significant diversity and richness of culture, race, language, and socio-economic status (SES) to the school setting. This was based on Fitzpatrick's (2008) definition, but extended to include schools having Title I status or high percentages of free and reduced lunch (<https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/schoolsearch/>) to ensure diversity in SES.

There were two main research questions were as follows: (1) What are the lived experiences of urban music educators who have been successful in teaching music at the elementary level? (2) How do elementary music educators in urban contexts describe their curricular and pedagogical decisions? The main research questions were accompanied by two sub-questions: (1) What characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom? (2) What are characteristics of these educators (e.g., personal, educational, interpersonal)? The six main themes include (a) relationships are key; (b) understanding how music functions for students; (c) willingness to perform

unofficial job duties; (d) concerns about urban teacher preparation; (e) curricular and pedagogical decisions; and (f) urban music teacher characteristics. Additionally, I summarized the participants' definitions of urban and of success, as well as their responses to a question about their preparation for teaching in an urban setting.

Definitions of Urban

Urban music education can be defined a number of different ways (Eros, 2018). This was reflected in the participants' responses when asked how they defined urban, which were similar to each other but also had some differences. They all described urban as being "in a city", which fits the definition of urban as a "densely populated metropolitan area" (Fitzpatrick, 2008; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). However, the nuanced differences amongst the participant's definitions indicate that further study of urban music education should continue.

The participants' differences in their definitions of urban indicates that there may be types of urban. Urban schools are sometimes associated with a lack of resources and funds (Abril, 2006; Doyle, 2012), yet this was not the case with the schools in which Amber, Bradley, and Daniel taught. Urban is sometimes code for *Black* and *poor* (Jacobs, 2015), yet Geneva commented that her school is only considered urban because of its location, as the only Title I school in her district, and her school sits on a "redlined" boundary. (Redlining was a practice of identifying locations as poor risks for financial investments such as mortgages, which was based on race or ethnicity. It was determined to be a discriminatory practice that became illegal as a result of Federal legislation in the 1960s and 1970s). This means that her student population is a mix of races and socioeconomic statuses. In fact, in his qualitative study, Jacobs' (2015) interviewed

preservice teachers about their student teacher experiences in urban school, and they revealed that schools could not be good and urban; meaning if a school was “exceptional” then by definition it lost its *urbaness* (p. 30).

These examples emphasize that urban is a complex construct, ergo the concept of urban music education is similarly complex. Because of this complexity, Shaw (2018) suggested that findings in studies of urban music education cannot be generalized to all urban music contexts, nor can success be pared down to one set of attributes, behaviors, and practices.

Definitions of Success

One of the sub-questions asked, “What characterizes success in the urban elementary music classroom?” Although each of the participants provided a different answer as to what characterized success to them, all responses involved students at some level. Abril’s (2006) study of experienced urban music educators revealed that their success was in their ability to identify and respond to their students’ emotional and educational needs. This aligns with the idea of being student centered: one cannot be student centered and not respond to students’ needs. To that point, being student centered means *every* student. Teaching to every student means that regardless of a student’s interest, talent, ability, or behavior, they must be included in teaching and instruction. Additional effective teacher characteristics identified by Baker (2012) included embracing diversity, having flexibility, managing student behavior successfully, and planning detailed lessons. While participants did not speak to these directly in response to this specific question, it is clear that these are part of their identity as an urban music

educator because they identified to these items verbatim when asked to describe characteristics of urban music educators.

The majority of the participants' definitions of success were more subjective or personal than traditional definitions of success. To these teachers, success can mean ensuring student have a connection to music, or it can mean providing meaningful experiences for their students; success can also mean cultivating positive, long-lasting relationships with students. As Christine stated, success is "personal." Based on the varied descriptions of success, I believe that if we expand our meaning of success, more teachers would "qualify" as successful. Conventional models of school-based music teaching tend to be based on causal logic, where success is contingent upon generating a narrow set of possible activities and outcomes; such models do not always work in uncertain, resource-constrained teaching contexts that are in urban schools (Hanson, 2020).

This study was about urban elementary music teachers that met an a priori definition of success. However, what about the urban music educators who do not meet this specified definition? Research is needed to investigate the experiences of unsuccessful or struggling music teachers in urban elementary schools. The findings of that study could be compared to the results and findings of this current study. The results of that comparison could produce strategies of how to move from unsuccessful to successful, but also might shift the field's conceptualization of success.

Key Findings

The research questions of this study were broad, and took a wholistic approach to capturing the lived experiences of successful urban music educators. Through the

narratives of the participants, themes emerged that explain their experiences. The six main themes include (a) relationships are key; (b) understanding how music functions for students; (c) willingness to perform unofficial job duties; (d) concerns about urban teacher preparation; (e) curricular and pedagogical decisions; and (f) urban music teacher characteristics. Each theme addressed either a research question or a subquestion, which is indicated in the heading.

Relationships are Key (RQ 1.1)

The participants all stated that relationships with stakeholders were imperative to success. These stakeholders included students, families of students, and administration. I believe it can be assumed that these relationships must be positive in order to be successful. Eberly (2014) found that music teachers placed high value on the importance of building relationships, and that they found great rewards in doing so. It seemed fitting that all participants centered the majority of their responses about their students and their relationships with them. The teachers used the information gleaned from these relationships to inform their teaching. My findings are similar to Shaw's (2018) conclusion that through building rapport and relationships, the teachers were willing to alter their instruction and repertoire selections to be more relevant to their population; they were willing to do extra work and use their creativity to educate the students and their families.

Relationships and rapport have been identified as an integral part of classroom management (Nagro, Hirsch, & Kennedy, 2020) and overall success in the classroom. Several of the participants shared that having a relationship with students or knowing their students provided insights on how to effectively promote positive behavior and

mitigate misbehavior during instruction. I interpreted this to mean that success in their classrooms was considered to be a direct result of building relationships with the students.

While building relationships with students is immensely important, building relationships with the parents and guardians of those students is also important. My findings suggested that relationships with students' families are fostered when the parents and/guardians believe the teacher has their child or children's best interest in mind, but also when the teacher includes them in the student's musical experiences.

Scholarship on urban music education indicated that one of the major problems is related to parental support, specifically with them being either uninvolved or unsupportive (Baker, 2012; Eberly, 2014; Smith, 2006). However, both Amber and Daniel countered these notions. They stated that it is not that parents do not want to be there for their students, is that they cannot physically be there. It is possible for both the findings in the literature and these participants' perspectives to be true. This supports the idea that findings regarding urban music education are contextual and cannot necessarily be generalized.

The participants shared that their relationship with their administration heavily impacted their job success and enjoyment. According to the teachers in this study, principals and district officials had the most impact. They also shared that when administration had a close relationship to the school and surrounding community, the teachers' relationship with administrators was generally positive.

It should be noted that although the findings of this current research are based on the urban music education experience, this theme of relationships is relevant to any

teaching context and any discipline. Building relationships as an educator is a simply good teaching practice (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Understanding How Music Functions for Students (RQ 1)

When one considers the functions of music, a potential first thought is from a psychological perspective; for example, how music makes one feel. Another perspective is from a biological perspective, for instance, how one responds to music. Another perspective is from a communication perspective, as music is a way to express one's emotions. However, in this study, the participants saw music from a purpose perspective, meaning what purpose can music serve to their students.

The participants witnessed the impacts music had on their students. As Amber shared, music "was a savior" for her and her students. Music allowed her a way to either escape the harsh realities of life or to bask in the glorious moments. Daniel and Francis shared how music was a positive outlet for their students, that could potentially provide life options and opportunities if students continued to be involved in music. For example, college scholarships or employment are some of those potential outcomes. Bradley, Christine, and Francis were all recipients of music scholarships to attend college, an opportunity that they implied may not have been available without financial assistance. Even in college Bradley, Daniel, and Francis were able to supplement their income by teaching private lessons or gigging during their free time.

This finding that these teachers understand how music can function in the lives of their students should cause all teachers to be more mindful about what they teach and how they teach. Teachers should be very intentional about how students can potentially benefit from music instruction in meaningful ways, given that music can have such a

significant impact on a student's life. The stakes may be even higher in the ways music functions for urban students when compared to suburban students. Daniel and Francis described how suburban students may have more and easier access to opportunities for musical involvement such as private lessons or attending a concert, while those same opportunities may be scarce for urban students.

Willingness to Perform Unofficial Job Duties (RQ 1)

Teaching elementary music can be challenging and teaching elementary music in an urban school can be more challenging. Research has found that various factors that can make urban teaching difficult include transient populations, lack of administrative support, uninvolved parents, undesirable teaching spaces, lack of instructional budget and supplies, classroom management issues, cultural tensions, and students' limited musical training and exposure (Baker, 2012; Smith, 2006). One might say these circumstances are daunting. If teaching music under these conditions is so difficult, why do teachers stay? What motivates them to continue this work? The answer is love: a love for the job, and a love for students (Thompson-Gray, 2019).

Every participant demonstrated a very deep love for their students. A great deal of interview time was spent with teachers sharing about their student and their interactions with them. As the findings suggested, teachers advocated for the students and their families, in many ways far outside the contractual agreement of the job. I posit that the love of the job and of students is a necessity in order to work in an urban school, more so if one wishes to be successful in an urban music program. Even when asked, the participants did not share many frustrations about the job itself. This is not to give the

illusion of utopian experience, but the participants felt that rewards of teaching music in an urban school outweigh the challenges

Concerns About Urban Teacher Preparation (RQ 1)

The successful urban elementary music educators of this study expressed concern for how they did not feel adequately prepared to teach in an urban classroom. As they reflected, they conveyed concern for how current preservice music teachers are being prepared for urban classrooms. Preservice teachers' feelings of being unprepared by their teacher education programs for positions in culturally diverse urban environments is well documented (Delpit, 2006; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Frierson-Campbell, 2006; Shaw, 2015). On one end of the spectrum, preservice teachers feel teacher education programs do not provide enough exposure to the urban experience. On the other end of the spectrum, teacher education programs may be attempting to overprepare preservice teachers. Shaw (2015) suggested that rather than attempting to prepare preservice teachers for every possible urban scenario, teacher education programs might do better to equip candidates with skills and dispositions necessary to cultivate their own contextual knowledge.

Several of these successful urban music educator participants expressed the belief that nothing really can prepare someone for teaching in an urban school, they just have to *do* it. As Elijah stated, one learns how to teach in an urban school by teaching in an urban school. These participants have been "tried by fire" given that they have successfully navigated the urban musical landscape. While they shared that their life experiences, and even their non-music education related jobs, were beneficial to them in their classroom,

they all still felt generally that they had been generally unprepared for the urban music classroom.

There are some misconceptions I would like to address that emerged from the findings as it relates to music teacher education programs. There is a misconception that teacher education programs are filled with professors with no public school teaching experiences. This attitude was expressed by four participants, as illustrated by Christine's statement that:

But most of the time, professors or the people who are teaching in college, they have not taught in public school. They're teaching off of whatever they learned in college, but they never experienced teaching in those schools. So how can they teach us if they've never gone through teaching a kindergartener or an eighth grader? They prepared me I think musically but they didn't prepare me for the other side of it.

In a study by Sims, Jeffs & Barrow (2010) of music education job descriptions, the authors found that "Precollegiate teaching experience was specified as a requirement by 93 (83.0 %) of the institutions" (p. 71). Hunt (1984) and Cutietta (1987) did separate analyses on music education job descriptions, revealing that a large majority of assistant professor job notices included public school teaching as an expectation. The issue may not necessarily be that college professors are incapable of preparing preservice music teachers because they have no public school teaching experience, it may be the interval of time between their public school teaching and collegiate teaching, or it may be a perception of the professor's lack of keeping current with respect to relevant current issues and topics.

There is another misconception about teacher preparation programs and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). There is a notion that HBCU can

potentially better prepare student to teach in urban schools. This assumption is based on the idea that because majority of the attendees and professors at HBCUs are Black and Brown, and because most HBCUs are located within proximity to urban areas. As an HBCU graduate, I have heard this notion and many of my colleagues who also graduated from an HBCU have as well. Christine and Elijah both attended HBCUs and expressed that did not feel prepared for the classroom. Their feelings about a lack of preparation is similar to the other participants, who had attended Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). It is my conclusion that HBCUs do not necessarily better prepare preservice teachers than PWIs. In my experience as a HBCU graduate, I did student teach in two schools that would be defined as urban, but I did not feel any more prepared than other preservice teachers who were my peers, or with whom I have interacted since then; many of my colleagues in my network at other HBCUs would agree.

According to some of the participants, the best solution to better prepare preservice music teachers for urban classroom is to provide more experiences in front of actual students in urban schools. Elijah advocated for this as he described the common role-play teaching strategy that is often utilized in teaching methods courses. This is where preservice teachers teach mock lessons to their peers during class. While much can be learned during these teaching episodes, working with real students in the real context is the best teaching tool.

The desire to alter music education programs to better prepare music teachers for urban classrooms is not a new idea (McKoy, 2013; Robinson, 2017). While the participants all stated that none of them received any formal training to prepare them for teaching in an urban elementary school, I believe that exposure can alleviate many

obstacles and help teachers navigate potentially difficult situations more successfully.

Being fully cognizant of the contextual nature of urban schools (Abril, 2006; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Lehmborg, 2008; Robinson, 2006; Shaw, 2020), I still credit potential success of preservice music teachers on being exposed to multiple contexts and environments. Elijah explained how he would have benefited from seeing all aspects of teaching, not just the utopian, perfect scenarios:

So I think as a preservice teacher, I would have appreciated it seeing the good, bad, and ugly. And I think I think as a preservice teacher, you need to see that: you don't need to see just a good, I mean you do, you need to see the good, because you need to know what can be but you often need to know what sometimes reality is.

I agree with the research and the finding that teacher preparation programs should make a concerted effort to expose preservice teachers to a variety of teaching contexts. I believe that if preservice teachers are exposed to the “good, bad, and ugly,” they are more likely to respond successfully when they encounter those circumstances. Denson and Anderson (2015) indicated that preservice music education students will be at an advantage by having firsthand, real-world, and accurate experiences in a variety of urban classroom settings. Some collegiate music programs attempt to provide these experiential learning elements that allow preservice teachers to work extensively with urban students (Abril, 2006; Kindall-Smith, 2004). However, other music programs use traditional, outdated pedagogical methods, and tend to gloss over or completely ignore the issues that urban music educators face (Kindall-Smith, 2004).

I suggest that a solution to better preparing preservice music educators is for urban elementary teachers to form mentorships with preservice music teachers. To accomplish this, partnerships with local colleges and universities’ music education

faculty should be established with local urban schools. Successful urban elementary teachers could be guest speakers during courses, or could open their classrooms to pre-service students for observations and provide lab opportunities for university students to connect their coursework to practice. This initiative provides preservice teachers access to more authentic context learning (ACL) experiences, such as situated learning, fieldwork, peer-teaching, service learning, practicum, and student teaching (Forrester, 2019). However, Kelly (2003) cautioned, "...despite curricular experiences through college diversity courses students' personal experiences through their own cultural background may be a factor in where students will seek teaching positions" (p. 47). This resolve is problematic given the racial and ethnic diversity of students in the urban schools juxtaposed with the ethnic homogeneity of preservice music teachers in the United States (Elpus & Abril, 2011; Fitzpatrick, 2011; McKoy, 2013).

Learning more about urban music education not only benefits preservice teachers, but in-service teachers as well. I suggest having more professional development sessions that address issues centering urban schools that feature or are facilitated by successful urban music teachers. Bradley, Daniel and Heather discussed how conferences and professional development do not speak to authentic urban experiences. Bradley shared in particular that there are individuals who desire to make changes in urban music who are not involved in urban music. He specified that people who have never been in poverty do not have the leverage to make recommendations on how children in poverty should be educated. In general, I also advocate for having more people engaged in urban music education making decision about urban music education.

More sessions, presentations, and scholarship at music education conferences that center urban music education from urban music educators should be offered. Daniel spoke to only being familiar with one large Midwestern conference for band having a handful of sessions on their “Title I Track.” In my experience, I, too, have noticed a scarcity of sessions and workshops geared specifically to urban music educators. The field needs to hear more about urban schools from the teachers that teach in them; this is what “survival, success, and reform” should look like (Frierson-Campbell, 2006). Professional events and publications are meant to provide educators with tangible solutions and strategies for problem solving that can be used in their classrooms and push the profession forward.

Curricular and Pedagogical Decisions (RQ 2)

Teaching music in an urban school requires a specific skill set, different from that used by suburban teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2008). The participants of this study shared what some of these specific skills look like in the classroom. From changing the repertoire selections for lesson activities, to being student-centered rather than teacher-centered in the classroom, these teachers have mastered the balance of being relevant and being effective. Karvelis (2017) suggested providing multiple opportunities to co-teach with the students, with the class operating as a healthy, democratic community. One thing I noticed about the participant’s curricular or pedagogical decisions is that while there was a departure from the conventional or established methods or strategies used in general music classrooms, there was never an abandonment of them. The participants seem to align with Allsup’s (2015) *both/and* approach which is rooted in Jorgensen’s (2003) *this with that* approach. When the participants found what worked for them and their student,

this was in addition to the traditional approaches to teaching music. They used a mixture of old and new, with the ultimate goals of students mastering the adequate skills.

The curricular or pedagogical decisions that these teachers made were made in part to prepare their students for life outside the classroom. One of the sub-themes of curricular or pedagogical decisions identified was *continuity of instruction*. I believe that making changes to the learning activities to be more engaging results in making continuity of instruction easier; moreover, continuity of instruction will result in continuity of engagement. If students are provided a quality and enjoyable music experience from K-12, they would be more like to be engaged in music and musical activity after high school. This may include joining an ensemble in college or at a local church, maybe even a community ensemble.

The second sub-theme of curricular or pedagogical decisions was *content is secondary*. This is not to give the connotation that music content and skills are not important, because that was not the case. Daniel and Geneva discussed how centering the student instead of centering the musical skill when teaching made music making much easier. However, this finding triggered me to ask myself: Why do I teach music? Many of the participants felt that teaching music was not just about teaching music. I, personally, feel that my purpose in teaching was not solely attempting to achieve a flawless performance. Yes, music teachers desire to make music, and yes, skills are needed to make music, but process is much more important and complex than the product.

Characteristics of Urban Music Teachers (RQ 1.2)

Describing characteristics of urban music teachers attends to sub-question two: What are characteristics of these teachers (e.g., personal, educational, interpersonal)? I

wanted to know if there were any similarities across the different urban contexts of my participants. As a long reaching implication, if there were common characteristics, they could be cultivated during preservice teachers' coursework.

One similarity among three participants was that they had attended urban elementary and secondary school themselves. According to the literature, having attended an urban school is a common trait of successful urban educators (Abril, 2006; Baker, 2012; Smith, 2006). As the profession attempts to improve urban teacher education, a suggestion would be to select potential music educators from urban areas. As the Center for Sustainable Systems (2020) estimates that by 2050, 89% of the U.S. population will live in urban areas, this suggestion may be the direction urban music education needs to follow.

Abril (2006) and Baker (2012) identified additional characteristics of successful urban music educators, including individuals who embraced diversity, had flexibility, managed student behavior successfully, wrote grants successfully, planned detailed lessons, created approaches to work with English-language learners, and supplemented school budget with outside funding sources. Multiple participants provided evidence of all of these characteristics in their responses and agreed that they were involved in their success in the classroom.

Positive Attitude Toward Students and Their Learning. All participants in this study gave responses indicating that an important characteristic of an urban music educator was being student centered. I found that each participant centered their responses about their students and their interactions with them. As a central theme of this study was that relationships are key, and successful teachers use their relationships with

students in guide how they teach. Through building rapport and relationships, the teachers were willing to alter repertoire selections to be more relevant to their population (Shaw, 2018); they were willing to do extra work and use their own creativity to educate the student and the families. These pedagogical shifts are a direct result of building relationships with the students.

A student-centered approach to teaching honors students' prior experiences and knowledge (Forrester, 2018). The deficit perspective discussed in the literature review that is often attributed to urban students does not grant credit to students and the prior experiences and knowledge they possess. Francis expressed a counternarrative as she believed that her "kids have so much to offer the world." Geneva explained that even our education system's current attention to diversity, equity, and inclusion does not always value urban students and what they bring to the classroom. They represent a wealth of knowledge, potential, and uniqueness, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Once urban students are "seen as humans" (Daniel) and not being compared to other students in other places, then their abilities are at the forefront. Urban students can be seen as the capable musicians that they are.

Historically, music education's approach to urban education, although well meaning, used language that indicted a deficit perspective. Dating back to 1967, music educators who wrote the Tanglewood Declaration demonstrated this in two of their declaration statements. In particular, the seventh declaration stated that the music education profession must focus its efforts on addressing societal issues, especially to those in the "inner city" or other places with "culturally deprived individuals." The eighth declaration stated that music teacher education programs must be expanded to prepare

preservice teachers specifically for working “with the very young, with adults, with the disadvantaged, and with the emotionally disturbed.” In our current society of 2021, those word choices may be problematic and politically incorrect. However, the sentiments still ring true. This is a call to action for music programs to teach every student, regardless of their social identifiers. As Amber stated, “We need as a profession to make sure that we're providing that for every student: not just the students that sing well, not the students that play instruments well, but every student”—because children deserve music, every child.

Being Open to New Classroom Approaches. The participants in this study also all stated that being open and flexible was an essential characteristic. This means being flexible in ways of thinking, or as Elijah stated not being “stuck in your ways.” In urban music education, teachers must be open to new ideas, new ways of doing things, and to learning from their students. Teachers should be committed to being lifelong learners, as well as developing lifelong learning in the students. Teachers can learn from students by being open to using different genres of music in class, being open to student creations and compositions, being open to different cultural norms from their own, and being open to having conversations with students and what they want to share.

Being open and flexible promotes the teacher learning alongside their students. This notion can be demonstrated through culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billing, 1995), intercultural sensitivity (Deardorff, 2015), or cultural competence which is defined as “understanding of and respect for student’s culture(s) of origin,” and “sociopolitical consciousness,” which refers to student’s ability to “ask larger sociopolitical questions about how schools and the society work to expose ongoing inequity and social injustice”

(Ladson-Billings, 2002, p. 111). It should be noted that using these methods is not necessarily a departure from traditional content, but merely another way to teach content in a way that is meaningful to the students (traditional content is referring to music and musical skills that center the western classical canon and traditional notation). To facilitate cultural competency, music teacher educators must create ongoing opportunities for discourse and situated learning (Forrester, 2019). Villegas and Lucas (2002) outlined a vision for teacher education supporting educators' development of six characteristics of culturally responsive teachers. Such educators:

(a) are socio-culturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar (p. 20).

Lind and McKoy (2016) described culturally responsive teaching as more than an approach, more than repertoire choices: but as a disposition. Teachers with a culturally responsive disposition are intentional about understanding how culture informs learning, recognizing their own cultural conditioning, getting to know their students and community, making culturally informed decisions about pedagogy and curricula, and creating inclusive classroom environments. As Daniel articulated so perfectly in his interview, "I am a student of the culture: I'm a student of the people, the kids, the families;" teacher education programs must prepare preservice teachers to continue learning. Not just learning content from scholarship, professional development, and conferences but from the students and the surrounding community. Although the participants may not have articulated these words specifically, their instruction most

definitely personified these approaches to music education. For example, Elijah's example of using more diverse videos in his classroom examples is a model example of culturally relevant pedagogy.

The participants discussed how awareness or being more aware was a factor in their success. They shared how they had to be aware of their societal privilege, but also needed to be aware of the culture and community of their students. Based on the literature about cultural backgrounds of preservice teachers (Ausmann, 1991; Doyle, 2014; Shaw, 2015), it is possible that preservice teachers suffer from what Vaugeois (2013) terms "terminal naivety," a lack of awareness of power relations, larger systemic dynamics, and a more individualistic focus on one's outlook. A teacher who demonstrates "terminal naivety" may stay unaware or even disinterested in world events and the systems that shape society and other people's lives (Hess, 2017). This means that in addition to content, new teachers must also be learning about cultural awareness. This is especially necessary as new teachers may not be familiar with the various types of cultural diversity that is present in urban schools (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). When there are cultural differences between teachers and students, it can potentially present barriers to successful urban teaching (Benedict, 2006; Robinson, 2006).

Understanding Racial Differences. Because of the current racial climate in the United States, it is aptly important to have an awareness of race and racial issues; this is especially true for teacher who work in urban schools because of the racially diverse population often found in urban communities. In this study, there were two Black females, one Latinx female, two white females, and three white males. I believed they

would present different understandings of race and racism, and they did. I also believe that race and racism can influence instruction and interactions, subconsciously or not.

Some of the participants explained how they do not discuss issues of race and racism with students. I am aware that discussions of race and racism at the K-12 level is currently a highly debated topic (e.g. recent legislation that bans teaching Critical Race Theory). I believe that having discussions about race and racism is not inherently bad: they are just structures in our society. As a matter of fact, not discussing race and racism can be problematic and unproductive (Kohli, Pizarro, & Nevárez, 2017). Larson and Ovando (2001) asserted that “educators are often not aware of the biased constructions that frame their perceptions and interactions with others [because of a] pervasive acceptance of difference blindness” (p. 64). This failure to recognize differences oftentimes leads to “attempts to understand and solve problems using objective and value-free methods” (Young, 2003, p. 281). As it pertains to race, most music education research has focused on solutions rather than a systematic inquiry about the nature of the problem itself (DeLorenzo & Silverman, 2016). Freeman (1977) asserted that “researchers unfamiliar with the historical and structural difference of cultures continue to define the problems and develop solutions based on models that are applicable to the majority population” (p. 548). Using these methods can be of a detriment to the students as it negates and trivializes the nuances of their culture and community.

Many authors have described the fear of race talk (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Bradley, 2006; Morrison, 1992). Morrison (1992) continued it is a “graceful, liberal gesture” that strives to avoid any mention of race, but more pointedly, avoids acknowledging the complicity of Whites in past and ongoing racial oppression. The liberal gesture born of

cultural Whiteness results in coding race as politics. As Lewis (2019) stated, educators try their best to avoid the “P-word”.

It is important to be mindful of race as it can dictate everyday interactions with students, their families, and the school community. In my experience, when I was teaching public school, I knew there was a level of privilege and unearned trust that I possessed as a Black man teaching mostly Black students. The way that I could approach my students and their families was different than my white counterparts. Daniel shared how his success was contingent upon building trust with his students and their families. Building trust provided him with leverage to successfully build his music program:

I think the biggest most important thing in doing my job, and even the job I had before this was always approaching it as like I am a student of the culture: I’m a student of the people, the kids, the families. And that's the only reason I’ve been able to last, and in my school, the only reason I’ve been able to last in urban education and the only reason I’ve been able to build a decent program where I’ve built trust with the families and the kids and all type of stuff.

Daniel not only credits his success with cultivating trust with his students and the families, but he also approaches his interaction with his students and families with an openness to learn about them.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) would be an ideal path for interrogating and exploring race and racism in the urban music classroom. CRT originated in 1989 as a legal movement employed by individuals who identified as feminists who focused on changing relationships in society among racism and power (Bell, 1992; Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009). It is a framework or a set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy, that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the marginal position and the subordination of people of color (Tierney 1991, 1993; Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). When CRT is

applied to education, it is used as a way of confronting and challenging traditional views of education (Hall, 2007) in the areas of meritocracy, claims of color-blind objectivity, and equal opportunity (Crenshaw, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Villalpando, 2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory frameworks support each other (Singleton, 2020). Culturally relevant pedagogy finds the media and the methods that best connect with the students in the room, while CRP helps teachers accept and affirm their students' cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenges inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Critical Race Theory can also be a place for future research, as it is a fairly new subject to music education.

While all of the participants defined racism, only some of them felt like it informed their instruction. Some participants attacked it head on, providing space for students to discuss their feelings in what I would describe as a brave space (Arao & Clemens, 2013); some participants stated that racism is an adult problem and teachers should not put that burden on their students, allowing student to experience the bliss of ignorance. However, I am of the opinion that if students are old enough to experience racism, they are old enough to learn about it. I believe these types of critical conversations should be happening in elementary school or perhaps even earlier. In my experience and the experiences of my colleagues, having these conversations garners pushback as people may feel the content of those conversations are too mature for younger audiences. I would challenge this by referencing Jerome Bruner's process of education. According to Bruner (as cited in Smith, 2002), children can learn anything at any age, if the material is presented in an age-appropriate manner.

Implications

The teachers of this study have revealed that successful urban elementary music teachers are important and unique. What can be learned from them, and more importantly, how can the profession produce more like them?

According to this study, in order to be a successful urban music educator, the prime directive is to be focused on the students and their success. One must not only acknowledge urban students' knowledge and experiences, but also to include them in components of their own instruction. There is so much value in what students bring to the classroom, and a successful urban music educator understands how use this to their advantage. The best and only way to be student centered is to get to know the actual students. This is done through having conversations with the students, going to and supporting their extra-curricular activities, and allowing the students to see the teacher outside of their role as a music educator. Building relationships and rapport with students also provides opportunities for the teacher to become more culturally aware and hear perspectives that may be unlike their own.

Another implication is that successful music educators must demonstrate that music is not a rigid, exclusionary activity, as the findings suggested that successful urban music educators are open and flexible in their classroom approaches. This is accomplished by using a variety of musical style and genres in class. Even more targeted, asking students to share what music they enjoy and infuse that into the instruction. In elementary school, one of the goals should be to establish and maintain the attitude that music is fun and enjoyable. One reason is because elementary school musical experiences could have a significant impact on the children's musical trajectory. If a student does not

enjoy music at the elementary level, why would they desire to be involved in middle school or high school, or beyond?

This phenomenological research study provides the music education profession with a collective of experiences of successful urban elementary music educators. The findings contribute to creating an authentic picture of what it means to be a successful urban music educator. Although the specific findings are context specific and should not be generalized, they can be used as a starting place to increase understanding of and conversations about urban music education and potentially improve the field's approach to it.

Recommendations

This study has explored what it means to be a successful urban music educator, by sharing the lived experiences and narratives of the eight participants. The next step in making this research and the findings meaningful is to consider how this information can be utilized in practical, tangible ways. How can the field of music education move forward with this new information? Because of the complex and nuanced nature of urban music education, solutions must be tiered, meaning implemented at various levels. I have provided recommendations for various stakeholders here to the further the understanding and progress of urban music education.

For Music Teacher Educators. Music teacher educators play a pivotal role in music education, as they are tasked with equipping preservice music teachers with skills and strategies needed for their first classrooms, including a mindset of learning and growth. Although texts and articles are wonderful methods of learning about content and its efficacy, experiential learning is in many ways the best teacher. If music teacher

educators wish to prepare their preservice students for urban classrooms, they must provide opportunities for their preservice students to experience urban music classrooms. Music education departments should actively create or actively seek to create community with urban districts and the schools within. This can be done through the college students attending school concerts and events, inviting urban music teachers to be guest lectures in methods courses or seminars, or having urban music teachers bring their students to perform on campus. The establishment of this relationship can make the request to allow preservice access to urban music classrooms easier, because field experiences in urban schools with successful teachers would provide the best preparation for the music education students.

Another recommendation is the creation of an afterschool program for an urban school or schools. This might be curricular, or perhaps a co-curricular service-learning project. In a program such as this, the preservice music students will be the instructors, responsible for creating lesson plans, establishing classroom or ensemble routines, and administering assessments. This would be overseen by music teacher educators and urban music teachers working collaboratively. Once a week, the preservice teachers would attend a seminar lab where they could engage in open discussions their experiences, confront biases, share successes and disappointments, and discuss curriculum, student assessments and evaluations.

This idea is beneficial in many ways to all entities involved. Urban music students would benefit because, as was described by the participants in this study, involvement in music can be a positive outlet for the students. Preservice teachers would benefit by being able to try out the content they have learned in their methods courses, as well as by

experimenting with their own creativity, ideas, and skills in a supportive environment. Music teacher educators stand to learn and benefit by being connected to the urban community as well, which would add value to their teaching and discussions about urban music contexts.

For Preservice Music Teachers. In addition to having the experience of observing and teaching in urban schools, preservice teachers also need to be provided with practical strategies for teaching in these settings. Culturally relevant pedagogy has been identified as a way to approach this. Culturally relevant teaching can be demonstrated by methods class instructors using video and audio examples of instruction that is outside of the traditional, western Classical canon, as well as using video and audio examples from the traditional, western Classical canon performed by non-White performers or in non-traditional ways. Another way to implement culturally relevant teaching is to use instrumental recordings of current songs to support rhythm exercises, such as establishing and maintain a steady beat or identifying or creating an ostinato. The idea described previously of an urban music teaching afterschool program would be a way for the college students to experiment with culturally relevant teaching in a controlled, monitored environment.

For Inservice Teachers. Urban music teachers can find community with one another. In my own teaching experience, and even while interviewing the participants for this study, I found and valued connectivity with other urban music educators, as we shared stories of our students and their families, of our successes and achievements, and even provided advice or served as a sounding board for new ideas related to the classroom. Inservice teachers would stand to benefit greatly from being a part of such a

group, for example, joining a professional learning community (PLC). Professional Learning Communities are small groups of teachers who come together on a regular basis to engage in constructive dialogue to better understand their own teaching practices (Harris, 2017). In recent years, PLC have been widely embraced in schools as a way for teachers to engage in professional development that ultimately leads to increased student success (Watson, 2014). Because of the accessibility to internet in many parts of the United States, there are a plethora PLC options and ways to access to them. Examples of PLC to help inservice teachers glean from urban teacher experiences and culturally relevant pedagogy: Decolonizing the Music Classroom (Facebook); The Mayday Group; Solidarity Superheroes - Music Educators Fighting for Diversity and Unity (Facebook); Organized Chaos: Purposeful Organization at Home and in The Music Classroom (Blog); The Institute for anti-Racist Education (Instagram). PLC have been found to aid in the development of lasting teacher relationships, supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, and collective learning of contextual knowledge (Battersby, 2019; Harris, 2017; Sindberg, 2016). Based on my experience, I believe the increased use of PLC for urban context would be a method of creating and sustaining a more collaborative and inclusive culture in music education.

For The Music Education Profession. The stories and narratives of teachers like my participants need to be shared with the masses. This can be done in scholarship and more qualitative research on urban music teacher's experiences. This can also be done by having increased conference presentations and panel discussions about urban music experiences by urban music educators. Normalizing the experiences of urban music

educators can aid in demystifying the assumptions and deficits that are often associated with urban music programs.

I believe the profession should also make a resolute effort to train urban music teachers that come from urban music programs. Aligning with the notion of *growing your own*, music education programs should recruit students who have successfully come through urban music programs to teach music in urban schools. This is supported by Baker's (2012) study that indicated teachers who attended urban schools themselves tend to have longer tenure in urban school than teachers that did not. In order for this model to be fruitful, the profession must be prepared to acknowledge, honor, and nurture those skills of urban students that may be outside the traditional experience. For example, placing more value on the process and the impact of music with urban students over the product or performance.

Most importantly, this model is not a quick fix, it is a proactive approach to addressing an issue in the profession. By doing so, the results are more likely to be successful and sustainable.

Future Research

There are several suggestions for future research relative to the findings of this study that have been included in previous sections of this chapter. Many of these recommendations are to expand on this current research by interrogating the experiences of different target populations of urban music educators.

I would like to suggest that more people of color should be doing research about children of color; pointedly, more Black people doing research about Black students. Qualitative researchers bring their experiences, identities, and understandings to their

research. Because of this, Black scholars would make a valuable contribution to research about communities they may belong to, and specific to this study, urban communities. By no means does this trivialize or discredit the work of non-Black scholars doing work on Black students. Yet, having Black people do research about Black communities brings a level of authenticity that may otherwise be inaccessible to the field.

While Black scholars may bring authenticity, non-Black scholars often have more access in terms of freedom in scholarship and research. Hess (2017) shared that teachers who possess more privilege have the ability to pursue conversations and issues more freely than teachers without that privilege. Collaboration between Black and non-Black scholars in scholarship and research about urban education is encouraged in order to make an equitable contribution to the field and continue moving it forward. I truly believe that progress in the profession will happen when the privilege and access of non-Black scholars is used to uplift the authenticity of Black scholar's experiences.

Final Thoughts

Based on the findings of this study, as well as that of scholars in music education, it may be concluded that being a successful urban elementary music educator is the result of a complex set of skills, and that urban music educators are sometimes misunderstood and misrepresented. Each participant shed light on the reality of urban music education: the creativity of curricular and pedagogical decisions, a complex knowledge and understanding of students, their families, and their community, and a deep affection for what they do and whom they serve. Successful urban music educators, like these participants, can serve as valuable resources to provide understanding and offer

suggestions for improving urban music education, including ways to nurture and develop the next wave of music educators.

References

- Abramo, J., & Bernard, C. (2020). Barriers to access and university schools of music: A collective case study of urban high school students of color and their teachers. *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, (226), 7-26.
doi:10.5406/bulcouresmusedu.226.0007
- Abril, C. (2006). Teaching music in urban landscapes: Three perspectives. In Frierson-Campbell, C. (Ed.), *Teaching music in the urban classroom, volume I: A guide to survival, success, and reform*. (pp. 75-95). Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Education.
- Allen, T. R. (2011). *Challenges of the music classroom: Perceptions of teachers and administrators* (Publication No. 3502811) [Doctoral Dissertation, Florida State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Allsup, R. E. (2015). Music teacher quality and the problem of routine expertise. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 23(1), 5-24.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/philmusieducrevi.23.1.5>
- Aloe, A. M., Shisler, S. M., Norris, B. D., Nickerson, A. B., & Rinker, T. W. (2014). A multivariate meta-analysis of student misbehavior and teacher burnout. *Educational Research Review*, 12, 30–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2014.05.003>
- Amatea, E. S., Cholewa, B., & Mixon, K. A. (2012). Influencing preservice teachers' attitudes about working with low-income and/or ethnic minority families. *Urban Education*, 47(4), 801–834. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912436846>

- Anderson, S. A., & Denson, G. L. (2015). Preparing the successful urban music educator: The need for preservice and in-service development. *Music Educators Journal*, 101(4), 35–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432115573965>
- Arao, B. & Clemens, K. (2013). From safe spaces to brave spaces: A new way to frame dialogue around diversity and social justice. In L. M. Landreman (Ed.), *The art of effective facilitation: Reflections from social justice educators* (pp. 135-150). Stylus Publishing, LLC.
- Ausmann, S. W. (1991). *Characteristics of inservice urban music teachers and preservice music teachers in Ohio and their attitudes toward teaching music in urban schools*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. The Ohio State University.
- Baker, V. D. (2012). Profile of an effective urban music educator. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 31(1) 44–54. DOI: 10.1177/8755123312458293
- Ballantyne, J. & Packer, J. (2004). Effectiveness of preservice music teacher education programs: Perceptions of early-career music teachers. *Music Education Research*, 6(3), 299-312. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461380042000281749>
- Barnett, J., and D. Hodson. (2001). Pedagogical context knowledge: Toward a fuller understanding of what good science teachers know. *Science Education*, 85(4), 426–453. doi:10.1002/sce.1017
- Battersby, S. L. (2019). Reimagining music teacher collaboration: The culture of professional learning communities as professional development within schools and districts. *General Music Today*, 33(1), 15–23. DOI: 10.1177/1048371319840653

- Bell, D. (1992). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*.
New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Benedict, C. (2006). Defining ourselves as other: Envisioning transformative possibilities. In C. Frierson-Campbell (Ed.), *Teaching music in the urban classroom, Volume I: A guide to survival, success, and reform*. (pp. 3-14).
Lanham, MD: Roman & Littlefield Education.
- Bernard, R. (2010). The rewards of teaching music in urban settings. *Music Educators Journal*, 96(3), 53-57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0027432109356268>
- Beven, M. T. (2014). A method of phenomenological interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research*, 24(1), 136-144. doi: 10.1177/1049732313519710.
- Billingham, C. M. (2019). Within-district racial segregation and the elusiveness of white student return to urban public schools. *Urban Education*, 54(2), 151–181.
DOI: 10.1177/0042085915618713
- Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Boutelle, J. (2009). *Factors influencing teacher retention in an urban secondary school district* (Publication No. 3371189) [Doctoral dissertation, Arizona State University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Bradley, D. (2006). Music education, multiculturalism, and anti-racism—Can we talk? *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 5(2), 2-30.
http://act.maydaygroup.org/articles/Bradley5_2.pdf

- Bresler, L. & Stake, R. E. (2012). Critical essays in music education. In M. C. Moore (Ed.), *Qualitative Research Methodology in Music Education* (pp. 113-128). London: Routledge.
- Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
<https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep347483/>
- Bruenger, S. D. (2010). Why select new music teachers chose to, or chose not to apply to, teach in an urban school district. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 19(2), 25–40. DOI: 10.1177/1057083709346787
- Buford, D. R. (2010). *Investigation of music literacy teaching strategies among selected accomplished choral directors in Texas Title I high schools* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas Tech University.
- Center for Sustainable Systems. (2020). U.S. Cities Factsheet. University of Michigan Pub. No. CSS09-06.
- Chou, V., & Tozer, S. (2008). What’s urban got to do with it? Meanings of “urban” in urban teacher preparation and development. In F. P. Peterman (Ed.), *Partnering to prepare urban teachers: A call to activism* (pp. 1–20). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Clandinin, D. J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers’ classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 15(4), 361–385. doi:10.2307/1179683
- Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education (2019, December). Report on the teacher needs survey 2019. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, Center for Psychology in Schools and Education. Retrieved from <https://www.apa.org/ed/schools/coalition/teacher-needs>

- Cochran-Smith, M. (2005). The new teacher education: For better or for worse?
Educational Researcher, 34(7), 3–17.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X034007003>
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2010). Toward a theory of teacher education for social justice. In A. Hargreaves, A. Lieberman, M. Fullan, & D. Hopkins (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational change* (pp. 445–467). Springer.
- Coloma, R. S. (2020) Decolonizing Urban Education. *Educational Studies*, 56(1), 1-17.
DOI:10.1080/00131946.2019.1711095
- Conway, C. (2001). What has research told us about the beginning music teacher?.
Journal of Research in Music Education, 10(2), 14-22.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10570837010100020104>
- Conway, C. M., & Zerman, T. E. H. (2004). Perceptions of an instrumental music teacher regarding mentoring, induction, and the first year of teaching. *Research Studies in Music Education*, 22(1), 72–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1321103X040220011001>
- Cornbleth, C. (2008). *Diversity and the new teacher: Learning from experience in urban schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.
- Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics.
University of Chicago Legal Forum, 1989(1), 139-167.
<http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8>
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. London: Sage Publications.
- Deardorff, D. K. (2015). Intercultural competence: Mapping the future research agenda [Editorial]. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 48, 3–5.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.002>
- Diemer, M., Rapa, L. J., Voight, A. M. & McWhirter, E. H. (2016). Critical consciousness: A developmental approach to addressing marginalization and oppression. *Child Development Perspectives*, 10(4), 216–221.
DOI: 10.1111/cdep.12193
- Delgado, D., & Stefancic, J. (2001) *Critical race theory: An introduction*.
New York: NYU Press.
- DeLorenzo, L. C. & Silverman, M. (2016). From the margins: The underrepresentation of black and Latino students/teachers in music education. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 27, 2-30.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301356870_From_the_Margins_The_Underrepresentation_of_Black_and_Latino_StudentsTeachers_in_Music_Education
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*.
New York, NY: The New Press.

- Dosman, N. A. (2017). Why music matters in urban school districts: The perspectives of students and parents of the Celia Cruz High School of Music, Bronx, New York. *Arts Education Policy Review, 118*(2), 67-82.
DOI: 10.1080/10632913.2015.1009223
- Doyle, J. Lee. (2009). Music teacher perceptions of issues and problems in urban elementary schools. Open Access Theses. 185.
https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_theses/185
- Doyle, J. L. (2014). Cultural relevance in urban music education: A synthesis of the literature. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education, 32*(2) 44–51.
DOI: 10.1177/8755123314521037
- Elpus, K., & Abril, C. (2011). High school music ensemble students in the United States: A demographic profile. *Journal of Research in Music Education, 59*(2), 128–145.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23019481>
- Emdin, C. (2017). *For white folks who teach in the hood...and the rest of y'all too: Reality pedagogy and urban education (race, education, and democracy)*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Emmanuel, D T. (2006). Cultural clashes: The complexity of identifying urban culture. In C. Frierson-Campbell (Ed.), *Teaching Music in the urban classroom* (pp. 15–24). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Erickson, B. (2008). The crisis in culture and inequality. In S. J. Tepper & B. J. Ivey (Eds.), *Engaging art: The next great transformation of America's cultural life* (pp. 343–362). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Eros, J. (2018). Becoming part of the city: Influences on the career choice of an urban music educator. *International Journal of Music Education*, 36(3) 407–417.
DOI: 10.1177/0255761418771798
- F. Keith, personal communication [email], December 2, 2020.
- Farrell, E. (2020). Researching lived experience in education: Misunderstood or missed opportunity?. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19, 1–8. DOI: 10.1177/1609406920942066
- Fiese, R. K., & DeCarbo, N. J. (1995). Urban music education: The teachers' perspective. *Music Educators Journal*, 81(6), 27-31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3398779>
- Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2011). A mixed methods portrait of urban instrumental music teaching. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 59(3), 229–256.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429411414912>
- Fitzpatrick, K. (2008). *A mixed methods portrait of urban instrumental music teaching*. [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. Northwestern University.
- Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2012). Cultural diversity and the formation of identity: Our role as music teachers. *Music Educators Journal*, 98(4), 53–59.
doi:10.1177/0027432112442903
- Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2012). A survey of the characteristics and perceptions of urban and suburban secondary instrumental music teachers. *Contributions to Music Education*, 39, 53-68. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24127244>
- Forrester, S. H. (2019). Community engagement in music education: Preservice music teachers' perceptions of an urban service-learning initiative. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 29(1), 26–40. DOI: 10.1177/10570837/19871472

- Foote, M. Q. & Bartell, T. G. (2011). Pathways to equity in mathematics education: How life experiences impact researcher positionality. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, 78, 45-68. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10649-011-9309-2>
- Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London, England: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Freeman, K. (1977). Increasing African Americans' participation in higher education: African American high school students' perspectives. *The Journal of Higher Education* 68(5), 523-550. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2959945>
- Frierson-Campbell, C. (Ed.). (2006). *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom* (Vols. 1 & 2). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Gadamer, H. G. (1989). Truth and method (2nd rev. ed.) (J. Weisheimer & D. Marshall, Trans.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1960)
- Gaines, L. J. (2017). *Working with African-American males in urban schools: An exploratory study of public high school teachers* [Doctoral Dissertation, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey]. Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology Electronic Theses and Dissertations.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>
- Giorgi, A. (1985). *Phenomenology and psychological research*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.

- Glen, S. (2021, May 10). *Response bias: Definition and examples*. StatisticsHowTo.com: Elementary Statistics for the rest of us!.
<https://www.statisticshowto.com/response-bias/>
- Gomes, Sr., G. (2017). *Teacher preparation: perceptions of preparedness for high-needs urban schools a qualitative study* (Publication No. 354). [Doctoral dissertation, St. John Fisher College]. Fisher Digital Publications.
- Grossman, P. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hall, T. D. (2007). *A pedagogy of freedom: using hip-hop in the classroom to engage African-American students*. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Missouri-Columbia.
- Hanson, J. (2020). Effectual thinking and music education: One view of creative adaptation in an underserved urban middle school. *International Journal of Music Education*, 38(4), 625–643. DOI: 10.1177/0255761420944034
- Harris, M. M. (2017). Why music matters: How participation in a professional learning community can expand the role of music educators. *Journal of Practitioner Research*, 2(2), 1-19. <http://doi.org/10.5038/2379-9951.2.2.1042>
- Heidegger, M. (1994). *Introduction to phenomenological research*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1962). *Being and time*. New York: Harper. (Original work published 1927)
- Hein, L. (2017). Black feminist thought and why it matters today. *Spectra*, 6(1). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.21061/spectra.v6i1.405>

- Hess, J. (2017). Critiquing the critical: The casualties and paradoxes of critical pedagogy in music education. *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 25(2), 171–191.
doi: 10.2979/philmusieducrevi.25.2.05
- Hess, J. (2017). Equity and music education: Euphemisms, terminal naivety, and whiteness. *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, 16 (3), 15–47.
doi:10.22176/act16.3.15
- Hollins, E. R., & Guzman, M. T. (2005). Research on preparing teachers for diverse populations. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 477–548). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.
- Holmes, A. D. G. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 2020, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v8i4.3232>
- Holroyd, A. E. M. (2007) Interpretive Hermeneutic Phenomenology: Clarifying Understanding. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 7(2), 1-12.
DOI: 10.1080/20797222.2007.11433946
- Howey, K. R. (1989). RATE: Programs of teacher preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(6), 23–26. doi:10.1177/002248718904000605
- Hunter, W. C and Haydon, T. (2019). Implementing a classroom management package in an urban middle school: A case study. *Preventing School Failure*, 63(1), 68–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2018.1504740>

- Jorgensen, E. (2003). *Transforming Music Education*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Joubert, D. & Van der Merwe, L. (2020). Phenomenology in five music education journals: Recent use and future directions. *International Journal of Music Education*, 38(3), 337–351. DOI: 10.1177/0255761419881492
- Kelly-McHale, J. (2013). The influence of music teacher beliefs and practices on the expression of musical identity in an elementary general music classroom. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 61(2), 195–216.
doi:10.1177/0022429413485439
- Kincheloe, J., Hayes, K., Rose, K., & Anderson, P. (Eds.). (2007). *Urban education: A comprehensive guide for educators, parents, and teachers*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kindall-Smith, M. (2004). Teachers teaching teachers: Revitalization in an urban setting. *Music Educators Journal*, 91(2), 41–46. doi:10.2307/3400048
- Kindall-Smith, M. (2006). I plant my feet on higher ground: Music teacher education for urban schools. In C. Frierson-Campbell (Ed.), *Teaching music in the urban classroom: A guide to survival, success, and reform* (Vol. 2, pp. 47–66). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kindall-Smith, M., McKoy, C. L., & Mills, S. W. (2011). Challenging exclusionary paradigms in the traditional musical canon: Implications for music education practice. *International Journal of Music Education*, 29(4), 374-386.
doi:10.1177/0255761411421075

- Knapp, M. S. & Shields, P. M. (1990). Reconceiving academic instruction for the children of poverty. *The Phi Delta Kappan*, 71(10), 752-758.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20404280>
- Kohli, R., Pizarro, M., & Nevárez, A. (2017). The “new racism” of K–12 schools: Centering critical research on racism. *Review of Research in Education*, 41(1), 182–202. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16686949>
- Kopetz, P. B., Lease, A. J., & Warren-Kring, B. Z. (2006). *Comprehensive urban education*. Boston: Pearson.
- Kozol, J. (2006). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York, NY: Three Rivers Press.
- Kraehe, A.M., Acuff, J.B. & Travis, S. (2016). Equity, the arts, and urban education: A review. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 48(2), 220–244.
<https://doi-org.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/10.1007/s11256-016-0352-2>
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45(3), 214-222.
<https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.45.3.214>
- Kruse, A. J. & Gallo, D. J. (2020). Rethinking the elementary “canon”: Ideas, inspirations, and innovations from hip-hop. *Music Educators Journal*, 107(2), 58-65. DOI: 10.1177/0027432120975089
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476635>

- Ladson-Billings, G. J. (2002). I ain't writin' nuttin': Permissions to fail and demands to succeed in urban classrooms. In L. D. Delpit, & J. K. Dowdy (Eds.), *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom* (pp. 107–120). New York: Norton.
- Lauterbach, A. A. (2018). Hermeneutic phenomenological interviewing: Going beyond semi-structured formats to help participants revisit experience. *The Qualitative Report*, 23(11), 2883-2898. <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol23/iss11/16>
- Laverty, S. M. (2003). Hermeneutic phenomenology and phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 2(3), 21-35. DOI:10.1177/160940690300200303
- Legette, R. M. (2003). Multicultural music education attitudes, values, and practices of public school music teachers. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 13(1): 51–59. doi:10.1177/10570837030130010107.
- Lehmberg, L. J. (2008). *Perceptions of effective teaching and pre-service preparation for urban elementary general music classrooms: A study of teachers of different cultural backgrounds in various cultural settings* (Publication No. 3326036) [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Lemay, C. A., Cashman, S.B., Elfenbein, D. S., & Felice, M. E. (2010). A qualitative study of the meaning of fatherhood among young urban fathers. *Public Health Nursing*, 27(3), 221–231. doi: 10.1111/j.1525-1446.2010.00847.x
- Lind, V. R. & McKoy, C. L. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education: From understanding to application*. New York: Routledge.

- Logan, J. R. & Burdick-Will, J. (2017). School segregation and disparities in urban, suburban, and rural areas. *The Annals of The American Academy*, 674, 199-216.
DOI: 10.1177/0002716217733936
- Martignetti, F., Talbot, B., Clauhs, M., Hawkins, T., & Niknafs, N. (2013). “You got to know us”: A hopeful model for music education in schools. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 23.
http://www.usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v23n1/visions/Martignetti_et_al_A_Hopeful_Model_for_Music_Education_in_Urban_Schools.pdf
- Matsko, K., & Hammerness, K. (2014). Unpacking the “urban” in urban teacher education: Making a case for context-specific preparation. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 65(2), 128– 144. doi:10.1177/0022487113511645
- Mattulke, E. E. (2019). The benefits of music education in urban education. *The International Undergraduate Journal for Service-Learning, Leadership, and Social Change*, 9(1), 22-30. <https://opus.govst.edu/iujsl/vol9/iss1/5>
- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Urban. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved February 5, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/urban>
- McKoy, C. (2013). Effects of selected demographic variables on music student teachers’ self-reported cross-cultural competence. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 60(4), 375–394. doi:10.1177/0022429412463398
- Milner, H. R., IV, & Lomotey, K. (Eds.). (2014). *Handbook of urban education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Mora, R. A. (2014). Conscientização. *Key Concepts in Intercultural Dialogue*, 42.
<https://centerforinterculturaldialogue.files.wordpress.com/2021/05/kc42-conscientizacao.pdf>
- Morrison, T. (1992). *Playing in the dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Morse, J. M. (1994). Designing funded qualitative research. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 220–235). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Nagro, S. A., Hirsch, S. E., and Kennedy, M. J. (2020). A self-led approach to improving classroom management practices using video analysis. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 53(1), 24-32. DOI: 10.1177/0040059920914329
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2008). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Olsen, B., & Anderson, L. (2007). Courses of action: A qualitative investigation into urban teacher retention and career development. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 5-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085906293923>
- (2015). Opportunity-To-Learn Standards. National Association for Music Education.
https://nafme.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Opportunity-to-Learn-Standards_May2015.pdf
- Palmer, R. E. (1969). *Interpretation theory in Schleiermacher, Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer*. Evanston, IN: Northwestern University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Peroff, L. W. (2019, April 25). *Failure is a part of teaching. Here's how to grow from it.* Education Weekly. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-failure-is-a-part-of-teaching-heres-how-to-grow-from-it/2019/04>
- Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537 (1896). <https://www.loc.gov/item/usrep163537/>
- Punch, K. F. (2009). *Introduction to qualitative research in education*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Pyke, K. & Dang, T. (2003). “Fob” and “whitewashed”: Identity and internalized racism among second generation Asian Americans. *Qualitative Sociology*, 26(2), 147-172. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022957011866>
- Reardon, S. F. & Bischoff, K. (2014). Growth in the residential segregation of families by income, 1970–2009. In J. Logan (Ed.), *Diversity and Disparities: America Enters a New Century* (pp. 208-233). New York: The Sage Foundation.
- Regelski, T. A. (2005). Critical theory as a foundation for critical thinking in music education. *Visions of Research in Music Education*, 6. <http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/v6n1/visions/Regelski%20Critical%20Theory%20as%20a%20Foundation.pdf>
- Robinson, K. M. (2006). White teacher, students of color: Culturally responsive pedagogy for elementary general music in communities of color. In C. Frierson-Campbell (Ed.), *Teaching music in the urban classroom: A guide to survival, success, and reform* (Vol. 1, pp. 35–53). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Robinson, N. R. (2004). Who is “at risk” in the music classroom? *Music Educators Journal*, 90(4), 38–43. doi:10.2307/3399997
- Robinson, N. R. (2017). Developing a critical consciousness for diversity and equity

- among preservice music teachers. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 26(3), 11–26. DOI: 10.1177/1057083716643349
- Robinson, T. (2017). Male elementary general music teachers: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, 26(2), 77–89. DOI: 10.1177/1057083715622019
- Robinson, T. (2019). Improving classroom management issues through your carefully chosen approaches and prompts. *General Music Today*, 32(3), 20–22. DOI: 10.1177/1048371318812440
- Rowe, W. E. (2014). Positionality. In D. Coghlan & M. Brydon-Miller, (Eds.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research*. New York, NY: Sage.
- Rushing, W. (2017). School segregation and its discontents: Chaos and community in post-civil rights Memphis. *Urban Education*, 52(1), 3–31. DOI: 10.1177/0042085915574520
- Salvador, K. & Allegood, K. (2014). Access to music education with regard to race in two urban areas. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 115, 82–92. DOI: 10.1080/10632913.2014.914389
- Salvador, K. & Kelly-McHale, J. (2017). Music teacher educator perspectives on social justice. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 65(1) 6–24. DOI: 10.1177/0022429417690340
- Savin-Baden, M. & Major, C. H. (2013). *Qualitative research: The essential guide to theory and practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Routledge.

- Schaffer, C. L., White, M., & Brown, C. M. (2018). A tale of three cities: Defining urban schools within the context of varied geographic areas. *Education and Urban Society*, 50(6), 507–523. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517713605>
- Shaw, J. T. (2015). “Knowing their world”: Urban music educators’ knowledge of context. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 63(3).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022429415584377>
- Shaw, J. T. (2018). Alleviating praxis shock: Induction policy and programming for urban music teachers. *Arts Education Policy Review*, 119(1), 25-35.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10632913.2016.1185655>
- Shaw, J. T. (2018). Pedagogical context knowledge: revelations from a week in the life of itinerant urban music educators. *Music Education Research*, 20(2), 184-200.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14613808.2016.1238062>
- Shaw, J. T. (2020). Urban music educators’ perceived professional growth in a context-specific professional development program. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 67(4), 440–464. DOI: 10.1177/0022429419889295
- Shulman, L. S. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1–23.
<https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411>
- Sindberg, L. K. (2016). Elements of a successful professional learning community for music teachers using comprehensive musicianship through performance. *Journal of Research in Music Education*, 64(2), 202–219. DOI: 10.1177/0022429416648945

- Singleton, D. M. (2020). *Black band for Brown students: A culturally relevant pedagogy?* (Publication No. 27834645) [Doctoral dissertation, Boston University]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.
- Siwatu, K. O. (2011). Preservice teachers' sense of preparedness and self-efficacy to teach in America's urban and suburban schools: Does context matter? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(2), 357–365.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2010.09.004>
- Sloan, A. & Bowe, B. (2014). Phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology: The philosophy, the methodologies and using hermeneutic phenomenology to investigate lecturers' experiences of curriculum design. *Quality & Quantity*, 48(3), 1291-1303. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-013-9835-3>
- Smith, M. K. (2002). *Jerome S. Brunner and the process of education*. The encyclopedia of informal education. <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/brunner.htm>.
- Smith, J. (2006). The challenges of urban teaching: Young urban music educators at work. In C. Frierson-Campbell (Ed.), *Teaching music in the urban classroom* (Vol. 1, pp. 57–74). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Solorzano, D. & Villalpando, O. (1998). Critical race theory, marginality, and the experience of minority students in higher education. In C. Torres & T. Mitchell (Eds.), *Emerging issues in the sociology of education: Comparative perspectives* (pp. 211-224). Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Steinberg, S., & Kincheloe, J. (2004). *19 urban questions: Teaching in the city*. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

- Talbot, B. C & Williams, H. M. A. (2019). Critically assessing forms of resistance in music Education. In D. J. Elliott, M. Silverman, and G. E. McPherson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophical and Qualitative Assessment in Music Education*. (pp. 1-31). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, E., Gillborn, D, & Ladson-Billings (Eds). (2009). *Foundations of Critical Race Theory In Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Thompson-Gray, T. (2019). *Staying by Choice: A Phenomenological Study Exploring Lived Experiences of Urban Teachers* (Publication No. 27995211.) [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University–Portland]. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing
- Tierney, W. G. (1991). *Culture and Ideology in Higher Education*. New York: Praeger.
- Tierney, W. G. (1993). *Building communities of difference: Higher education in the twenty-first century*. Westport, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Urban Area Criteria for the 2010 Census. (2011). Welsh, R. O. & Swain, W. A. (2020). (2020) U.S. and World Population Clock. The United States Census Bureau.
<https://www.census.gov/popclock/>
- Van Manen, M. (2016). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Vera, H. & Gordon, A. (2003). *Screen saviors: Hollywood fictions of whiteness*. New York, New York: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Villalpando, O. (2003). Self-segregation or self-preservation? A critical race theory and Latina/o critical theory analysis of a study of Chicana/o college students. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(5), 619–646.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000142922>

- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(1) 20–32.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003>
- Watson, C. (2014). Effective professional learning communities? The possibilities for teachers as agents of change in schools. *British Educational Research Journal*, 40(1), 18–29. DOI: 10.1002/berj.3025
- Weiner, L. (2000). Research in the 90s: Implications for urban teacher preparation. *Review of Educational Research*, 70, 369–406. doi:10.3102/00346543070003369
- Welsh, R. O. & Swain, W. A. (2020). (Re)defining urban education: A conceptual review and empirical exploration of the definition of urban education. *Educational Researcher*, 49(2), 90–100. DOI: 10.3102/0013189X20902822
- Wiggan, G., Smith, D. & Watson-Vandiver, M. J. (2020). The national teacher shortage, urban education and the cognitive sociology of labor. *The Urban Review*, 53(1), 43-75. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-020-00565-z>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 8(1), 69–91.
doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yüksel, P. & Yıldırım, S. (2015). Theoretical frameworks, methods, and procedures for conducting phenomenological studies in educational settings. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(1), 1-20. DOI:10.17569/TOJQI.59813

APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia
FWA Number: 00002876
IRB Registration Numbers: 00000731, 00009014

482 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
573-882-3181
irb@missouri.edu

February 04, 2021

Principal Investigator: George Preston Wilson
Department: Learning Center

Your IRB Application to project entitled A Phenomenological Investigation of Successful Urban Elementary Music Educators was reviewed and approved by the MU Institutional Review Board according to the terms and conditions described below:

| | |
|---|--|
| IRB Project Number | 2047422 |
| IRB Review Number | 300324 |
| Initial Application Approval Date | February 04, 2021 |
| IRB Expiration Date | February 04, 2022 |
| Level of Review | Exempt |
| Project Status | Active - Exempt |
| Exempt Categories (Revised Common Rule) | 45 CFR 46.104d(2)(ii) |
| Risk Level | Minimal Risk |
| | A recruitment email that will be sent to identified subjects; the recruitment flyer will be attached. |
| Approved Documents | Interview questions for semi-structured interviews An informed consent script that will be given to each subject. A recruitment flyer that will be sent to identified subjects; it will be an attachment on the recruitment email. |

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. COVID-19 Specific Information

Enrollment and study related procedures must remain in compliance with the University of Missouri regulations related to interaction with human participants following guidance at research.missouri.edu/about/covid-19-info.php

In addition, any restarting of in-person research activities must comply with the policies and guiding principles provided at research.missouri.edu/about/research-restart.php, including appropriate approvals for return to work authorization for individuals as well as human subject research projects.

2. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.

APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT

1. Recruitment Flyer
2. Recruitment Email

1. Recruitment Flyer

Research participants needed

ARE YOU A SUCCESSFUL ELEMENTARY URBAN MUSIC EDUCATOR?

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this dissertation study is to understand the teachers and their experiences who have been successful in elementary urban music classrooms. This study aims to garner an authentic picture and capture the essence of what it means to be a successful elementary urban music educator.

LOCATION:

Sixty-minute (60) interviews via Zoom, responses to short follow-up questions, reviewing your transcript for accuracy

ELEGIBILITY:

- Currently employed in an urban school system, defined as a school having Title I status or high percentages of free and reduced lunch
- Teaching general music to grades K-5
- Have been employed in an urban context for three or more years in the same school
- Has been nominated and/or a finalist within the past 5 years for either a:
 - Music Educator Award (through the Recording Academy and the GRAMMY Museum)
 - Music Teachers of Excellence award (the Country Music Award Foundation)



BENEFIT:

Contribute to a growing body of scholarship in urban music education and provide voice to experiences and realities that often remain outside the realm of knowledge.

Please contact G. Preston Wilson, Jr.
xxxxxxxx@missouri.edu
(xxx) xxx-xxxx

2. Recruitment Email

Recruitment Email

SUBJECT LINE: Research Participation Opportunity

Hello,

My name is G. Preston Wilson, Jr. and I am a PhD Candidate in the School of Music at the University of Missouri. I am looking for potential participants for my dissertation study, *A Phenomenological Investigation of Successful Urban Elementary Music Educators*.

What will I be doing in the study?

You will be doing an interview (via Zoom) about your lived experiences as an urban elementary music educator.

How long is an interview? One hour. You may be asked to complete a follow-up interview (for transcription accuracy).

When and where?

The interview will be scheduled at mutually agreed upon time. No traveling is required as this is a remote study that will be performed online. You may participate using your office or home computer, or at a private location of your choice.

Interested in participating?

Please see the attached flier for eligibility and additional information.

If you have any questions, please contact me at xxxxxx@mail.missouri.edu or (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Thank you for your interest, time, and consideration,

G. Preston Wilson, Jr.
PhD Candidate – Music Education
University of Missouri

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent

Dear Participant,

I am a PhD candidate in Music Education at the University of Missouri. For my dissertation, I am working on a research study to explore the lived experiences of successful urban elementary music teachers called “A Phenomenological Investigation of Successful Elementary Urban Music Educators.” My study involves interviewing elementary music teachers that work in urban contexts; urban being defined in part by Title 1 status or high percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch. The interviews will focus on interviewees’ personal experiences and reflections about their schooling and preparation, teaching, students, successes and challenges, and inspirations.

Data will be collected through approximately one-hour interviews via Zoom, at a time that is most convenient for you. Later, I may ask for responses to follow-up questions, and will ask you to review the transcript of your interview to be sure it captures your thoughts and meanings accurately. Interviews will be audio-recorded, but only pseudonyms will be used in any reports of the data, including my dissertation or in a journal article. Recordings and transcript files will be stored on password-protected devices. Your responses will remain strictly confidential.

I hope that the findings of this study will help further the profession’s understanding of the urban music teaching experience. An expected benefit associated with your participation is the opportunity for your own reflection about your work. I will be happy to share my findings with you after the research is completed.

You should be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or the University of Missouri. Potential risks will be the time given up by the interviewees, but there will be no other risks outside of what is encountered in normal daily life.

Do not hesitate to ask any questions about the study either before or while you are participating. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (xxx) xxx-xxxx. Feel free to contact myself, or my advisor Dr. Wendy Sims (xxxxxx@missouri.edu) if you have any questions about this research project.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the research study,

G. Preston Wilson, Jr.
PhD Candidate - Music Education
University of Missouri
xxxxxx@mail.missouri.edu | (xxx) xxx-xxxx

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Background information

1. State your full name.
2. How old are you?
3. Where are you from (grow up)?
 - a. K-12 school location.
4. How do you identify racially?
5. How long have you been teaching?
6. What does urban mean to you?

Schooling/Preparation (Ballantyne & Packer, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 2005)

1. What is your educational background?
 - a. Degrees? Certifications?
2. What were your intentions post-graduation?
3. How did you end up teaching music?
4. Describe your teacher preparation process: classes, assignments, experiences
 - a. Describe your student teaching experience.
5. What experiences or circumstances prepared you to teach in an urban context?
 - a. Did your formal music education program prepare you?
6. Describe your occupational journey.
7. How did you end up at your current school?

Teaching (Eros, 2018, Dosman, 2017)

1. What does it mean to be an urban music educator?
2. What does a routine day look like in your classroom?
3. What do you think makes a good music educator? What characteristics would a person who is a good music educator have?
4. How do you stay current with pop culture trends?
5. What are your goals as a music educator?
6. How do your ideas concerning best practices match the school's expectations?
7. Define Racism.
 - a. In what ways does your definition of racism inform your teaching? Please provide examples.

Students (Conway & Zerman, 2004; Gaines, 2017; Shaw, 2015)

1. Describe your students.
 - a. Do they fit into common stereotypes and assumptions?
2. What strategies do you use to connect with your students?
 - a. In what ways do you use different strategies based on race? Please provide examples.
3. How do you maintain positive relationships with your students?
 - a. Why do you feel that it is/is not important? Can you give me an example?
4. What are some of the frustrations you experience with your students?
 - a. Attendance, behavior, etc.
5. What do you learn from your students?

6. In what ways do you connect your teaching to your student's world?
7. How do you try to support your students?
 - a. What have you found to be more or less successful?
8. Describe your most memorable successes?
 - a. What happened?
 - b. What was the outcome?
9. How do students let you know when they like or dislike classroom activities?
Materials? Repertoire?
 - a. What was the feedback you received?
 - b. How did you use this information?
10. Do you have any experience with special education students?
 - a. How are they different?
11. How do you feel your race impacted your work with students?
 - a. What other identifiers do you hold that you feel impact your teaching?
 - b. Were you conscious of it? Please explain
 - c. Do you feel that your students were conscious of it? Please explain

Successes

1. What do you like about being an urban music educator?
2. How do you define success?
 - a. How would you describe success in your classroom?
3. Do you deem yourself as successful?
4. Describe an experience that was challenging but had a satisfactory resolution.

Challenges (Conway & Zerman, 2004; Lemay et al., 2010)

1. What do you find difficult about being an urban music educator?
 - a. Students? Staff and admin? Society? Home life and personal life?
2. Do you feel overwhelmed?
3. Did you ever want out?
4. How do you deal with fatigue?
5. What kind of support do you have?
6. Describe an experience that was challenging that did not have a satisfactory resolution.
7. How do you manage failure or disappointment with teaching or your students?

Inspiration (Doyle, 2014)

1. What keeps you teaching?
2. How have your attitudes about teaching changed? To what do you attribute this?
3. How have you grown professionally?
4. Why do you continue to stay (other opportunities)?
5. How do you feel you have evolved as a teacher?
6. What advice would you give to a new music teacher going into an urban context?
 - a. What do you wish more people knew about urban music education?

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Available upon request

VITA

G. Preston Wilson, Jr. was born October 31, 1987, in Durham, NC. After graduating from Durham School of the Arts in 2006, he attended Fisk University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in Music Education degree in 2010. He earned his Master of Music degree from Bowling Green State University in 2012. Dr. Wilson earned his PhD in Music Education from the University of Missouri in 2021. During his doctoral coursework, he taught courses in music and education, was a student teacher supervisor in music education, and was a fellow with the MU Writing Center. Prior to enrolling in the PhD program, he was public school teacher in Toledo, Ohio for six years, including three years of elementary general music, three years of high school choir. Dr. Wilson has presented posters and workshops at conferences such as the Missouri Music Educators Association annual in-service conference, New Directions in Music Education, and the Annual Black Male of Excellence Leadership Conference. His co-authored research has been published in the book *Remixed and Reimagined: Innovations in Religion, Spirituality, and (Inter)Faith in Higher Education* (Myers Educational Press, 2020). His research interests include urban music education, race relations in music education, and practical approaches to diversity, inclusion, and equity.