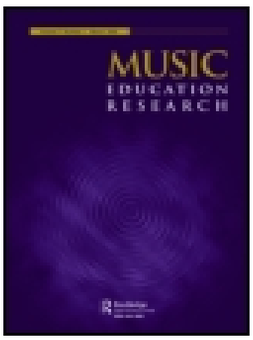

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White preservice music educators' perceptions of teaching predominantly Black student populations in city schools

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to explore how five White preservice teachers described working with predominantly Black student populations in city school music classrooms. Participants with prior K-12 school music experience in primarily White public and private school settings were assigned to student teaching placements in a city school district in the United States. Using critical race theory as a framework, this study focused on three research questions: (1) How do participants' life experiences influence the way they think about teaching racialised student populations? (2) How do participants' student teaching experiences with racialized populations shape their views of music education? and (3) How do participants' student teaching experiences influence their desire to teach in city schools? Findings suggest the participants had a limited understanding of White privilege and did not recognise racial inequalities in American public-school education. And while participants felt better prepared to teach in a city school classroom with a predominantly Black student population, none expressed a strong desire to work in these settings after completing their student teaching experience.

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Introduction

Prior research demonstrates that most teachers in the United States grow up in White, middle-class communities and may struggle to relate to students who do not benefit from White, middle-class privilege (Sleeter 2007; Villegas and Lucas 2002). According to surveys collected by the National Center for Education Statistics, 80 percent of public-school teachers in the 2015–2016 academic year identified as White, compared to fewer than half of public-school students who identified as White (U.S. Department of Education 2019). Many scholars have written about the racial divide between teachers and students (Delpit 2006; Ladson-Billings 2004) and the increasing segregation of public schools in the United States (Ayscue and Orfield 2015; Orfield et al. 2016). Music educators, perhaps as a consequence of this racial divide and school segregation, report they feel unprepared to teach in high-minority and low socio-economic city schools (Doyle 2012; Fiese and DeCarbo 1995).

The field of music education has struggled to prepare teachers for racially and economically diverse classrooms for decades. In 1967, the Tanglewood Declaration sought to address the needs of city school students with the following statement, 'The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems as in the "inner city" or other areas with culturally deprived individuals (Mark 2008)'. The phrase 'culturally deprived' is racist and promotes a cultural-deficit perspective. And it is clear,

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through the resolution, that music educators have struggled with race and diversity since suburbanisation, depopulation, and racist policies (see Massey and Denton 1993; Wilson 2012) resulted in high-minority city schools in areas of concentrated poverty. After the Tanglewood Symposium, MENC dedicated a full issue of the *Music Educators Journal* to 'Facing the Music in Urban Education', demonstrating further evidence that music educators were failing to serve students well in city schools. Decades later, the music educators at the Housewright Symposium recognised that the profession made little progress in meeting the needs of diverse student populations. In the Housewright Declaration music educators agreed:

> All music has a place in the curriculum. Not only does the Western art tradition need to be preserved and disseminated, music educators also need to be aware of other music that people experience and be able to integrate it into classroom music instruction. (Hinckley 2000)

Cohorts of music teachers dedicated to the cause of social justice and equality in music education in the United States include the Consortium for Research in Equity in Music Education, the MayDay group, the Cultural Diversity and Social Justice ASPA (Areas for Strategic Planning and Action) of the Society for Music Teacher Education, and the Social Sciences SRIG (Special Research Interest Group) of the National Association for Music Education. These groups include music teachers and music teacher educators who recognise the need for more culturally responsive teaching practices for an increasingly diverse student population. Despite the efforts of these groups and the aforementioned conferences, national survey data indicate that White students and students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds remain overrepresented in school music programmes across the United States (Elpus and Abril 2019).

Critical race theory

Critical race theory (CRT) is a framework that examines how structures and cultural assumptions contribute to racial inequality. CRT scholars have argued that 'a regime of White supremacy and its subordination of people of colour have been created and maintained in America' (Crenshaw et al. 1995, xiii), and we must identify and eliminate systems of racial oppression (Ladson-Billings 1998, 9). Applying CRT to music education, Juliet Hess wrote that the framework 'allows music educators to recognise the Whiteness and Eurocentricity present in school music at all levels and the ways in which masking systems serve to perpetuate these facets of institutions' (2017, 17).

One aspect of critical race theory is White privilege, the social advantages that come with being White (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Privilege in music education is manifested in the inclusion or exclusion of genres, repertoire, and curricula, as well as who is provided access to music education (Matthews 2015). In the United States, White music educators and music teacher educators perpetuate hegemonic structures that advantage White musicians and a Western European canon of music through curricular choices, evaluations, auditions, college admissions, and job interviews, consistently reproducing cohorts of music educators that do not represent the racial diversity of the students they serve. Because student teaching is one of the most significant components of music teacher preparation, an analysis of this experience through the lens of critical race theory might illustrate how White privilege is evident in this part of the system.

Student teaching in diverse school settings

Field-based experiences, including student teaching, are generally perceived by beginning teachers to be among the most important components of their educational preparation (Conway 2002; James, Etheridge, and Lyles 1991). Although the importance of field-based experiences is well-documented, beginning teachers often have limited experiences with children in city school settings (Haberman 1995). Cook and van Cleaf (2000) found that 'First year teachers who had student teaching experiences in urban settings perceived themselves as better prepared to deal with

multicultural needs of children' (165). While previous studies have examined preservice classroom teachers' perceptions in urban education, few studies to date have examined preservice music educators' perceptions about teaching in city schools.

Emmanuel (2005) conducted a case study of an immersion internship experience for preservice music teachers. She found that field experience in city schools, combined with group support and reflective practices can help preservice music teachers develop intercultural competence. The preservice teachers in Emmanuel's study believed that their internship experience challenged preexisting stereotypes and assumptions they held about city schools. However, many music teacher education programmes do not offer a fully immersive field experience, and few include activities designed to help student teachers understand and contextualise their experience specifically in an urban setting. More research is needed in determining how traditional student teaching experiences influence preservice teachers' perceptions of, and assumptions about, teaching music in city school communities, specifically to racialized student populations. Therefore, the purpose of this collective case study research was to explore how five White preservice teachers described student teaching in a large city school district that served a predominantly Black student population. This research was guided by the following questions:

(1) How do participants' life experiences influence the way they think about teaching racialized student populations?
(2) How do participants' student teaching experiences with racialized populations shape their views of music education?
(3) How do participants' student teaching experiences influence their desire to teach in city schools?

Method

I used a collective case study design to gather life histories and descriptions of city schools and students from participants in this study. Stake (2005) recommended using a collective case study design to 'investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition' (445) when the investigation includes several cases that share a common characteristic, what Stake (2006) called a 'quintain'. The aim of this collective case study design was to better understand the quintain, defined here as perspectives on teaching racialized populations in city schools, from an examination of the individual cases – the participants in this study. Each individual participant was examined as an individual case, and comparative data analysis examined themes and categories in the talk of the participants across cases. Merriam (2002) and Matsunobu and Bresler (2014) note the importance of collecting data from multiple sources in qualitative inquiry to allow for a convergence of data. The collected data in this study come from preliminary and follow-up semi-structured interviews with the participants as well as journals they maintained throughout the student teaching experience.

Participants

All five participants were undergraduate preservice music teachers attending a university in the northeastern region of the United States. All students in the university were required to take one 3-credit course on race and diversity, and many of the preservice music teachers participated in field observation experiences in city schools. Three of the participants were male, two were female, and each is identified by a pseudonym in this study. I provide a brief background of each participant in the following section to help contextualise their experiences.

Mark. Mark grew up just outside of the city centre and attended an urban elementary school for Kindergarten and some of first grade before relocating to a suburban school district. His high school

marching band had over two hundred members and won several championships. Mark noted that while the student population of his school district was predominantly White, there was economic diversity in his hometown. He pursued a music education degree largely because he was interested in being a teacher and chose music as a content area because he enjoyed it so much in his own school experience.

Pamela. Pamela first experienced a joy of making music while performing in church choirs. Her grandfather was a music educator and actually taught one of Pamela's own elementary school music teachers. She attended a large suburban school district and participated in the school ensemble programme, which had a very strong reputation, starting in the fourth grade.

Justin. Justin's earliest musical memories include listening to Raffi and picking up a band instrument in the summer before third grade. He started taking private lessons in third grade and continued them throughout high school. Most of his music activities were outside of school because he attended a high school that specialised in science and technology. He described his school district as being mostly White, in a suburban community with significant economic diversity.

Jennifer. Jennifer attended a midsized suburban school district about an hour away from the city. Noting her special talent for the flute, her band director recommended she take private lessons, which she began in fourth grade and continued through high school. Her mother grew up in a rural setting and was especially nervous about Jennifer attending college in the city.

Michael. Michael said that his family was 'not particularly musical', but he began taking private piano lessons in fourth grade and always liked music class in school. He attended a large private catholic high school, with an enrolment of approximately 2,500 students. Michael's high school band director strongly influenced his desire to teach music.

Setting

Much like the rest of the United States, the setting of the participants' student teaching experience has a long history of racist policies, such as redlining–banks refusing loans to businesses own by the Black community–and White flight, which contributed greatly to economic decline. According to the Census, approximately half of the residents in the community were below the poverty line (American Fact Finder n.d.). All schools in the district satisfied the federal definition of a 'low-income school', meaning at least 30 percent of their students qualified for free or reduced lunch (Jablow 2010).

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews

I conducted two interviews with all five participants in order to understand how they described working with predominantly Black student populations in city schools before and after the student teaching experience. In the first interview (Appendix 1), I hoped to learn about the participants' cultural backgrounds, their experiences with racially diverse populations, and their expectations of city schools. In the second interview (Appendix 2), I hoped to learn how the participants' expectations were met or challenged through their student teaching experience and to determine if the experience instilled in them a determination for social justice.

Teacher journals

All student teachers at the university were required to write weekly journals as part of the student teaching experience. I invited participants in this study to share their journals with me so that I could triangulate data collected from the interviews. Three of the five participants volunteered to

share their journals and two declined. Participants wrote journals based on the following reflection prompts:

1. What one or two words best describe your teaching experience this week?
2. What went well this week?
3. Did you reach your personal teaching goals this week?
4. If you could do this week over again, what would you do differently?
5. What new ideas, concepts, or techniques did you try this week?

After addressing the reflection prompts, participants were invited to write an open-response, reflecting on their experiences throughout the week.

Analysis

I entered the collected data into a database and coded for themes using Stake's analysis and interpretation approach (1995). Stake recommended three stages of analysis, during which the researcher engages in determining categorical aggregation and direct interpretation; correspondence and patterns; and naturalistic generalisations. At the same time, I conducted cross case analyses (Yin 1984) to compare multiple cases. By using this method, I found similarities and differences in how the participants described teaching music to racialized student populations in city schools.

The following broad themes emerged from this data analysis process, (a) participants had little interaction with racialized students and did not think about racism growing up (b) participants 'othered' multicultural music (c) participants often described their city school students from a deficit perspective, and (d) participants felt more prepared to teach in city schools after student teaching in a city school setting. While findings of a qualitative collective case study may not be generalisable to all music teacher preparation programmes, they may be transferable to other contexts similar to the one described in this study.

Findings

White privilege

All five participants grew up in a suburban hometown that was primarily White and middle-class. For many of the participants, the field experiences they had in urban settings while taking methods courses at the university were their first experiences in city schools. Jennifer describes how her own homogenous high school setting masked the realities of racism and discrimination.

> I was always in the honors classes, and there was only one girl that was African American and the rest of us were all White. It just never really occurred to me that racism was an issue even now, until I came here [to college] and I saw it. (Jennifer, pre-student teaching interview)

Michael attended a predominantly White private catholic school and had little interaction with students of colour.

> I can count on one hand how many African American students we had. It started to get more as I became a junior and senior, and a bit more Latino as well, but predominantly White, middle class.
>
> (Michael, pre-student teaching interview)

All of the participants expressed that they came from unprejudiced families and were raised not to stereotype others.

> I don't care if you're Black; I don't care if you're White. Doesn't really matter to me. As a matter of fact – most often – sometimes I'll meet someone or watch someone and the thought that they're Black doesn't really occur to me until much later. (Justin, pre-student teaching interview)

And Pamela was annoyed by people who 'complain' about racism, adding we need to 'get over it and move on.'

> A lot of gen-ed classes just divert over to racism and people complaining one way or another, and I've always kind of been annoyed by that. Again, maybe I'm ignorant, but thinking let's just get over it. If you keep bringing it up, you're the one that keeps bringing it up. Can't we just get over it and move on with our lives? (Pamela, pre-student teaching interview)

It was clear in the pre-student teaching interviews that participants had limited interaction with racialized students and did not seem to think much about race before attending college in a city. The benefit of not having to think about race is a typical example of White privilege, defined by CRT scholars as 'the myriad of social advantages, benefits, and courtesies that come with being a member of the dominant race' (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 89). Some participants failed to realise that students of colour must confront racism daily in their personal lives, school, community, and current events. Jennifer's admission 'it just never really occurred to me that racism was even an issue' highlights this striking reality that White students are free to live their lives without even thinking about, let alone experiencing, rampant racism clearly evident in American society.

Justin takes his privilege a step further by claiming to be colourblind, 'the thought that they're Black doesn't really occur to me until much later.' While this perspective may be well-intentioned, a colourblind mindset fails to recognise how racialized students face significant disadvantages as a consequence of racism and oppression. Justin and other colourblind individuals may instead blame individual students for the consequences of racism. CRT education scholar, Ladson-Billings explains 'the race-neutral or colour-blind perspective … presumes a homogenised "we" in a celebration of diversity' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 22). Ladson-Billings identifies how the colourblind perspective 'homogenizes' our communities. For music teachers, this affects our view of the curriculum and the repertoire we choose to promote, as colourblind programming and lesson planning is sure to include an overrepresentation of White composers, perspectives, and musical practices. In contrast, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) argue for 'color-conscious' efforts that represent the perspectives and experiences of racialized populations.

Pamela's frustration with conversations about racism may be the most disturbing perspective in this section. As exhausting as conversations about racism may be for her, it cannot compare to the exhaustion that racialized populations experience when confronted with racism daily, something known as 'racial battle fatigue syndrome' (Smith, Hung, and Franklin 2011). Pamela's White privilege allows her to confront racism only when asked to do so in an intellectual exercise. Her lack of empathy may be shared by other White music teachers who use their privilege to ignore racism instead of fighting it. As Ladson-Billings (1998) wrote, educators must 'make racism explicit so that students can recognize and struggle against this particular form of oppression' (22).

Multicultural is other

Some participants spoke about their own dominant culture in normative terms, 'othering' multicultural music and non-Western European learning styles. Most participants described multicultural education from the perspective of course content, not instructional strategies. For many, multicultural education was synonymous with 'world music'. The participants typically described a multicultural curriculum as one that included songs from around the world.

> I would only of course, use good music in the classroom, so I would look for multicultural music, music from other countries, or music from this country that has outside influences. (Mark, pre-student teaching interview)

> I mean we're so accustomed to the western type of music that sometimes you put on something from West Africa or something and they just – it's so different. It doesn't have to be so weird or strange; it can just be different. (Pamela, pre-student teaching interview)

The participants' perspectives seem to be, in Ladson-Billing's (1998) words a 'transmutation of multicultural education' from its origins as a way of changing schools to reconstruct society.

> Rather than engage students in provocative thinking about the contradictions of U.S. ideals and lived realities, teachers often find themselves encouraging students to sing "ethnic" songs, eat ethnic foods, and do ethnic dances. Consistently, manifestations of multicultural education in the classroom are superficial and trivial "celebrations of diversity". (Ladson-Billings 1998, 26)

One participant even suggested that multicultural education is undesirable. Before his student teaching experience, he believed all students and traditions should 'melt together' into a single American culture.

> I don't think the United States should be multicultural at all … We're looking for unicultural, but within that unicultural there's cultures that exist, that melt together to form this one American culture that accepts all cultures. (Justin, pre-student teaching interview)

Justin's experience in city schools did not change his philosophy toward multiculturalism. After he completed his student teaching experience, he reaffirmed his desire for a monocultural ideal, explaining why he believed multiculturalism is dangerous.

> Multicultural is very dangerous. And multicultural happened in the Balkans and that's why there's fighting all the time. And you really want a unicultural idea, I think where all the cultures come together to make one new culture. (Justin, post-student teaching interview)

The rejection of multiculturalism demonstrates a desire for racialized populations to abandon traditions, norms, and cultural identities to assimilate into the dominant (White) culture. Assimilation has been widely critiqued by CRT scholars who maintain we must give voice to racialized populations and reject a White normative society (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Ladson-Billings 1998). Scholars have suggested that instead of viewing American society as a 'melting pot,' the metaphor of 'salad bowl' is useful to describe how cultures can co-exist and remain distinct (Akiner 1997).

Deficit perspective

All participants described their students' home lives, and particularly parents, as being obstacles to academic success. In Michael's pre-student teaching interview, he described a lack of parental support as being a significant challenge for his students. 'I would think just going home and not being in a loving home. Is the mom there? Is the dad there?' This view was reinforced by Michael's student teaching experience. When asked about the obstacles he observed, he replied, 'because so many of them, like mom's on crack; dad's in jail, and they're – no wonder they're lashing out'. Pamela's descriptions of the challenges facing students also focused on the home and specifically the parent's role in a child's education.

> I think a lot of parents don't care. The students don't see a reason to care, and therefore they just don't do anything. If nobody's asking you to do it, why are you gonna do it? So, I think there are a lot of teachers out there that are trying really hard, and they're just being sabotaged with the home life. (Pamela, pre-student teaching interview)

Mark and Jennifer also pointed to violence and drug dealing parents as typical negative influences in students' home lives. Mark suggested that these home life factors were more influential than school factors.

> A student was, I forget how old, it was a general music class and they were having a free dance time and one student just stood still and started crying. And the teacher asked 'why is she crying?' and someone else answered 'I know why she's crying, she saw her dad hit her mother's head against the wall this morning' and that's not something that you're going to forget once you come to music class, and the teacher walks

> up and says 'stop crying, it's time for music, why aren't you dancing?' not helping the situation. Yeah, things from home, things from outside of school definitely influence what happens inside of school. Probably more so than what happens inside of school. (Mark, pre-student teaching interview)

> They're desensitized to violence. A lot of them have drug-dealing parents. A lot of them are drug dealers already in middle school. They're already dealing. They're more desensitized to things than rural and suburban children, that they would find horrible, that would really hurt them to see it. The students here, that's what they see. (Jennifer, pre-student teaching interview)

The stories these participants share about their students as 'drug dealers' with parents who 'don't care' demonstrates damaging racial stereotypes and a deficit-model perspective. The participants assume that students' living situations and parents are, perhaps insurmountable, obstacles to academic success and tell stories, to themselves and others, that reinforce this belief. CRT scholars argue that this deficit-model perspective is often employed by teachers as a way of placing blame on students, not the teacher's own instructional strategies, for a student's weak performance in a class. Ladson-Billings (1998) explains, 'CRT suggests that current instructional strategies presume that African American students are deficient … When these strategies or skills fail to achieve desired results, the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 22). The stories that the participants shared also help them to absolve themselves of any responsibility for their students' oppression. 'The dominant group justifies its power with stories, stock explanations that construct reality in ways to maintain their privilege. Thus, oppression is rationalized, causing little self-examination by the oppressor' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 16).

The deficit perspective can extend beyond the home life and into the students' musical preferences as well. All of the participants were classically-trained musicians who studied primarily in formal learning environments. Their values were shaped by their own experiences and may have influenced their appreciation of music outside of the western classical tradition. In a journal entry at the mid-point of his experience, Justin reflected on a classroom activity in which he showed a video of Puccini's *Tosca*.

> I am a bit ashamed to realize that I expected these fifth graders to be disinterested because the music wasn't written with only four chords or an explicit nonsensical poem set to some obnoxious synthesized beat. (Justin, week four journal entry)

While Justin was self-aware of cultural assumptions he made about his students, this entry reveals an elitist perspective of the value of western classical music, in this case an opera, over a popular style of music, rap.

The typical school music curriculum in the United States is one example of how teachers reproduce White western-European musical norms, customs, and values through instrumentation, repertoire, instructional strategies, and content. CRT views the curriculum 'as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script' (Ladson-Billings 1998, 21). Swartz (1992) explains 'master scripting silences multiple voices and perspectives, primarily legitimizing dominant, white, upper-class, male voicings as the "standard" knowledge students need to know' (341). It is quite clear in Justin's journal entry that Puccini's Tosca was the master script, and the musical interests of his students were of little value.

Preparation for teaching in city schools

One of the more encouraging findings of the study is that participants felt more prepared to teach in city school settings after the completion of their student teaching experience. This finding is consistent with previous research on the importance of field-based experiences in city schools. Pamela reflected on the effectiveness of her student teaching placement for preparing her to teach in city schools in her final interview.

> I think I would be really scared if I hadn't had this opportunity … I'm much more confident when it comes to maybe getting a job in an urban setting. (Pamela, post-student teaching interview)

In a journal entry, Justin specifically noted his increased confidence in classroom management due to his placement in a city centre.

> I feel more comfortable with classroom management than ever … I feel as though I can handle most situations in the classroom. I know I can't foresee them all, but the issues I have seen I haven't expected but somehow found a way to deal with them. (Justin, week eleven journal entry)

All five participants believed that early observations were a valuable part of their training for teaching in city schools, and being located in the community was an advantage.

> Observations around the area is just the most you can do before just plopping yourself in an urban classroom. I think it's really great the way they have it set up that we can go – for [General Music Methods] we can go get that experience just right down the street. (Michael, pre-student teaching interview)

Although the participants felt more prepared to teach in a city school, all five participants imagined themselves teaching in a suburban school district, both before and after their student teaching experience. The participants wished to teach in a suburban school primarily because of the familiarity of that setting.

> I've always seen myself as suburban only because that's where I grew up. It's the only reason that I'm basing that on though. I'm not saying that I couldn't teach anywhere else. (Mark, pre-student teaching interview)

In his final interview, Michael believed he would prefer to teach in a suburban school, but he also recognised the need for qualified teachers in city schools.

> Right now I'm kind of leading toward suburban, but my – there's a certain stigma with – like my parents will say – and everybody I talk to – 'Oh, you don't want to teach in [name of city] public schools', and just because I've grown up around it and we know what goes on, that's a main reason I went to Catholic school was because it was either Catholic school or [name of city] public schools, which were always known as not that great. So, in talking to people, you always get, 'Ooh, you shouldn't really apply there or whatever, even though they have so many openings'. So, it's always that, but then I kind of think well, they need to be educated. The situation isn't gonna get better if I don't go in there. (Michael, post-student teaching interview)

Discussion

The background of these participants indicates they had little experience with racialized populations and city schools prior to their student teaching experiences. These participants, like most preservice teachers, attended primarily White, middle-class schools and had little interaction with students of colour growing up. Previous research suggests that these participants may have difficulty relating to students of colour in their student teaching experience (Sleeter 2007; Villegas and Lucas 2002). Some of the views the participants expressed in their pre-student teaching interview are consistent with that assertion. Justin's statement that 'the thought that they're Black doesn't really occur to me' is an example of colour blindness. Critical race theory argues that colour blindness supports a racialized social system by ignoring how differences may lead to discrimination and inequality (Ladson-Billings 1998). Instead, CRT scholars promote a race-conscious approach to social transformation to compensate for racism and discrimination while increasing equality of opportunity (Delgado and Stefancic 2017). Pamela's comment about 'moving on' from racism may be an example of ahistoricism, a lack of concern for historical context. Both Justin and Pamela's comments suggest that discussion of the differences between races is not important. Racial inequality is typically challenged through a 'denial of racial difference' (Winant 2004, 59). These comments are consistent with CRT scholarship showing Whites enjoy a privileged status that is often invisible to them (McIntosh 2003).

The CRT theme of invisible White privilege may be reinforced in the university setting. Unfortunately, many university multicultural music education courses focus exclusively on the songs,

instrumentation, and styles of a diverse collection of cultures. This approach is inconsistent with James Banks' (1993) vision of multicultural education, 'to reform the school and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality' (3). Instead of focusing on the content of multicultural education (e.g. songs, dances, activities), music educators should consider focusing on the process of multicultural education. Instead of training preservice teachers *what* to teach, music education programmes should consider training preservice teachers *how* to teach an increasingly diverse student population.

The tendency of the participants to describe their students' home lives and environments as obstacles to success, but not the school itself, the teachers, or the educational system in this country supports the cultural-deficit perspective. Many of the participants may believe there is little they can do to improve the situation of city schools because the parents are ultimately responsible for whether or not the student succeeds or fails.

These participants should be excellent candidates for music teaching positions in city schools. They attended college in a racially diverse urban setting and had more experience observing and teaching in city schools than most other preservice music teachers in the United States. If these preservice teachers are not motivated to teach in city schools, who will? Michael clearly recognised the need that city schools have for qualified teachers, yet even he admitted he would prefer to teach in a suburban school. The participants seemed to think that the disadvantages of teaching in a city school far outweighed the desire they had for social justice or equality. In fact, few of the participants expressed an interest in the latter at all. It is possible that their student teaching experience reinforced, rather than challenged, their beliefs about city schools and the racialized student populations they serve.

Conclusion

The findings of this research may be useful to professors and cooperating teachers who prepare future music educators. These student teachers' insights into their urban education experiences might encourage other student teachers to seek placements in city schools with students from racial backgrounds different from their own. The findings suggest fieldwork in high-minority music classrooms is an invaluable element of race and diversity training. Since it typically requires a school to be in close proximity to an urban centre, few schools offer fieldwork opportunities in high-minority classrooms. However, preservice teachers that do participate in these experiences report significant transformations in their approach to education (Emmanuel 2005; Ladson-Billings 2004). If a school is not located in an urban centre, exchange programmes and partnerships between urban and rural universities can alleviate this problem. Professors at these universities can facilitate dialogue using a critical race theory framework as part of this experience.

In order for music education to be relevant and accessible for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, preservice teachers and college faculty need to engage in critical discourse on race and diversity in music teacher education programmes. Current practices in multicultural music education, university sanctioned race and diversity requirements, and fieldwork and observation in high-minority classrooms are inconsistent and do not always provide opportunities for meaningful dialogue and in-depth understanding of critical issues.

Through careful reflection of teaching practices and examination of assumptions about music learning, preservice teachers might better understand the social and political factors that influence their students' lives. As more educators join the movement for social justice in music education, we may find higher numbers of minority and low socio-economic status (SES) students participating in music festivals, applying to schools of music, and wanting to become music teachers. With time, music teachers may become representative of the diversity of cultures, musical styles, and perspectives that our students bring to the classroom every day.

Geolocation information

Ithaca, NY, USA, 42.4440° N, 76.5019° W

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Data availability statement

Due to the nature of this research, participants of this study did not agree for their data to be shared publicly, so supporting data is not available.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questions from the Pre-Student Teaching Interview

1. Please tell me about your experiences with music in the school district where you grew up.
2. How would you describe your own school district to someone who has never been there?
3. What is your vision of the dream music teaching position?
4. Tell me about experiences that you have had with diverse populations.
5. Have you ever been in a situation where somebody said something, or performed some action concerning diversity that made you uncomfortable?
6. Have you been the victim of prejudice or stereotypes? Tell me how you reacted to this experience.
7. What are some challenges with working with diverse populations?
8. How do you describe your own culture?
9. Would you consider teaching in an urban school district?
10. What do you think are the pros and cons teaching in an urban setting?
11. What adjectives what you use to describe students in urban schools?
12. What challenges or obstacles, if any, do you think urban students face?
13. What strengths or unique skills do you believe urban music students possess?
14. What do expect to learn from a music student in an urban setting?
15. What are the demographics of the students? Do you know anything about the socioeconomic background of the students?
16. What challenges do you expect to meet in your student teaching experience?
17. Tell me how you plan to build rapport with students.
18. What kind of assessment practices will you use to measure student learning?
19. What teaching strategies do you think will be successful in your placement?
20. How might you incorporate students' culture into classroom activities?
21. What are you looking forward to the most about student teaching?
22. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about concerning your student teaching experience?

Appendix 2. Questions from the Post-Student Teaching Interview

1. Tell me about experiences you've had with diverse populations in your student teaching experience.
2. How has student teaching changed your understanding of your own culture?
3. Tell me how your student teaching experience has affected your desire to teach in an urban setting?
4. What adjectives what you use to describe students in urban settings?
5. What challenges or obstacles, did your students face? Do you believe that these challenges are unique to students in urban settings?
6. What unique strengths or skill sets did your music students possess?
7. Tell me about something that a student taught you.
8. Tell me about the school. What classes did you teach; what were the students like; how did the faculty communicate?
9. Tell me about the strategies the cooperating teacher used when teaching the students.
10. Tell me how you established rapport with the students.
11. What kind of assessment practices did you use?
12. What challenges did you face in your student teaching experience?
13. How did you respond to these challenges?
14. What teaching strategies did you find to be successful in your placement?
15. How did you incorporate students' culture into the classroom? Can you give specific examples?
16. How do you view your role as a teacher in issues of racism or diversity, cultural understanding?
17. Has your vision of a dream job changed since you began your student teaching experience?
18. Tell me how your vision compared to your student teaching experience?
19. How did your vision of your ideal music curriculum compare to what you experienced as a student teacher? Would you make any modifications to your ideal music curriculum for an urban music programme?
20. What was the most positive aspect of your student teaching experience?
21. How did this experience benefit your career as an educator?
22. Is there anything else that you would like to talk about concerning your student teaching experience?