Diversifying Music Educators: Creating Frameworks and Best Practices for Recruiting and Retaining Urban and Rural Students and Students of Color.

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Background

In recent years, educators have been interested in making sure that the teacher workforce has been more culturally and racially diverse (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015; Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor, 2014; Nieto & McDonough, 2011) because a diverse workforce benefits students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). As Sleeter and Milner (2011) suggest, teachers of color have the identity and cultural competencies to work with students of color, which allows them to form relationships and set high expectations for learning. A diverse workforce might also benefit all students. Cherng and Halpin (2016) found that students, regardless of racial background, "perceive minority teachers more favorably than White teachers" (p. 407).

Despite the benefits of a racially and culturally diverse teacher population, the music education teaching workforce and students and faculty at university schools of music that prepare these teachers remain predominantly white (Elpus, 2015; Rickels, et al., 2013; Taggart & Russell, 2016). Elpus (2015) found that 86% of music teacher licensure candidates between 2007-2012 identified as white. This racial composition of music teacher licensure candidates was significantly different from that of the overall U.S. adult population, yet only slightly higher than the current demographic of current U.S. music teachers, which is 81.9% white. This echoes a 2013 demographic study of prospective music education majors applying and auditioning at eight U.S. universities (Rickels et al., 2013), where 80% of students identified as white. The high percentage of white music education candidates suggests that there is a "leaky pipeline" to music teacher licensure that "excludes potential music teachers systematically by race and ethnicity," favoring white students (Elpus, 2015, p. 317).

Our Aim

Determine what, if any, barriers to access to applying to university schools of music and becoming music teachers exist according to high school students of color and their music teachers.

To carry out this aim, we observed music classes, interviewed teachers, and conducted focus group sessions with students in two urban high schools in a city in the Northeast. One of these schools was a traditional comprehensive school and the other was an arts magnet school.

Findings

1) *The teachers and students valued high standards and community as part of their music education.*

    The performance skills of the students were particularly high, specifically in technique, scales, and aural skills. Likewise, in both schools the culture of the community was an integral component of the educational process. This included embedding education around community events, including sporting events and parades. Like many schools in a variety of settings, playing at community events was a major focus of rehearsals and the overall music curriculum. Much of this music played in the community was popular music. The structure and style of the programs--particularly the ensembles--was important to sustaining its success in the community.

2) *Audition processes did not align with students' values of community music making.*

    While these values of high standards, community, and playing popular music were central to these school music programs, the students and teachers did not feel that they were part of the audition process. This served as a first barrier to access. For some students, the required repertoire was not to their liking. For others, it was the idea of playing alone in the audition. The teachers also felt that the requirements did not reflect the students' abilities and their abilities to become successful students and teachers. Also, according to these teachers, some students who could audition did not because schools of music and their audition processes did not appeal to students or did not accurately assess their abilities.

3) *There is an assumption that auditioning students have participated in prerequisite activities, including participation in private instruction and honors ensembles.*

    Students did not participate in the prerequisites assumed to be required for application to music school. The teachers told many stories of students who wanted to major in music education, but were unable or unwilling to complete requisites and prepare for auditions, including participation in private instruction and honors ensemble. There were other students who had no interest in playing by themselves, both for auditions and in their own learning process. The students we spoke with preferred to audition using popular music and as a group, as they were used to community-based learning and activities.

4) *Students did not possess knowledge of the unspoken rules of audition procedures.*

    The students who prepared to audition for admittance into the schools of music were often surprised by requirements that were not specifically spoken. This included playing particular scales though they were not stated in the requirements. Also, some students expected requirements based on what was written in audition documents, but when they attended the audition, they were surprised how the actual process differed from those official requirements. For example, one student spent hours preparing scales and was asked only to play one scale.

5) *University requirements made it difficult for students to apply.*

    The teachers discussed that certain "academic skills" inhibited students who were otherwise prepared to enter a music school. For example, a student who can play at a high musical level and hits the musical benchmarks and requirements might not pursue calculus or physics in high school, which automatically lessens the likeliness of admission.

The following figure summarizes the barriers to access that prevent students from applying to schools of music as well as the strategies both schools of music and organizations can take to address and eliminate or ameliorate these barriers:

	1	2	3	4
Barriers	Values of the audition and university schools of music do not align with values of community and music program.	Students have not completed unofficial prerequisites.	Students are not aware of unspoken rules of an audition.	Students have not fulfilled university requirements for admission.
Possible strategies for schools of music and organizations	Allow more comprehensive criteria for the assessment of all applicants. Conduct community-based recruitment.	Allow contextual factors to help decisions on students.	Provide clearer guidance on audition process and requirements.	Engage in university-wide discussion about requirements for admissions.

The misalignment of values are paramount among these barriers. Students must first reconcile the misalignment of values before attaining prerequisites, then understand the unspoken rules, and finally secure university requirements. We numbered these barriers to emphasize number 1, the misalignment of values, because students must first reconcile these misalignments before confronting the other barriers. We also numbered these barriers to articulate how they become more unambiguous as they proceed. Starting from the far right side of the figure at number 4, university requirements are generally unambiguous; universities often publish their general requirements for acceptance. The audition requirements (number 3), too, are published by schools of music; however, the unspoken rules of how they are enacted is less well articulated. Next, prerequisites (number 2) are not officially required, but participating in select ensembles and receiving private lessons are unspoken rules. Finally, on the left (number 1), the misalignment of values between communities is often unspoken, hidden, or coded.

Recommendations for NAfME Action

This study suggests that the values of the communities of color do not reflect the values of the schools of music and the audition requirements of large-ensemble festivals at the state, regional, and national level. This suggests that in addition to providing increased access for students of color, if NAfME and other institutions want to diversify music educators, a shift in values that align with and is more inclusive of these communities is needed. In total, these findings suggest that shifts in the demographics of students of color cannot only include providing access to the system as it currently operates. If more students of color are to choose to enter music education, there needs to be a shift in 1) what skills and experiences are valued in music teachers and the organizations that represent them and 2) how those skills and experiences are assessed and measured.

Based on these we suggest specific strategies for NAfME to consider:

A Review and Revision of Audition and Selection for National, Regional, and State Honors Ensembles
- *Conduct a review of student participation in honors ensembles and revise procedures.* A review might include finding the percentages of student participation based on the following demographics:
  - Racial and ethnic background;
  - Geographic location, including the percentages of urban, suburban, and rural participation;
  - Family income (or in lieu of this information, median income of the community the student comes from);
  - Participation in musical extra-curricular education (private lessons, AP classes);
  - If imbalances exist, revise procedures for audition and selection and types of ensembles and repertoire;
  - If this data is not available, then NAfME might consider developing a procedure to begin to collect this data.
- *Review of audition material and procedures.* Based on this review, NAfME and state MEAs might reexamine the audition repertoire and the measurement and assessment (such as grading, rubrics) of student auditions for participation in state, regional, and national ensembles. They might look for biases that inhibit student participation and contribute to imbalances.
- *Possible expansion of types of ensembles.* Also based on this review, a revision to the types of ensembles might be necessary. This might include the expansion of the types of ensembles (i.e. mariachi, hip-hop, Latin pop and Jazz) that are represented at NAfME honor ensembles events. However, as the findings on misalignment of values suggests, important in expansion in these areas is to not reproduce competition processes used in selection for band, orchestra, and choral ensembles. Other alternatives might include selecting schools that have these ensembles to participate. Similarly, these ensembles should also reproduce the process that musician use to create this music, including playing by ear, improvising, playing from chords or lead sheets, group composition, etc.
- *Eliminate financial barriers.* Also based on this review, NAfME might determine how students pay for their tuition, if they receive funding for festival participation, and what transportation they use to travel to/from these festivals. If barriers to participation exist for financial reasons, then NAfME might find ways to eliminate those barriers, if they do not do so already.
- *Provide guidelines for state MEAs.* NAfME might provide guidelines to MEAs on equitable practices around honors auditions and selection. Based on the previous suggestions, this does not mean fulfilling a quota specific to a particular race, class, or location, but embracing particular practices central for all students regardless of background.

Advocacy and Professional Development
- *Combat deficit mindsets within the profession.* The findings of this study of high standards and misalignment of values between these communities and music schools suggest that the students have a different set of values of skills, knowledge, and abilities central to being music majors and music educators than the current dominant conception. Rather than seeing students as lacking these skills, knowledge, and abilities, the profession might seek to

develop a broader notion of competency and values. NAfME has a role through advocacy to expand these roles and combat deficit mindsets.
- *Create materials and resources for urban schools.* Advocacy is a major mission of NAfME. Looking at required materials, there are no resources devoted specifically to advocacy for and within urban schools. NAfME might consider creating resources specifically for these issues, or revising current materials so these issues are addressed directly. Important in these is highlighting the values of these communities.
- *Provide professional development.* Providing professional development for teachers to make their music education practices and values better take into account the values of communities and students of color. This might include sessions at the state, regional, and national conferences outside of the traditional band-chorus-orchestra-general-music model.

Long-term Planning and Sustained Efforts
- Create a liason or permanent seat on the NAfME board devoted to diversity issues.
- Similarly, encourage the creation of an access and equity chairperson or committee within each state MEA (CMEA has done this and might be a good example to follow) to join the executive board. This chair or committee can attend the state executive board meetings.
- Encourage the state SMTE chairs to work in conjunction with access and equity chair regarding issues and barriers to access for students.
- Provide scholarships for students of color who want to be music majors.

Attached is a formal, academic report based on this research project. This manuscript is currently under review for publication.

Urban high school students' of color and their teachers' perceived barriers to access to university schools of music

Abstract

Although there are benefits to a racially and culturally diverse teaching workforce, the music teaching profession remains predominantly white. Using an "opportunity gap" framework, this study aimed to discover what, if any, barriers to access to applying to university schools of music—a first step in becoming music teachers—exist according to high school students of color and their music teachers. Employing a grounded theory methodology, the researchers observed classes, interviewed music teachers, and conducted focus groups in two high schools in a city in the Northeast of the U.S. Findings suggest that although these music programs had high performance standards, ultimately students did not want to audition or found the process difficult for the following reasons: 1) the audition process did not align with students' values of community music making; 2) there was an assumption that auditioning students have participated in prerequisite activities, including private instruction and honors ensembles; 3) students did not possess knowledge of the unspoken rules of audition procedures; and 4) participants found the university requirements, including non-music standards and the transition to university to be difficult. Based on these findings, changes to the audition and recruitment processes, including community engagement, are proposed.

Keywords: students of color; music auditions; music school recruitment; barriers to access; opportunity gap

In recent years, educators have been interested in making sure that the teacher workforce has been more culturally and racially diverse (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015; Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor, 2014; Nieto & McDonough, 2011) because a diverse workforce benefits students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016). As Sleeter and Milner (2011) suggest, teachers of color have the identity and cultural competencies to work with students of color, which allows them to form relationships and set high expectations for learning. A diverse workforce might also benefit all students. Cherng and Halpin (2016) found that students, regardless of racial background, "perceive minority teachers more favorably than White teachers" (p. 407).

Despite the benefits of a racially and culturally diverse teacher population, the music education teaching workforce and students and faculty at university schools of music that prepare these teachers remain predominantly white (Elpus, 2015; Rickels, et al. 2013; Taggart & Russell, 2016). Elpus (2015) found that 86% of music teacher licensure candidates between 2007-2012 identified as white. This racial composition of music teacher licensure candidates was significantly different from that of the overall U.S. adult population, yet only slightly higher than the current demographic of current U.S. music teachers, which is 81.9% white. This echoes a 2013 demographic study of prospective music education majors applying and auditioning at eight U.S. universities (Rickels et al., 2013), where 80% of students identified as white. The high percentage of white music education candidates suggests that there is a "leaky pipeline" to music teacher licensure that "excludes potential music teachers systematically by race and ethnicity," favoring white students (Elpus, 2015, p. 317).

Other researchers have pointed to reasons and solutions for the lack of teachers of color. For example, some researchers argue that there are sociological barriers that make the application to and completion of college difficult for students of color. Since students of color are often the first in their families to attend college, they often do not have the support system to navigate and make the transition from high school to college (Chapman, 2011; Crisp, Taggart, & Nora, 2015; Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015; Swail, 2003). Familial obligations, such as taking care of an aging family member or younger siblings, also provide a challenge for students of color to attend college (Melendez & Melendez, 2010). In addition, there are rarely professors of color who may serve as role models and support systems for students of color (Blake-Beard, Bayne, Crosby, & Muller, 2011; Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Emdin, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011).

In addition to sociological barriers, some researchers have argued that the audition process in music is also a hindrance for students of color. Audition processes favor prospective students who have a propensity for classical music, have funds to pay for private tutelage, and can attend schools that provide advanced "supplemental" music classes and/or high-performing ensembles (Albertson, 2015; Koza, 2008). Additionally, it is not sufficient for students only to be proficient performers, but they must have ample theory and aural skills (Keating, 2003). Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor (2014) interviewed six music education majors about their desire to pursue music studies. These "students of color, self-identified LGBTQ students, [and] first-generation college students" (p. 110) reported difficulty navigating the application and audition processes, including filling out paperwork for the application and financial aid, preparing for the audition without private lessons, and feeling confused and intimidated by the overall college process. Students of color felt uncomfortable during the audition process on campus amidst the overwhelming population of white students and faculty. Fitzpatrick-Harnish (2015) recommends that if music educators want students of color to enter the academy, they must "help them [students] develop some sort of literacy with this domain, lest they be permanently excluded from participating in its richness" (p. 55). These systematic biases in the audition process and other requirements are what might be called "barriers to access" (Albertson, 2015; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2014; Keating, 2003; Koza, 2008).

Those in higher education, and specifically in music and teacher education, have tried to address these concerns of diversity through recruitment and retention strategies (Luedke, 2017; Thiry & Laursen, 2011). Reporting on efforts at Amherst College, Rubin (2011) noted that successful initiatives included "widening the applicant pool by intensifying recruitment efforts and broadening definitions of merit, hiring a dynamic president as the voice and leader of the diversity movement, and garnering widespread institutional support" (p. 512). Some have suggested that universities engage in community outreach by creating partnerships with schools, parents, and children in local urban communities for recruitment and pipeline purposes (Duncan-Andrade, 2011; Emdin, 2016; Nieto & McDonough, 2011). Within music, Barnes (2016) found that outreach, campus visits, and community involvement were the most common recruitment tools of instrumental ensemble directors at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Music and music teacher education, however, has not focused on retention strategies for students of color.

While there have been efforts to diversify the teaching workforce in education and music education in higher education, less explored are seeking the perspectives and experiences of students of color and their music teachers in urban K-12 settings regarding music education. How might gathering their perspectives supplement and alter views of the recruitment of music teachers of color and students of color in university schools of music? This study looked at the critical first steps of becoming a music teacher; we studied the perspectives of high school students of color and their teachers in urban areas on the perceived barriers of access for students of color to apply to schools of music in higher education.

Theoretical Framework: Opportunity Gap

To study these potential barriers to access, we used Milner's (2012) "opportunity gap" as a framework. Many policymakers and education administrators frame disparities in education as an "achievement gap," focusing on the test performance of different socioeconomic statuses, races, genders and other identities. Instead, Milner (2012) proposes looking at disparities in education as an "opportunity gap." In other words, disparities in performance are a result of the the gap in opportunities and experiences provided to students of color. This shifts the problem from a "deficit mindset" which blames students of color and their communities for the discrepancies in performance and places emphasis on the resources and structures that create those discrepancies. Milner (2012) outlines five critical qualities to address the opportunity gap: 1) rejection of color blindness; 2) ability and skill to understand, work through and transcend cultural conflicts; 3) ability to understand how meritocracy operates; 4) ability to recognize and shift low expectations and deficit mind-sets; and 5) rejection of context-neutral mind-sets and practices (cf. p. 698).

According to Milner & Howard (2015), when educators *reject color blindness* in their teaching, they acknowledge that dominant curricula and social narratives are constructed around white contributions and white cultural norms. Once this acknowledgment is made, educators may then explore with students the excluding contributions from other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups (Banks, 2016; Gay, 2010). Addressing this issue with diverse student populations allows students to consider ways in which "other" groups participate in the larger learning narrative.

Milner (2012) suggests that *cultural conflicts* are prevalent in the achievement gap theory when students' cultures are not honored, including their learning preferences and interests. As a result, there are little overlaps between teacher and student cultures. Milner provides the example that a student, "may be immersed in hip-hop culture, and teachers may have no interest in the 'culture' or any interest in learning about it in order to infuse aspects of hip-hop into curriculum and instructional practices" (p. 701). As a result, students may refuse to participate and learn within the existing classroom culture.

When educators do not acknowledge and accept the connection between educational opportunity and economic means, *meritocracy* ensues. Rather, educators must create learning opportunities that help students understand inequity and inequality, which in turn can allow them to navigate their socio-economic statuses and "circumvent poverty and low-paying positions and careers in society" (p. 706). Acknowledging the reality of meritocracy, Milner argues, might also help educators to challenge the deficit—or achievement gap—mindset. In his fourth pillar, Milner suggests that in most schools with diverse student populations, there is a lowering of student expectations; the content taught is not relevant to students' lives, needs, and experiences and, as a result, students are left unchallenged and disengaged (Gay, 2010).

Fifth in the opportunity gap, Milner (2012) suggests that it is not enough for educators to master content without knowing their students and the contexts from which they come. Ladson-Billings (2009) explained that epistemologies encompass not only ways of knowing and perceiving the world, but also *systems* of knowing the world. For educators, this includes knowing the subject matter, but also knowing the community around the school and showing a commitment to the community.

Research Question

Milner's (2012) "opportunity gap" as a framework allows the ability to view the audition and application processes to university schools of music through a lens of cultural conflicts and opportunities to communities of color, rather than achievement deficits. Our research question was: *What, if any, barriers to access to applying to university schools of music and becoming music teachers exist according to high school students of color and their music teachers?*

Methodology
Research Design
To study this research question, we employed a grounded research methodology (Charmaz, 2006) in two urban public high schools. This grounded research included observations of music classes and interviews with students and with music teachers. First, we gathered data in one of the schools. We conducted observations, reviewed and analyzed data, and generated initial themes and theories related to the research question. The following year, we then tested those theories and themes in the second school, looking for verification, nullification, or further nuance. We then used all data for the final themes (Charmaz, 2006) for formation of the final theories.

For both schools, we created a procedure. First, we visited the school, observed classes and interviewed the teachers. We then returned a second time to observe the same classes, interview teachers again, and conduct a focus-group session with students selected by the teachers. These sources of data—classroom observation, teacher interviews, student focus-group sessions, and field notes taken during observations—served to triangulate one another for trustworthiness. An Institutional Review Board approved all processes and pseudonyms are used for the schools and people throughout this report.

Settings
We conducted research in two large, public urban high schools in a city in the Northeast of the U.S. We chose this city because of its high percentage of people of color in the community and enrolled in schools. We initially contacted all high schools in this city, and these two schools ultimately chose to participate. The two schools differed in key aspects. The first school, "Collective Arts High School" (CAHS), was an arts magnet school. Students from the city as well as surrounding suburbs are chosen from a lottery system to enroll in this school to focus on music or other arts. The school employed four fulltime music faculty and offered multiple courses including

bands, choruses, orchestras, theory, guitar, and music appreciation. The second school, "Mountain Grove High School" (MGHS), was a traditional comprehensive high school. Students were drawn throughout the city, and there was no focus in music or any other area for these students. This school had one teacher, and band and general music are the only courses offered. Despite the relatively small offering of courses, this school and teacher had a history of sending students to become music and music education majors in college. These two schools—a magnet school with a special emphasis in the arts and a comprehensive high school without an emphasis—served as two differing urban sites to look for similarities and differences.

Participants

        Teacher participants. We observed the classes of the four fulltime music teachers from the arts magnet school, CAHS. They included two band directors, one choral director, and an orchestral director. From those four teachers, the two band directors, "Mr. Johnson" and "Ms. Gazzara" ultimately decided to participate in the interviews. In the comprehensive school, MGHS, the only music teacher, "Ms. Bologna," participated. These participating teachers all identified as white.

        Student participants. Student participants included juniors or seniors selected by the teachers. For the focus group sessions, the teachers selected students they believed would be open in their discussion. All students were students of color based on reporting by teachers. The students included a range: students who had applied to schools of music, those who were interested and applying to music schools, and those who had no plans of applying to schools of music. Ten students from CAHS and five students from MGHS participated in these focus group sessions.

        Studies in interviews that have looked at the effects of the race of the interviewer when interviewing people of color suggest that, when interviewed by a white person, the interviewee will be more conservative in his or her critique of whites in issues of race and racism (Krysan & Couper, 2003). Because both researchers identify as white, we aimed to mitigate this limitation. We tried to be as visible as possible prior to conducting the student focus-group sessions; we sat in the room during rehearsals and talked to students in between classes. Despite these procedures to ameliorate these issues, the racial identity of the researchers and the bias it might have caused is a possible limitation of this study.

Data Collection

        We observed a total of 15 hours of classes in the schools. We were both present at all observations to corroborate our interpretations. All interviews and focus-group sessions were audio recorded and later transcribed by graduate assistants. We used an observation tool to guide the observations. The tool designated four areas: materials and repertoire, musical objectives, non-musical objectives, pedagogies, and other observations. Within each of these areas we had columns where we could list observations of the physical environment, teacher action, student action, and rapport. In addition, we added two other columns to aid in analysis. One column provided an area for us to note aspects that were in line with culturally relevant teaching. A second column provided an area for us to list how the areas observed coincided or diverged from schools of music requirements, including common audition requirements, core courses like theory and music history, rehearsals procedures in large ensembles, and requirements as outlined by NASM.

        We conducted semi-structured interviews with the three participating teachers. For each teacher we conducted two sessions, each 45-60 minutes in duration, resulting in approximately five hours of interviews. We followed a semi-structured protocol (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). In the first interview, we focused on contextualizing information, including their duties, pertinent information about their school and community, and pedagogies the teachers use in response to the community. In the second interview, we focused on their experiences and views of what are barriers to access for

their students to apply to and attend university schools of music. Like the observations, we were both present to corroborate interpretations and for both of us to have the ability to ask pertinent follow-up questions.

We conducted one small-group focus-group session with each group of students (Morgan, 1997). We conducted one focus-group session in each of the schools, lasting about 30 minutes each, resulting in a little over an hour of material. The focus-group sessions followed a semi-structured protocol, allowing for follow-up questions. We asked students about their perceptions of their music programs and why they have decided or not decided to major in music. For students who did apply and audition for university music schools, we asked about the experiences of this process.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data using Charmaz's (2006) process for grounded theory coding, which creates initial codes to be tested and further expanded into larger, more focused codes and themes. We formed our initial codes and theories from data collected at CAHS. We reviewed the data collected from our observation protocol and interviews with teachers at the first meeting. After the interviews, we individually reviewed the transcriptions and had initial, informal conversations about the data. We then coded individually using line-by-line coding in the interviews and incident-by-incident coding for the classroom observations. Using our individual codes, we came together again to create initial themes and theories, defining the relationships between the codes and themes and then identifying gaps. We then used these themes to frame further observations and conduct additional interviews, focus-group sessions and observations at CAHS. After the process was complete, we revisited all the data to form themes and theories.

In the following academic year, we used our themes and theories to frame observations at MGHS. We repeated the analysis process where we used initial codes to frame our observations. In addition, the data collected at MGHS allowed us to revise, supplement, and augment the themes derived from CAHS. Once we established our core collective themes, we re-reviewed extant literature and integrated it with our data, including the theoretical framework (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). Throughout the analysis process, the data were triangulated through student focus-group sessions, teacher interviews, and observations of classes.

Findings

This study aimed to find what barriers to access might exist that would inhibit students of color from applying and enrolling in schools of music and music teacher education programs. Through observations of classes and rehearsals, teacher interviews, and student focus groups, we aimed to find their perspectives and experiences, arriving at four main themes. These included: 1) the teachers and students valued high standards and community as part of their music education; 2) the audition process did not align with students' values of community music making; 3) there is an assumption that auditioning students have participated in prerequisite activities, including private instruction and honors ensembles; 4) students did not possess knowledge of the unspoken rules of audition procedures; and 5) participants found the university requirements, including non-music standards and transitioning to college to be difficult.

Valuing High Standards and Community

As we observed classes, we found that the teachers had high standards and the students had requisite techniques on their instruments. The performance skills of the students in Collective Arts High School was particularly high. The band teachers, Mr. Johnson and Ms. Gazzara, focused on skills and standards. For the classes we observed, the ensembles spent the first 25 minutes working on scales in a variety of modes at a pace that was, for us, surprising. This level of detail is rare for

schools, regardless of setting, age, or developmental level. However, coupled with these high standards was focus on addressing cultural aspects of music. In one of the classes we observed, the teachers helped prepare the students for auditions to an extra-curricular music program run by a university in the city. The teachers had students play their solos for the class and then discussed etiquette around the audition. Taking time with each student, they instructed the students to "wear nice clothes," "speak their names clearly," and "be personable."

For both schools, and particularly in MGHS, the culture of the community was an integral component of the educational process. This included embedding education around community events, including sporting events and parades. Like many schools in a variety of settings, playing at community events was a major focus of rehearsals and the overall music curriculum. Ms. Bologna was particularly interested in making sure that the ensembles that played at these events reflected the community at large. The style of the marching band was important to sustaining its success in the community. She described how the previous teacher had not paid attention to the type of marching band the students and the community wanted:

> So before [my predecessor] came in. . . they had over a hundred people in the marching band; it was huge—they had dancers. It was like a drumline, drill team thing going on—real wild. And then [my predecessor] came in saying, 'no, that's not how you march! You march with your roll steps'. And kids started dropping [the class]. So I had to bring all that back.

The students were high stepping, using R&B and other "popular" music prior to the previous teachers, and Ms. Bologna returned these styles to the program. As she alluded to, these characteristics are in a marching style similar to a style commonly used by Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and linked to African-American traditions. Conversely, the previous teacher came and tried to impose more a "traditional" (read as "white") style, using roll stepping and classical repertoire.

Audition Process Did Not Reflect Their Abilities and Values in Music

While these values of high standards, community, and playing popular music were central to these school music programs, the students and teachers did not feel that they were part of the audition process. This served as a first barrier to access. For some students, the required repertoire was not to their liking. For others, it was the idea of playing alone in the audition. For example, we asked one student what might persuade her to do auditions. She noted,

> If we could choose the music we play for that audition. . . we don't want to do classical, so I'd bring something more fun to me, like the music we do now [in class]. Oh, and if we could play together instead of alone—yeah, I would definitely do that.

The teachers, all who had successfully auditioned for and completed traditional music education programs, also felt that the requirements did not reflect the students' abilities and their abilities to become successful students and teachers. As Mr. Johnson noted,

> Okay, the barrier system is fine, but it puts too much emphasis on theory and sight singing. That takes years to learn. . . . I mean, a girl who could end up being a fabulous teacher, who's a decent clarinetist and is smart and a nice person. . . might wash out because she can't sight sing. I mean that's just wrong.

When we asked what might make a more equitable audition and application process, Ms. Gazzara noted,

> I think our students would actually do better if they were given an opportunity to spend a day on campus, like a shadow. They could play in the bands, have a mock lesson, they could do 48 hours as if they were there. Now, do they have access to that, can they get themselves to that college? I don't know. That might be a barrier. Some of our very strict Hispanic parents might not let their daughters go sleep over at a college, like I get that.

Ms. Gazzara noted that a more holistic experience might help students and colleges make a better decision whether a university is best for them. However, she also notes that this is not a completely equitable system. Cultural norms, such as restrictions of gender in some conservative Latinx families, might make these types of processes a barrier to access.

Because of the misalignments, sometimes teachers advise students not to major in music. Mr. Johnson described a student who successfully auditioned for honors ensembles and did the preparatory work; yet, he did not think she would be successful in a school of music:

> She's really creative, she has taken piano lessons, and made regionals on bass. She forgot her music the day of the audition and played it from memory. She's taken all our electives, composition, but she didn't take AP Music Theory. She takes guitar and she has this cool raspy Janis Joplin, she plays drums. . . . She has all this musical ability, I'm not telling her to go into $250,000 worth of debt to go to [a conservatory], though that music school is right for her. It might totally stifle her and she might hate it.

As a result, according to these teachers, some students who could audition did not because schools of music and their audition processes did not appeal to students or did not accurately assess their abilities.

Assumption of Prerequisites

A second barrier to access was the unofficial prerequisites for auditioning, including private lessons and participation in honors ensembles. Students did not participate in the prerequisites assumed to be required for application to music school. The teachers told many stories of students who wanted to major in music education, but were unable or unwilling to complete requisites and prepare for auditions. For example, Ms. Bologna described her frustrations with a student who she thought had potential to be a music education major, but refused to play by himself in an audition.

> He wanted to do music ed, go to a HBCU school. I told him he should audition for regionals [honors band]. And he's like, "No. I'm not doing that; it's crazy hard." [I said to him,] "Do you think getting a degree is going to be easy? What are you thinking? How do you expect to get into college? You have to do an audition, even if you just wanna play in the band and not major in music. You still should have an audition." And he said, "Then I'm not going, I can't do it then." I'm like, "dang that sucks." He's a good kid and musician, he's really going to let that be the reason? He's like, "I don't care what you say, I'm not going."

There were other students who had no interest in playing by themselves, both for auditions and in their own learning process. A few of the band students at MGHS shared their fear of auditioning for honor ensembles:

Researcher: Have you ever done any regionals or All-State participation?

Student 1: No. I don't like to play under pressure. Like, if I know everybody is listening, I know I got to get this and not do something wrong, I'm going to freak out.

Student 2: I just wasn't good. I don't like talking in front of people. I don't like performing in front of people, especially by myself in a part. . . .

Researcher: What would you want to do to show off your skills so that it's not super scary?

Student 1: We don't want to do classical [music], so I'll bring something more like me [music she plays]. . . . I'd definitely do that.

Researcher: What if you could audition with another person from your school?

Student 3: That would be cool.

The students preferred to audition using popular music and as a group, as they were used to community-based learning and activities.

Unspoken Rules

Some students were able to look past this misalignment of values, participated in prerequisites, and auditioned for admittance into university schools of music. However, they were often surprised by requirements that were not specifically spoken. As one male student from CAHS noted,

I wish they were a little more specific. . . because when I took my audition. . . I didn't know I had to do fingerings on guitar for different scales and different pieces. And chords for different voices, I kind of was unaware of that.

Even when they felt there was specificity, students' actual experiences in auditions were surprising. Some students expected requirements based on what was written in audition documents, but when they attended the audition, they were surprised how the actual process differed from those official requirements. As a girl at CAHS noted,

They're not specific with auditions. They tell you to know your scales, but when you get to the audition, they say play one major scale. And it's like, 'wait, so I didn't have to know all these major scales as a violinist, really?' So my time learning F# major, that was so hard and was for nothing?

University Requirements

In addition to the music requirements, the teachers described how the university requirements made it difficult for students to apply. Ms. Gazzara talked about how certain "academic skills" inhibited students who were otherwise prepared to enter a music school: "So there are kids who can play, but they didn't pursue calculus or physics here at Collective Arts. And the university has a stupid amount of extra classes you have to take." For Ms. Gazzara, the focus in an arts magnet school prepares students in some ways for music schools, but the de-emphasis of science and math makes students unprepared for general education requirements needed for

admission.

In addition, the students needed help transitioning to more independence from high school to college. As one student told us,

> They give us a lot of help now, but I feel like in college you're by yourself…. teachers aren't going to say, 'Did you turn in this assignment…because you still haven't handed it in. No, it's going to be a zero.' So I feel like if you just mentally prepare yourself and get ready now, then in college you won't have to worry about someone holding your hand and you will know your own strengths.

Discussion

We found thriving music programs in CAHS (the arts magnet school) and MGHS (the traditional comprehensive high school). Despite these thriving programs, the students and teachers identified barriers to access that inhibited students from auditioning for schools of music and pursuing careers as music teachers and musicians. They identified uncertainty with requirements of auditions and not possessing the prerequisites, such as auditioning for and participating in honors ensembles. However, in addition to this, some students discussed how the audition requirements of classical music repertoire, individual performance, and notation-based performance did not reflect what they valued in music and their music education experience.

Using the "opportunity gap" framework to interpret this data, there appears to be a mismatch in values between these students and teachers and schools of music requirements, rather than an "achievement gap" of the students of color in urban areas. This confirms previously found barriers to access, but also identifies additional barriers to access previously not documented in music education research. Fitzpatrick, et al. (2014) and Albertson (2015) identified the rules and requirements of auditions as a barrier to access. This study supports these findings. Similar to Albertson (2015), we found that private tutelage and participation in honors ensembles are unspoken prerequisites. However, this research also identifies an additional barrier to access which occurs prior to the actual decision to audition; many qualified students, at least as identified by their music teachers, elected not to audition because it did not align with their values. The first row of Figure 1 lists the barriers to access to admission to schools of music.

	1	2	3	4
Barriers	Values of the audition and university schools of music do not align with values of community and music program.	Students have not completed unofficial prerequisites.	Students are not aware of unspoken rules of an audition.	Students have not fulfilled university requirements for admission.
Possible strategies	Allow more comprehensive criteria for the assessment of all applicants. Conduct community-based recruitment.	Allow contextual factors to help decisions on students.	Provide clearer guidance on audition process and requirements.	Engage in university-wide discussion about requirements for admissions.

Figure 1: Barriers to access for students auditioning for schools of music.

The misalignment of values are paramount among these barriers. Students must first reconcile the misalignment of values before attaining prerequisites, then understand the unspoken rules, and finally secure university requirements. We numbered these barriers to emphasize number 1, the misalignment of values, because students must first reconcile these misalignments before confronting the other barriers. We also numbered these barriers to articulate how they become more unambiguous as they proceed. Starting from the far right side of the figure at number 4, university requirements are generally unambiguous; universities often publish their general requirements for acceptance. The audition requirements (number 3), too, are published by schools of music; however, the unspoken rules of how they are enacted is less well articulated. Next, prerequisites (number 2) are not officially required, but participating in select ensembles and receiving private lessons are unspoken rules. Finally, on the left (number 1), the misalignment of values between communities is often unspoken, hidden, or coded.

An argument might be made that the audition process as conceived currently is a necessary quality check. For the students who did not choose to audition because the requirements did not align with their values, additional studies in music and a profession in music education was not an appropriate path for higher education studies and their careers. However, these students did express interest in music, and their teachers identified them as having the potential to become music educators. The "cultural conflict" component of Milner's framework (2012) might suggest these students' desires not to pursue music or music education stemmed from the mismatch of values between their in- and out-of-school musical experiences and the norms of university schools of music and the audition process. When schools of music, who serve as gatekeepers, hold power in these conflicts, it becomes a gap in opportunity for students. This might suggest that systems and processes that do not identify these earlier barriers of access—where values do not align and students do not have access to or do not choose to participate in prerequisites—contribute to a deficit mindset.

<center>**Implications and Recommendations**</center>

Based on these findings and the resulting analysis and theory of barriers to access, we suggest the following recommendations for practice that schools of music and preservice music education programs adopt to aid in creating a more culturally and racially diverse student population in university schools of music, leading to a more diverse music teaching workforce.

Implement Community-Based Recruiting Efforts

As suggested in previous research (Barnes, 2016; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2014), forging relationships with students of color is important. If, as the findings suggest, community is a valued part of music-making and the music-education experience, then university schools of music might benefit from community-based recruitment and outreach. If schools of music want a more diverse student population and then teaching workforce, then they might actively seek out those students. This might include faculty-led clinics in schools and attendance at concerts, and other school events where the school music department may take an active role. Based on findings from the interviewed teachers, university personnel might also invite students to campus. Schools of music might create partnerships with local schools to have field trips for students to visit school-of-music classes and rehearsals, tour campus, and receive college preparation clinics. These visits to college campuses might demystify schools of music. If, as the findings suggest, community values are important, then what is paramount in these efforts is to take into account the values of those communities with which university schools of music hope to partner. This requires a stance of listening to and embracing the values of the communities university schools of music visit. Representatives of schools of music might be aware of any cultural conflicts that might be present and work to bridge differences, rather than coming merely with their own assumptions and values and, potentially, deficit mindsets.

Revising the Audition and Application Process

Our findings, along with other research (Albertson, 2015; Fitzpatrick, et al., 2014), suggest that the audition and application process is a barrier to access. As we noted above, the first row of Figure 1 lists these barriers. The second row of Figure 1 provides possible strategies to address these barriers. First, as articulated in number 4 in the figure, university requirements for admission are often out of the control of faculty and administration of schools of music. However, continued dialogue between schools of music and the university is essential in communicating clear and equitable requirements (Rubin, 2011), while paying attention to sociological barriers that inhibit students from successful application (Melendez & Melendez, 2010).

Second, in number 3 of the figure, as Fitzpatrick, Henninger, & Taylor (2014) suggest, schools of music might be more explicit in their audition requirements as well as university requirements to help them become more "literate" in the audition process. Music faculty might create a document that more clearly spells out requirements to help students who do not have access to these unspoken rules. However, the opportunity gap framework might suggest that this process, when not engaged in conjunction with other changes, places the onus of knowledge on students of color, continues to conform to standards that do not align with their values, and might perpetuate deficit mindsets.

Third, as suggested in number 2 in the figure, schools of music might also consider students' backgrounds and contexts without changing the requirements of the auditions. If students do not have access to resources, including private instruction, then the understanding that a student potentially does not possess a background might factor into decisions on individual auditioners. This might be done informally or codified through official processes or measurements that would account for students' backgrounds. However, the opportunity gap framework might suggest that

while this change does reject color blindness, it might also perpetuate low expectations and a deficit mindset.

Fourth, number 1 in the figure articulates a more significant option; schools of music might revise the requirements of the audition. The student participants did not feel the audition process reflected the ways they participated in music inside and outside of school. To address this, the audition process might be opened up to allow differing ways to present musical proficiency. The process of performing classical music as the sole or primary demonstration of musical proficiency did not capture the students' abilities. A wider repertoire, including popular music might better reflect these students' abilities. A wider variety of musical processes as considered evidence of proficiency in an audition would better reflect these students' abilities. Schools might consider allowing, for example, a portfolio of compositions, whether they be notation-based or studio-recordings in a variety of genres.

Fifth, as number 1 in the figure also suggests, perhaps most radically, schools-of-music faculty might reexamine and restructure the epistemological assumptions of the audition process itself. If, for these participants, community—and not individual success—was at the heart of musical experience, then a process that rewards individual "accountability" and "meritocracy" is based on an assumption, not an essential component, of what constitutes musical success. Using this assumption as the measure of success is a potential barrier to access. This is potentially the most robust, but difficult, of all the strategies. However, this process of reviewing the assumptions and misalignment of values of the audition and acceptance procedures perhaps holds the greatest potential to address the opportunity gap, combat deficit mindsets, and correct inequalities in university schools of music and the music teacher workforce.

Finally, in addition to these potential strategies, the research on retention (Luedke, 2017; Swail, 2003; Thiry & Laursen, 2011) suggests there needs to be sustained efforts toward curricular change, supporting supporting students of color, as well as recruitment of faculty of color (Blake-Beard, et al., 2011). Without these sustained efforts, students may not feel welcome and make the transition to college in a smooth manner (Crisp, et al., 2015; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011). Though our research did not explore the area of retention specifically, research on retention in higher education would suggest attention in these areas is required to sustain any gains won by changes to recruitment and audition processes. However, more pointed empirical research needs to be conducted in this area within music and music education.

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