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The Influence Music Education Programs Have on Identity Development, Cultural Awareness, and Trauma Related to African American Youth That Live in Urban Settings

Michele Colbert

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The Influence Music Education Programs Have on Identity Development, Cultural Awareness, and Trauma Related to African American Youth That Live in Urban Settings

By Michele Colbert

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A Capstone in Education with a Concentration in Educational Leadership

I approve the capstone of Michele Colbert

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Date

Certification of Authorship

I certify that I am the sole author of this capstone. Any assistance received in the preparation of this capstone has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this capstone according program guidelines as directed.

Author Signature _Michele Colbert_ Date _April 28th, 2021_

Executive Summary

Research continues to document results that suggest a positive relationship between music education programs and student academic achievement. In comparison, however, there are an insignificant number of studies that look at the influence music education programs have on variables such as identity development and self-concept regarding its impact on African American youth that live in economically disadvantaged communities.

Seeking to ascertain the manner by which an urban multicultural choral program influence identity development, promotes cultural awareness, and combats levels of stress in youth of color, I utilized a basic interpretive qualitative study design, drawing on elements of phenomenology. In an effort to examine individuals' perceptions of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), I interviewed seven Chicago Children's Choir (CCC) adult alumni participants. These participants' gender and ethnic make-up included two African American females, four African American males, and one Caucasian female.

The results of this study indicated that music has the propensity to decrease levels of stress. Although the Chicago Children's Choir music programing could benefit from annual student evaluations, their curriculum positively impacts the identity development and cultural awareness of African American youth in their program. Six out of the seven participants discussed ways that CCC continues to make a substantial effort to understand the effects of race, ethnicity, and culture on African American youth. It appears that this organization's mission takes into account the educational inequities which take place in Chicago Public Schools, particularly for those students who live in underprivileged communities. Their music curriculum takes into account factors that affect music teaching and music learning.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this Capstone Research Project to:

My Husband, Jeffrey Gougis, for his love, support, and encouragement. I thank him for being humble enough to often play the role of my personal secretary and editor, as I continued to need many literary works sought out, printed out, and "well" organized. Most importantly, I thank him for continuing to pray for and with me through this stressful yet gratifying journey.

My Mother, Charlene Carter, for never losing faith in me, even when I lost it in myself. Thank you for being the wind beneath my wings.

My only brother and pilot, Cortez Carter, who taught me that the sky was actually not the limit, that my wings already existed. All I had to do was fly.

My children, Porsche, Parrish, Pierce, Pria, Payden, Preston, Pierre, and Paige Colbert. Whew!!! There are a lot of "P" names. What can I say? However, motherhood comes to you, it's a blessing. "Adoption is an option." Without their love, patience and understanding, I would not have been able to achieve this incredible milestone.

My Dear Friend, Kenneth Hurst II. In the times when I grow tired as I continue to serve those, sometimes less fortunate than myself, the legacy of your kind heart will continue to be a source of inspiration for me.

My best friend, Audrey Bella Langston, who I met some 26 years ago as we served various communities as Chicago Police Officers. She has called me doctor since this academic program began almost five years ago. Her faith can move mountains. I truly believe that she spoke this outcome into existence.

Lastly, but most certainly not least, the sole inspiration for my research topic and study: Chicago Children's Choir. Your "Culturally Relevant Pedagogical," yet diverse repertoire of music education programs, encourages African American youth to embrace their identities and to have a better understanding of others, while learning to appreciate our differences. Thank you for continuing to create Global Citizens.

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Introduction

There is a wealth of literature that gives credence to the argument that there are several academic advantages to music education programs. Many scholars assert music education has the propensity to increase a student's IQ (Musey, 2006). Likewise, there are pedagogic experts who cite a causal relationship between music education and other kinds of intelligence such as spatial and logical. They argue that having an understanding of music theory assists in students being able to use their visual spatial-temporal skills such as those needed when dealing with the science of quantity. This essentially suggests that having an understanding of music can assist children in visualizing elements that work together, such as ones used in a math problem (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006).

Rarely, however, do studies look at the influences music education programs have on characteristics such as identity development, cultural awareness, and emotional competencies (Clift, 2012). Due to past studies being predominately conducted on European American youth, it is possible that these findings do not represent youth of color. Further, there is also an association between poverty, the proliferation of violence, and the development of traumatic stress. In fact, African American youth that live in economically disadvantaged communities are considerably more at risk for exposure to violence (Dusing, Richards, Ochoa, & Onyeka, 2020).

When you consider these same characteristics on populations such as youth in foster care, negative and unwarranted outcomes become disproportionately more likely to occur (Mann & Kretchmar-Hendricks, 2017). In addition to youth in foster care being commonly removed from settings in which they reside with their parents, they are often removed due to having experienced abuse and/or neglect (Cusick, Havlicek, & Courtney, 2012). This exposer to chronic trauma (trauma which occurs repeatedly) frequently creates challenges that are difficult to combat (Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008). Music education programs, however, also assist in reducing feelings of anxiety and deep sadness while creating a higher sense of self-concept (Clift, 2012).

Problem Statement

Establishing a stable sense of one's self-concept is an essential developmental task for ensuring a healthy self-image. Psychologist Eric Erikson was one of the first to give "identity" its underpinnings by explaining this philosophy according to his identity development models. One of the limitations of his research, however, is that the majority of them were conducted on predominantly European American youth (Adams, 1992). As a result, it is possible that the findings of these kinds of studies may not have given an accurate account of the perspectives of ethnic minority youth. In light of present-day student demographic change, understanding ethnic and cultural identity development within diverse settings is essential amongst educators (Shaw, 2016).

Although the ethnic composition of a classroom may be diverse in urban communities in the United States, a "profound and inescapable cultural fabric of the school's process persists" (Shaw, 2016). These ideologies are so intricately interwoven in educational curricula that they have become systemically overlooked. Although arts-based programs are considered to be more liberal in that they allow students the opportunity to exercise their creative freedoms, Eurocentric underpinnings often dominate this pedagogic space. When ethnic minorities such as African American students participate in music education programs whose repertoire does not validate their cultural backgrounds, they are more likely to feel "rejected, devalued, exposed and judged." Inversely, when music education programs introduce students to a culturally responsive pedagogic curriculum and repertoire of music exchange it creates feelings of "security, confidante, value and acceptance" (Pulido, 2009).

Purpose Statement

Without music education programs that encourage identity development and cultural awareness, African American students may shy away from opportunities to be creative and benefit musically. In order for African American youth to develop healthy self-concepts and an appreciation for cultural awareness initiatives, pride of their cultural identities must be acknowledged and nurtured (Major, 2017). Whenever music programs include culturally rich yet diverse repertoire, it fosters harmonious positive outcomes. As such, the purpose of this study is to examine the influence music education programs have on identity development, cultural awareness, and trauma on African American youth of color who live in urban settings. Lastly, due to there being an absence of literature which considers children living in foster care who are impacted daily by the three aforementioned variables, my research will consider youth who receive child protective services.

Definition of Key Terms

Adoption: is the social, emotional, and legal process in which children who will not be raised by their birth parents become full and permanent legal members of another family while maintaining genetic and psychological connections to their birth family.

*Chronic Trauma***:** Trauma that is repetitive and occurs over an extended period of time.

Critical Pedagogy: The fundamental principle of critical pedagogy is that there is a disparate social stratification in our society that has been established based upon race, class, and gender. Critical pedagogy is concerned with social injustice outcomes and as a result endorses practices that have the likelihood of transforming oppressive institutions, often through educational practices.

Cultural Awareness: is defined as an individual's understanding of the differences between themselves and people from other countries or other backgrounds, especially differences in attitudes and values.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP): is an approach to teaching that uses the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively.

Foster care: is a system by which a minor is placed into a ward, group home, or with a certified caregiver, referred to as a "foster parent." A minor may also be placed with a family member provided the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) approves.

*Identity***:** the stable inner sense of one's self, formed by the successful integration of various experiences into a coherent self-image.

Social Emotional Development: is defined as the process of developing fundamental skills for life. The ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behavior to achieve important life tasks such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Social Identity Development: is defined as an individual's identification with, and membership within, diverse social groups by race, gender, class and sexuality. Social identity involves an individual's sense of who they are based on their membership.

Musical underpinnings in humans begin at birth, as mothers sing lullabies to comfort their infants or entertain them. These vocal tones communicate feeling and emotion resulting in an attachment allowing the infant to experience a sense of security (Elliot, 2015). As the infant continues to grow and the vocal cords strengthen, they too begin forming harmonious sounds (Brown, Brisola, & Engler-Curry, 2015). As children mature, their own voice becomes a tool of self-expression and individuality (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, & Crawford, (2013). From this perspective, it can be argued that singing lends itself to experience emotions that could not in any other way be expressed.

Humans sing from various perspectives. There is the kind of singing that is vocalized out of boredom or personal gratification such as the kind we do when taking a shower or lyrics we share with a friend. Music is such a part of the human experience that wherever you go, it is there. It is played inside of a restaurant, a department store, and a doctor's office. It is also played during parties, at weddings and yes, even funerals. Sometimes music is used to showcase an idea and other times it serves as the background (Brown, Brisola, & Engler-Curry, 2015).

Due to cultural identity development relating to an individual's self-concept and self-perception, the elementary music classroom is the optimal setting by which social emotional skills may be developed. Children in this age group are required to interact during activities such as clapping hands with other students, choosing a partner, or waiting anxiously, hoping to be chosen. For these reasons, social emotional dilemmas are likely to occur (Jacobi, 2012). Here, social identity development and cultural awareness parallel in that they both involve the student having the ability to understand others and build relationships (Standley, 1996).

Music instruction has many benefits. The goal of music instruction involves more than performance-based outcomes. It increases a student's ability to listen critically, promotes self-respect, and fosters empathy for others (Rickard, et all, 2013). Due to music education classes yielding situational or opportunistic possibilities in which a student cannot predict how certain words in a song will cause him or her to feel, or whether the melodies in a music selection will make the individual feel enlightened or convicted, music interpretation and performance encourages self-discovery (Parker, 2010). Music programs also require group participation and collaboration. Students harmoniously blend sounds with others simultaneously (Camilleri, 2000). Due to identity being salient during the childhood years, being a member of a music group can be beneficial to social emotional development and equated to wearing a badge of honor (Pulido, 2009).

Youth in elementary and high school often struggle with feelings of being misunderstood or alone. As such, adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 begin having conflicts related to their identity. They ask self-reflecting questions such as "Who am I?" and "What makes me special?" Music programs assist in helping youth to cope with these emotions in that they create the feeling of belonging and community. More importantly, adolescents that experience long durations of feeling alienated and who feel they do not have sufficient support systems are more likely to experience anxiety and depression as well as have higher dropout and suicide rates (McNiff & Whitehead, 2015).

Instructors who work in music education programs have the ability to play a substantial role in shaping their student's identity by being nurturing and promoting sensitivity towards others. Setting this example fosters empathy towards others and assists in creating global citizens (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck, & Crawford, 2013). Music education is one of the most powerful tools that can

promote cultural identity development and global citizenship. It has the power to initiate cross-cultural sharing. Here, education respectfully begins with the student's music intuition and feelings and ends with their performance. Music education courses also give students the opportunity to be creative. Developing a beat through music theory helps the student feel authentic and gives them ownership of what they have created.

Individuals learn to understand their cultures through messages from family, their communities, as well as images portrayed in the media (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999). As a result, this collection of information often becomes the basis for the way they form perceptions of social, cultural, racial, and ethnic differences (Benson, 2003). Music education courses allow students the opportunity to learn that many music styles have been influenced by African and African American traditions.

Some of the most internationally acknowledged genres include country, jazz, rhythm and blues, rock, and pop (Southern, 2007). As an example, during the Civil War, African American musicians formed a style of music called ragtime. This genre of music was characterized by a "specific type of syncopation in which melodic accents fell between metrical beats, which became the foundation for the creation of jazz" (Southern, 2007). These cultivated elegant sounds later became the underpinnings to dance and folk music across the western world as well as Sub-Saharan Africa and continues to influence the world's music industry today (Southern, 2007).

It is beneficial for educational institutions that teach music to employ teachers who understand the true influence that African American music has on American music. "Describing the African American influence on American music in all its glory and variety is an intimidating-if not impossible task" (Lewis, 2016). These influences are so integral that there would be no American music as we know it today without them (Lewis, 2016). This is largely due to individuals of African descent being some of the first to be transported to America, bringing with them their rich musical African ancestry.

Diverse Ways of Learning Music

There is an appreciable amount of literature that points to the idea that African American students thrive better in cooperative group settings as opposed to traditional classroom settings with Western European values. Cooperative learning is based on group work. The core element of this learning style is to organically allow for the positive attributes of interdependence while upholding the importance of a student to holster personal responsibility.

Educational settings are often individualistic and competitive in nature running incongruent to Afrocentric cornerstones of a cooperative group's efforts (Gay, 2010). One example of this cultural cornerstone lies in the popular African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." This Nigerian Yoruba proverb exists in many African languages. The African proverb essentially maintains that the totality of raising a child, such as nurturing, teaching, and protecting, are a communal responsibility. Due to children being considered a blessing from God, benefitting the entire community, it is expected that neighbors and friends assist in child rearing down to the more extended family members such as cousins, grandparents, sisters, and brothers. There are many versions of this quote such as the Tanzanian proverb, "One knee does not bring up a child" as well as the Swahili proverb, "One hand does not nurse a child." All of these adages have one central theme in common. They stress the Afrocentric perspective that values "family, parent care, self-sacrifice, concern for others, sharing, and even hospitality" (Afriprov.org, 2020).

Because choral music is often rooted in spiritually based songs, there is generally an overarching theme of healing (Abbott & Seroff, 2013). For some individuals, spiritual songs express deep religious convictions, while some have used this kind of music proactively to advocate social change. Many individuals use the terms gospel music and spiritual music interchangeably. There, however is a difference. One distinction between the two genres is that gospel songs were originated in church for the purpose of worship and religious ideologies.

Spiritual songs on the other hand were specifically originated during distinct struggles for human rights and are inherent to all people regardless of sex, race, gender, or socioeconomic background (Abbott & Seroff, 2013). This oral tradition began as slaves were being transported to the Americas during the transatlantic slave trade. They adapted this style of music in an effort to describe the hardships of slavery and voice their desperation to be free. Spirituals, also referred to as Negro spirituals, are full of codes that were communicated between slaves about their planned escape to the Underground Railroad and to freedom (Abbott & Seroff, 2013). Examples of spirituals include *Sweet Chariot, Go Down Mosses, Steal Away, Nobody Knows the Troubles I've Seen and Wade in the Water* (Small, 2009). Spirituals are often taught to students who enroll in elementary and high school music programs because they introduce students to a heartfelt experience of a people who struggled (Small, 2009).

A significant amount of music educators express that there is a relationship between singing and cultural understanding (Walker, 2007). When children in music programs sing songs celebrating the traditions of other cultures, and recognize the struggles of individuals from other countries, they become graced with the opportunity to learn about others (Walker, 2007). The aim of music education programs is to assist students to feel secure, valued, and accepted through learning a multitude of music selections. When music programs do not practice culturally relevant and diverse repertoire, students often feel judged, rejected, and exposed (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck & Crawford, 2013).

Identity Formation

It has become increasingly more evident that identity formation is an essential developmental task (Parker, 2010). Research conducted over the past five decades essentially ignored the development of ethnic minorities. For this reason, Parker (2010) asserted that theoretical perspectives have suffered and have limitations. Additionally, a considerable number of theses theoretic frameworks did not take into account culture-specific aspects of development (Parker, 2010). Most theories did not consider the idea of assimilation to be of importance, consequently discarding the significance of minority youth's adjustment into settings which may have differed from their cultural frame of reference.

In large part, theories adhered to European American values that in practice may have unfolded differently from non-European American value systems (Parker, 2010). Erik Erikson, a 20th century psychologist was one of the first to develop a theory on psychosocial development, conceptualizing the idea of "identity" (Erikson,1959). For this reason, his theories have historically been held as some of the most influential for understanding the manner by which identity development progresses into stages during the human life cycle (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 2011).

The essential premise of Erikson's psychosocial theory on identity development is based on an epigenetic principle, which entails the concepts related to evolution and genetics as well as changes in the expression of genes that do not result from alteration in sequence of the genetic code (Erikson, 1998). According to Erikson, development is formed by interactions with an

individual's environment, occurring in sequence and is related to the individual's age. One imperative prerequisite to Erikson's theory is that he believed youth must go through stages of development designated by a characteristic developmental conflict or crisis (Erikson, 1968). According to Erikson, these crises were necessary milestones that allowed the individual an opportunity to resolve his or her conflicts either objectively or subjectively. In the event that the individual successfully negotiated these conflicts, a constructive outcome would emerge, resulting in a more dominant version of that individual.

Erikson described adolescence as the dominant period when youth were more likely to re-examine who they are, what they believe in, and where they fit in relation to the larger societal picture (Marcia, Waterman, Matteson, Archer & Orlofsky, 2011). Although Erikson believed that the high school and college years were the optimal time for young adults to re-assess norms and values introduced to them by their parents, African American college students who attend Predominately White Universities, are less likely to struggle during these crises due to commonly experiencing minority status stressors. Without a secure sense of their own ethnic identities, they are less likely to be able to deal with psychological problems (Cokley, Obaseki, Moran-Jackson, Jones, & Vohra-Gupta, 2016).

Due to there being essentially no theories which focused of how African Americans defined themselves (e.g., self -concept and self-esteem), scholars such as Janet Helms, Jean Phinney, William E Cross, Jr. and Kevin Cokley, developed black racial identity models. Cokley (2007) argues "the United States is a White supremacist country where negative messages about their humanity are part of the history and cultural fabric." His stance was that the marginalized and oppressed social status of Americans of African descent in the United States leaves them in an uncompromising position to label themselves in the hope of creating a healthy self-concept. To date, African Americans have been called "colored," next they advocated to be called "Negro," they then asserted they should be called "Black," following this title, they declared they were "Afro-American," subsequently deciding to finally rest on the title "African American." These various evolutions show an intrinsic desire to control one's own image as a race, messages regarding their race, as well as a narrative of who they believe they are.

African Americans are bombarded with negative images of their ethnic/racial groups daily, such as those shown in media orientations. To some degree these negative internalizations affect choices this ethnic/racial groups make related to their role as both audience and consumer (Adams & Stevenson, 2012). These indoctrinations disrupt the way this group forms perceptions of social, cultural, racial and ethnic differences within the United States and abroad.

Gender Differences Within the Classroom Setting

A vast amount of research has been dedicated to examining the impact gender has on the psychological and educational development of African American youth. These factors related to their perception to classroom treatment also have the capacity for creating negative outcomes (Lawell, 2010). Due to music education classes commonly being a part of the public-school curriculum, it is important to differentiate the impact gender differences have on student outcomes within the classroom setting.

While literature relates that white males at the adolescent stage are engaged with positivity in the classroom setting, experience more social power, and have higher self-concepts across social and academic disciplines, research conducted on that of the African American male student, appear opposing in nature (Cokley, 1999). For more than four decades, one commonly discussed issue has been the persistent drop in the social, economic, and educational status of young African

American males in the United States.

According to (Cokley, 1999) merely being an African American male in American schools' places one at risk for a variety of negative ramifications, including having to be retained and repeat a grade. African American male students are disproportionately put in special education programs deemed as needing an IEP (Individualized Education Program). In 2016, 12% of African American males in the United States received special education services in their school for disabilities ranging from cognitive disabilities to behavioral problems. In contrast, only 8.5 percent of their white male counterparts received special education services (Felton, 2017). African America males also received multiple detentions and suspensions. Currently, young African American males have the lowest literacy scores of any English-speaking population in the United States (Felton, 2017). This result has become commonplace in economically deprived communities within urban settings in the United States.

There is growing evidence that African American male students exhibit psychological and/or emotional withdrawal during their educational experience as early as kindergarten with these anxieties continuing to intensify as they progress throughout college (Alexander, Entwisle, & Horsey, 1997) These outcomes contribute to students experiencing lower self-esteem and higher anxiety and depression rates. Studies also suggest that black students receive poorer evaluations from white teachers than from black teachers (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). For these reasons it can be argued that race continues to play a part in student-teacher relationships throughout the secondary education years.

Conversely, African American female education achievements continue to increase. Current literature shows they have social power which is beginning to exceed that of the African American male (Smith & Cokley, 2016). African American females however tend to experience what has been termed at "double threat" in which they experience more negative, verbal criticisms from white instructors when their performance is insufficient. In their widely cited article, Fordham and Ogbu (1986) point out a phenomenon called "acting White." This article relates that African American pupils, more specifically females, are afraid of being ostracized by fellow students for desiring to excel academically (Horvat & Lewis, 2003). These females also have internal conflicts about their attitudes related to the shade of their skin and their body image. Research suggests that African American females who are admitted to predominately White universities (PWU) and who bear negative racial/ethnic self-concepts are particularly vulnerable to internalizing White Western standards of beauty resulting in this target audience being at greater risk for developing eating disorders (Abrams, 2002).

Downey and Pribesh (2004), suggests that teachers do not often understand why their black students behave as they do. African American students appear to have a different behavioral style than Caucasians. Their assertiveness when using verbal communicate, their dialect often referred to as Ebonics or African American English Vernacular, as well as their high energy levels often add to negative stereotypes. These cultural expressions are often interpreted as oppositional and defiant. African American teachers, parents, and constructs of social support in their neighborhoods, however, often reward these same characteristics. (Downey & Pribesh, 2004). In urban settings for example, it is common to witness a child on a street corner or inside a local barbershop assertively reciting rap or a hip-hop lyrics, resulting in some form of positive reinforcement. Youth often receive praise and monetary rewards from their peers as well as other members in their community. In this setting, there is a belief that this type of creativity should be cultivated.

Distinct behaviors do not mean that black students' demeanors are worse, just different (Tyler et al, 2008). Due to some behaviors being cultural in nature such as the manner by which some African American youth recite rap and hip-hop lyrics, they conflict with the European American education structure. These differences in methodologies often result in the classroom setting being an un-stimulating environment for African American youth (Tyler et al, 2008).

Music Instrument Selection and Gender Stereotypes

Although a substantial number of gender-related social barriers have been overcome within the past two decades, allowing customary expectations based on an individual's gender to decline, the conventional mindset still exists as it relates to the music instrument of choice music students select. Gender stereotyping involves the idea that some instruments are more "masculine" or "feminine" than others (Wych, 2012).

Literature suggests gender stereotypes may have a negative impact on the selection of musical instruments youth choose to play, particularly in educational environments such as elementary and high school settings (Cramer, Million, & Perreault, 2016). Studies continue to show that students choose instruments considered as confirmative in relation to their genders. As an example, a male student selecting a flute, clarinet or violin risk receiving negative appraisals (Cramer, Million, & Perreault, 2016). Conversely, a female student who decides to learn to play drums, a trombone or trumpet, also risks receiving negative appraisals.

Choice of instrument is one of the most impactful decisions a student can make that determines their level of satisfaction with music education. Gender stereotypes weigh heavily on the selection decision. This social role often leads to well documented negative consequences, including fewer instrument choices, limited ensemble participation, and peer disapproval (Eros, 2008). Contributing to this problem is the inconsistent manner in which the terms gender and sex are often used interchangeably, as well as boy/girl, and masculine/feminine. Eros contends that gender association issues should not be considered in terms of sex biologically but in terms of psychological sex type.

A study developed by Boldizar (1991) gave the Children's Sex Role Inventory to 64 girls and 44 boys. The study assessed musical instrument preferences and determined four typologies: masculine (high masculine, low feminine), feminine (high feminine, low masculine), androgynous (high on both), and undifferentiated (low on both). Boldizar's study showed a definitive relationship between sex type and gender association and instrument selection. Androgynous children showed the greatest preference (41.9%) for neutral instruments, as they were able to "select instruments from a broader range than that of masculine and feminine sex types" (Eros, 2008).

Additional studies by Abeles & Porter, 1978; Bruce & Kemp, 1993; Delzell & Leppla, 1992; Fortney, Boyle, & DeCarbo, 1993; Griswold & Chroback, 1981; Tarnowski, 1993 came to a similar conclusion that gender stereotypes exist in instrument selections (Eros, 2008). The research further demonstrated that stereotypes for boys were determined to be more impactful as demonstrated by "increased social pressure and fewer instrument choices (Cramer, Million, & Perreault, 2016). This issue is still relevant as seen in subsequent research from S. D. Harrison, 2003 and Sinsabaugh, 2005 that identified brass and percussion as stereotypical male instruments while woodwinds (flute, oboe, clarinet) and strings (violin) are stereotyped as female instruments (Eros, 2008).

Harrison conducted five studies and in the first one, 102 primary students were asked to pick their first choice of instrument and both sexes picked drums and guitar as the top two

instruments, which indicates the influence of pop music. Afterwards, saxophone and trumpet were picked for males and piano and voice for females. In Harrison's second study of 98 students, the drums, trombone, and trumpet were determined to be the most masculine instruments and the flute was the most feminine. In Harrison's third study, 903 secondary students completed a survey about their preferred instrument and the conclusions were consistent with the previous findings. Top instruments for boys were tuba, trombone, guitar, bass, and percussion, whereas the girls' top instruments were oboe, flute, and bassoon. In his final, 3-year longitudinal study of secondary students, Harrison determined that males again chose primarily brass and percussion instruments, whereas females tended to choose woodwinds and strings.

Yet, there are many students who select instruments that go against stereotypical instrument selections. Often, these students respond to strong influences of either their parents or teachers during the instrument selection process. Further, the research indicates that the gender of the performer heavily influences the student who are observers (Eros, 2008). Although certain aspects of this issue such as the influence of peers or pop culture cannot be controlled easily, it is critical that music educators are aware of their ability to impact these gender stereotypes. The research suggests that the presentation of the instruments by teachers strongly influence students' choices (Abeles & Porter, 1978; Boulton & O'Neill, 1996; Conway, 2000; Fortney et al., 1993; MacKenzie, 1991).

However, several of the studies identified acknowledge the challenges in addressing gender stereotypes in instrument selection Harrison & O'Neill (2000) deduced that "more systematic investigation is needed to examine processes involved in the influence of interviewer sex on children's gender-typed instrument preferences." Eros added that music educators must ensure that musical instrument selections remain "musical" and not based on gender stereotypes (2008).

Cultural Identity Development

Having a better understanding of our own cultural consciousness accounts for a larger part of the formation of identity development in all individuals (Jenlink & Townes, 2009). In addition to cultural underpinnings being largely responsible for what we choose to value, it also determines how we respond to our life experiences (Pang, 2015). In order for educators to attempt to understand their student's cultural identities that may vary from their own, they must first take the time to understand their cultural influences (Jenlink & Townes, 2009).

To successfully achieve this goal, educators must take a metacognitive stance. They must become more aware of their own thoughts, feelings and actions as well as how their actions affect others. Metacognition is not only premised upon being aware of what you know, it largely includes "thinking about your thinking" so that you may become more aware of what you don't know. By applying this technique, educators can gain more clarity as to their thought processes. Educators must be willing to be honest about their own biases and yes, even prejudices. These mindsets aren't always blatant; they ease into our pedagogic spaces. For these reasons, educators must conduct a self-evaluation and ask themselves questions such as, do books used for their curriculum only showcase traditional families limited to a mom, dad and of course, a dog? In an ethnically diverse classroom, some students may not share this traditional family structure.

In 2011, Pew Research Center conducted a study tracking social and demographic trends (DeSilver, 2014). They found that 7.7 million children in the United States between birth and 18 were living in the same household as at least one of their grandparents, totaling 10%. A respectable 4% were being cared for exclusively by at least one grandparent, translating into 3 million children within the U.S. Children being cared for primarily by a grandparent were as follows, 3% of White

children, 8% of Black children, 4% of Hispanic children and 2% of Asian (DeSilver, 2014). These figures show that Black children are more than twice as likely to have a grandparent as their primary provider than other ethnicities.

Education Through A Lens That Acknowledges

When we think of children's books used in educational settings that give an account of an indigenous people who first settled in America, Native Americans for example, are rarely if ever acknowledged for their contributions. These contributions include the cultivation and development of plants such as white and sweet potatoes, corn, beans, tobacco, chocolate peanuts, and cotton. These plants were also used to make dyes and discover natural medicines as well (Keoke & Porterfield, 2009).

In predominantly Hispanic education settings, for instance, the high school English curricula is likely to include literature written by Shakespeare over ones such as the Chicano classics such as "Bless Me, Ultima" by Rudolfo Anaya. This story is about the coming of age of 6-year-old Antonio Marez Luna, living in Guadalupe, New Mexico and his *curandero* (a traditional native healer, believed to have supernatural gifts, who dedicates himself to the well-being of mental, emotional, physical and spiritual health). Antonio, who has been raised to follow Catholicism, begins to question his faith in God after he witnesses death, supernatural occurrences, and unpunished sin. Antonio fails to get the answers from God, but through his interactions with Ultima and supernatural dreams, he realizes that he can create his own religion. In a *curandero's* role as counselor and physician, they inherently become respected members of the community (Boyd & Brock, 2015). Chicano literature in fact focuses on themes of identity and the discrimination of the Mexican American culture or Chicano culture within the United States. Publications of this literature are produced to express Chicano's perspectives (Boyd & Brock, 2015). Educators should be versed in literary works such as the above mentioned to better ensure their diverse student body feels included and validated. Rather than this outcome being prevalent, current research studies show it is not.

Confronting Biases Through A Cultural Lens

Jenlike & Townes (2009) give examples of ways by which educators might be able to confront biases they may not even known they have. In an exercise, he asks a group of educators to imagine that a young lady wearing a skirt walk passed them. He then asks if they felt anxious or if their heart skipped a beat. Next, he role plays the same example with the difference being that the individual walking past the educator is a male wearing a tee shirt, which is torn. Lastly, he repeats this scenario with the only difference being the male in this scenario is African American. He then asks if anxieties increased.

The idea is that unless an educator becomes comfortable confronting his or her own biases, they are not likely to be able to recognize the value in others (Jenlike & Townes, 2009). Identification of biases influences our behavior and what we believe. As an example, some educators authoritatively admonish their Asian student base when they respond to their student with statements such as "look at me when I talk to you". In many Asian cultures, eye contact is thought to be disrespectful and rude. The lack of eye contact for these students does not infer that they are not paying attention. In an American culture, eye contact is an indication that the individual is paying attention and being sincere (Jenlike & Townes, 2009).

We often think of biased thoughts as the aftermath of considering another individual's ethnicity or gender. This is not always the case. An educator for instance may have a bias against

families that have lower social economic statuses. In one study, reports showed that during student report card pickup day, educators spent more time with parents who had higher levels of education and a household income of $78,000 or more, versus those with a household income of $25,161 (U.S. News Report, 2017). In this case, these held biases deprived this group of educators of seeing commonalities with other parents. These commonalities may have enriched these teachers' experiences.

In recent years, there has been an upward shift of living arrangements in non-traditional households. The U.S. Census Bureau's annual *America's Families and Living Arrangements* shows that the majority of American children under the age of 18 still live in two parent households. This fact remains true despite an increase in births to unmarried women and a rise in the number of single mothers. "Between 1960 and 2016, the percentage of children living in families with two parents declined from 88% to 69%. Of the 50.7 million children living with two parents, 47.7 million lived with married parents and yet another 3 million with two unmarried parents" (US Census Bureau, 2018). These figures give a depiction of the current public-school education setting. Educators who frown on children coming from single parent homes place their students at risk for developing negative self-concepts (Ilari, Chen-Hafteck & Crawford, 2013).

So What, Who Cares: The True Cost of Violence

There has been an increase in violent behavior among young adults in the United States. The rates of mass shootings have grown as well with homicides becoming the leading cause of death among young adults ranging in age from 10-24 years (Bushman et al, 2016). This increase in youth violence and aggression has caused organizations such as the Department of Justice, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and other local police departments to look at the totality of circumstances as a national crisis. The related economic cost of this social crisis is staggering. It is estimated that emergency services such as police response, ambulance assistance, as well as expenses associated with the incarceration of offenders costs the United States approximately $214 billion per year (Bushman et al, 2016).

"The City of Chicago, more specifically, has a reputation of being one of the most violent cities in the United States… The number of homicides in Chicago since 2001 has eclipsed U.S. war fatalities in Iraq and Afghanistan" (McCarthy, 2017). To bring more clarity to this statement, the U.S. Department of defense reports there were 4,424 U.S. casualties as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom, which took place between the years of 2003-2010. The Operation New Dawn conflict, which occurred during 2010-2011, resulted in 73 more deaths. Operation Inherent Resolve claimed 32 more U.S. casualties. When you add the 2,216 U.S. deaths taking place in Afghanistan, the death toll rises to 6,778 (Holt, 2017).

2019 City of Chicago Crime Statistics
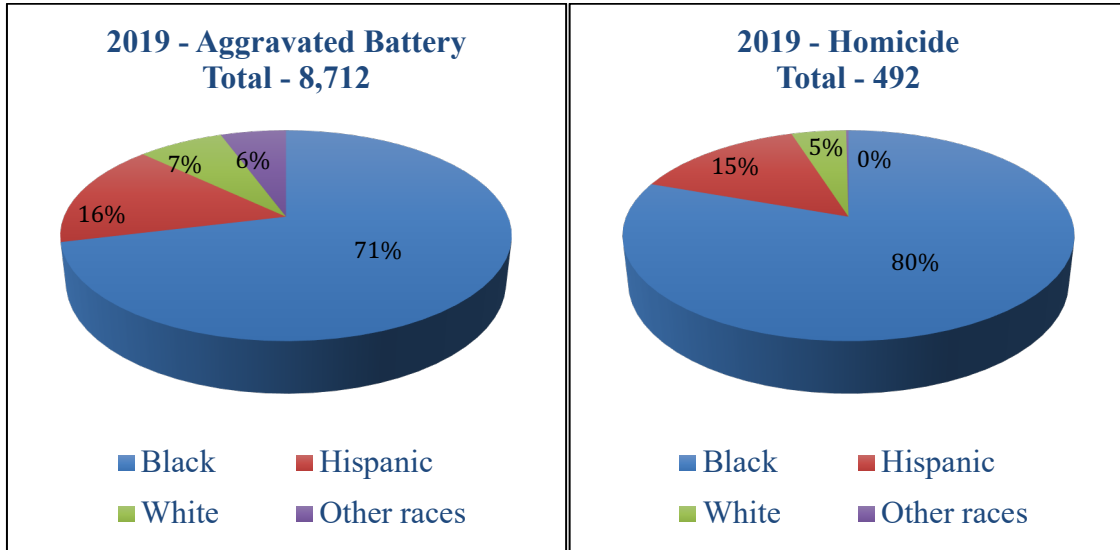
Figure 1: Aggravated Battery

Figure 2: Homicide

According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Chicago has seen an uptick in violence and is on pace to pass 700 homicides this year, as the city faces a 50% increase in gun violence from last year. Chicago is currently experiencing one of the most violent years in recent history. As of Wednesday evening, November 18, 2020, Chicago had 693 homicides, according to a Sun-Times analysis of Cook County medical examiner's office data (2020). Shootings are also up 53% compared with 2019 and as of November 15, 2020, Chicago saw 2,898 shooting incidents, which is nearly more than 1,000 shootings at this time just one year ago in 2019 (Struett, 2020). Further complicating this surge in violence is the fact that many violent crimes including homicides remain unsolved. Chicago Police Department data obtained by the Chicago Sun-Times shows that there have only been 165 arrests in connection to the 693 murders thus far.

Chicago Gang Violence

According to the Chicago Police Department's gang audit, there are over 600 different street gang factions in Chicago. It is estimated that these factions carry a total membership of 70,000 individuals, largely including youth 13-24 years of age (Wilson, 2014). Some of the notable as well as most violent street gangs in Chicago include the Latin Kings, Black Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, and Vice Lords. Although these street gangs are comprised mostly of an ethnic minority membership, there are street gangs in Chicago that are largely made up of Caucasian membership. One such street gang is known as the Almighty Gaylords, residing in the Up-Town community as well as the north side of Chicago (Wilson, 2014).

Trauma and Risk Factors

Violent acts commonly take place inside or directly outside of a school's grounds. During instances that result in violent outcomes ending fatally, elementary and secondary institutions often do not have trauma informed counselors hat know how to handle these kinds of crisis situations appropriately. This lack of experience often results in staff members not discussing traumatic that has occurred with students at all. As a result, students have difficulty finding mental solace and emotional closure.

Children begin learning at an early age and adapt to their surroundings. Environments presented to children assist in dictating the way in which they develop peer affiliations. The family structure is also a vital component as it relates to youth deciding not to participate in violent behavior. Other factors also include whether or not the adolescent has experienced prior abuse, a great deal of personal rejection from their parents or has grown up in a setting in which domestic violence outcomes took place often. Other risk factors for youth include mental illness diagnosis, emotional dispositions and drug and alcohol usage (Autunes, 2014).

Trauma is the response to a "deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness and diminishes the individual's sense of self as well as ability to feel the full range of emotions and experiences" (Gerber, et al, 2014). This emotional response can result from stressful occurrences such as a car accident, sexual assault or natural disaster according to the American Psychological Association, 2013. There are different types of trauma. For the purpose of this capstone project, I will discuss two. The first is acute traumas, often referred to as fight-or-flight response or single stress. Acute stress is your body's immediate reaction to a perceive threat. Examples of acute traumas include, a severe illness, the loss of a love one or being in a car accident that causes injury. Chronic trauma however involves repeated and prolonged exposure to highly stressful occurrences such as domestic violence occurrences, being the victim of child abuse and consistently being bullied at school.

The individual experiencing trauma may feel a range of emotions inclusive of, sadness, anxiousness, anger, denial, shame, confusion, helplessness and even numb. The American Psychological Association (2013) relates that as a result, the individual may cope with his or her traumas by withdrawing from other members in society. According to mayoclinic.org (2019), ongoing chronic stress can cause serious health problems, such as: anxiety, depression, digestive problems, weight gain, memory and concentration impairment, heart attack, stroke and sleeping disorders such as insomnia.

It has been well documented that there are many consequences of war related to trauma on individuals, more specifically children (Gerber, et al, 2014). In 1991, Kosovo professed that they were determined to gain their independence through separation. Through war and the sacrifice of 800,000 being either removed or slaughtered, Kosovo finally achieved independence. Due to children being physically and psychologically more susceptible to devastation, the ability to recover was more problematic (Gerber, et al, 2014).

For this reason, the Shropshire Music Foundation started an initiative to decrease psychological trauma and advance the emotional health of children through developing a music education program in 1998. This organization worked with 300 students once a week. This music program taught students to sing, play drums, penny whistles and harmonicas. Results showed that children who stayed in the program the longest had a diminished amount of psychological and emotional deficits in comparison to children who stayed in the program for a shorter period of time (Gerber, et al, 2014).

Negative Images of African Americans in the Media

Violent crime statistics are often correlated with African American images in the media. These images have become so sensationalize that the term "black on black crime" has become a commonly accepted ideology. This kind of propaganda, which promotes the idea that African American youth are intellectually inferior, and more prone to aggression, is common. One example of this mindset was expressed during a meeting when Ted Nugent, board member of the National Rifle Association stated, "The overwhelming majority of violent crime across America is

conducted by young, black males who, sadly, are on the self-inflicted expressway to prison or an early grave-or more often than not, both" (Horwitz, 2014).

This mindset is often perpetuated by negative imagery put forth by mass media, which has extreme power to shape attitudes and influence perceptions of African Americans. Although not representative of poverty in America, distorted presentations of blacks dominate mediums including films, TV shows, advertising, commercial, and video games have been perpetuated stereotypes. These distorted portrayals have been well researched and include underrepresentation overall, negative associations exaggerated, positive associations limited, blacks overly associated with intractable problems, and missing stories, which create a "causal link between media and public attitudes" according to opportunityagenda.org (2020).

Studies show that media images are most impactful when viewers have no direct exposure to African Americans and mistake the "media world" with the real world. These stereotypes (thugs, criminals, fools, and the disadvantaged) have also impacted African Americans directly resulting in a reduced self-identity, increased stress, and lower expectations of performance as cited in opportunityagenda.org (2020). This bias is yet another challenge that warrants the use of music education to help combat this problem.

Music Education for Special Learners

During a study of inclusive education, it was concluded that music education instructors must be creative in their method of teaching in order that a larger population of their student body can learn what it is the educator is trying to convey. Educators who teach special learners, however, must select intentional resource materials and implement special teaching strategies for their classroom. This group of educators must have a mild temperament, an understanding of each student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), and a lot of patience (Baumel, 2016).

IEP's are mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is an individualized document that creates an opportunity for all involved parties (parents, teachers, school administrators, and sometimes the student) to work as a team to achieve better educational results for children with a disability. Each public-school child who receives special education and related services must have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) created exclusively for a single student. Arrangements associated with having an IEP may include adjustments such as the positioning of where a student sits during class hours. Due to visual and audible delays, some students must sit close to the chalkboard, while other students require extended time on exams (Baumel, 2016).

Some children seem to have trouble digesting all of the information their senses take in. It is as if they experience information overload. The most common of these include sound, touch, taste, sight, and smell. Sensory abilities also involve having a sense of your body awareness and movement, balance, and coordination. Children with sensory issues are often over or under sensitive to input. Some children are overly sensitive and may not be able to tolerate bright lights and loud noises such as those activated on an ambulance, whereas children with low levels of sensory input often continue to rock in their chair, subsequently disrupting the classroom environment. A child who experiences overstimulation may refuse to carry his/her backpack because the Velcro fasteners feel too rough as cited in masters-in-special-education.com (2019).

Due to a considerable number of children in special education courses struggling with sensory dilemmas, multisensory music and instruments can be beneficial as a means of learning as well as a positive way to reinforce good behavior. Benefits to music education classes supersede the traditional class environment in that it encourages children to sing, which can motivate an

otherwise uncommunicative student. In the music classroom, children learn to use their psychomotor abilities to begin to open up and converse more with their teacher and peers (brightbulbeducation.org, 2011).

One cost effective lesson plan that only requires chalk to chalkboard involves a 20–40-minute classroom exercise by which students learn to decode four-beat rhythm. Although these beats contain only four beats, these beats may contain half notes, quarter notes, eight notes, or rests depending on the song being dissected or what the composer desirers. The teacher asks a volunteer to go to the board. The teacher then taps out a four-beat rhythm with rhythm sticks. The volunteer attempts to decipher the rhythm by selecting a quarter rest note or pair of eight notes. If the volunteer cannot figure it out, the teacher asks the members of the class the help the volunteer. The goal here is that all notes, inclusive of their rest values must combine to equal no more or less than the initial numerator of the time signature (brightbulbeducation.org, 2011).

If the volunteer has a hearing impairment, teachers often make modifications by taping beats on broader instruments such as a bongo or bass drum. In this way vibrations stretch throughout the floor. If the student is physically challenged and spend a considerable amount of time in a wheelchair, a teacher may hand the student flashcards to lay across their desk, asking to student to place the flashcards in order. Students use these large rhythmic display cards as they clap their hands or tap their feet to modify music (brightbulbeducation.org, 2011).

Despite the vast amount of literature indicating music education's positive socio-emotional gains, Chicago Public Schools continue to experience budget cuts towards funding for music arts programs, with an increased amount of attention being placed on standardized testing outcomes (Abril & Gault, 2008). In the *Arts and the Creation of Mind*, Eisner (2002) related that the problematic entanglement with these kinds of standardized testing goals has placed the arts at the rim, rather than at the core of education.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

In competitive learning environments, students often study alone and complete their assignments individually. Test scores also measure each student's progress and as a result play a large part in the student's assigned letter grade. In this atmosphere, students essentially compete for the highest grade. Although one could conclude that this teaching style embodies more of a real-world perspective, encourages students to do their best, and assists youth in developing into independent thinkers, one drawback is that some children become frustrated or anxious as they compete to do well. The nation's classroom structure is much more ethnically diverse than it was just two decades ago, for this reason it is fair and reasonable that curriculums encompass a multicultural approach to learning that advocates for a student population of all ethnicities (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings is the founding expert of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy, which is a student-centered approach to teaching that identifies the students' cultural underpinnings for the purpose of becoming strengths and is more closely related to a cooperative learning style. Under the umbrella of this framework, Ladson-Billings (2014) does not support the concept of competitive teaching. Gay (2018), another notable scholar within this framework suggests, rather than encouraging students to compete with one another for grades, educators should provide opportunities for every student to achieve the highest grades possible.

There are many aspects of CRP in multicultural curriculum design. Diversity and being able to model examples of learning and teaching to students ground this design. Gay (2010) related that in classes that she has taught, she traded student-teacher roles. She assigns small groups to

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teach a section of a particular subject matter. This has served to be a very empowering and uplifting initiative. She asserts that cooperative learning should be used with ethnically diverse students as educational discussions often help to break through some of the stereotypes associated with African American youth.

Another teaching tool that Gay (2018) discussed includes the idea of foregoing the proper pronunciation of a word and it being interspersed into word choices, such as the manner by which Ebonics is used in a song or sentence. Ebonics refers to a blend of words comprised of ebony and phonics. It is a term that was originally intended to refer to language of the descendants of enslaved black Africans. It is a language of its own rather than a dialect of Standard English. Ebonics, also known as "code switching" requires the use of Standard English and Ebonics.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy rests on three propositions: "Academic Achievement" or student learning, "cultural competence" and "socio-political consciousness." Under this methodology, all three propositions are necessary for creating the outcomes that educators would like to see for their students. Provided any one component is discarded, the notion of having a culturally relevant setting ceases to exist. Academic achievement: Student learning involves challenging students to become critical thinkers (Ladson-Billings, 2014). When attempting to get students to understand the concept of experiencing conviction regarding a song, a music instructor might ask the thought-provoking question, "Is violence ever justified?"

After watching footage of African Americans being violently attacked by police while peacefully marching and singing songs during the civil rights era, some students may come to believe that violence as a means of self-defense is sometimes justified.
Whenever possible, lessons should be connected to a student's history or cultural experiences, inclusive of relevant ones taking place in their communities. This strategy makes what is being taught more contextual and more meaningful (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

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Teacher's Perceived CRP in the Music Classroom

A recent study conducted during July of 2019 surveyed 228 music educators from a national population in an effort to ascertain an understanding related to how important teachers perceived CRP was, in action, in their classrooms. Of these participants, 93.6% were white, 56.2% were female, the median age was 51, and 55% of them had earned PhD's in music education. Of this conglomerate, 81.3 % held tenured positions or were on a tenure- track position, with less than 5% of the participants relating that they were adjunct professors. 70.67% of these educators indicated teaching at a public institution, while the remainder taught at private institutions. 42.44% worked in an urban setting while 34.67% worked in a suburban setting.

These music educator/participants were found in the directory of the College Music Society. An 18-item survey was developed based on the overarching question: "How familiar are you with the fundamentals of culturally responsive teaching?" On a 5- point Likert scale options ranged from "not at all familiar" to "extremely familiar." Questions also inquired about the

teacher's decisions to select music repertoire that best matched their students' interest as well as cultural backgrounds. The results indicated that the participants were most comfortable directing or allowing their students to examine their own cultures and biases after describing the presumptions that aligned with culturally relevant pedagogic philosophy.

However, the participants were uncomfortable creating educational opportunities for students to practice cultural responsiveness in a natural setting such as the school's music rehearsal space. When participants were asked to notate how often they discussed the various perspectives concerning culturally relevant teaching with their students, on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 equaling "never" to 5 equaling "a great deal" these participants largely promoted generosity and broad student engagement during their music classroom periods. Students were also influenced by the participants to utilize a vast genre of music styles. The participants were not as likely to discuss the importance of their students learning to communicate with their peers from various ethnic backgrounds. For this reason, creating choreography or music compositions, which demonstrated culturally, diverse student leaning rarely took place (music ed perception).

In another study directly pairing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with an adolescent music education program, Carlow (2006) evaluated an after school choral program in a Puerto Rican enclave in which a multiethnic music curriculum was put in place to be responsive to a neighborhood of adolescents encompassing a considerable amount of migrant and immigrant Hispanic individuals. This study involved English language learner's experiences. At times, their high school choral programs tension became palpable. These outcomes manifest "discourse norms" that widened between student's music experiences inside and outside of the music education program. Instead of the outcome of this music program being grounded in the principles of CRP, what resulted was more individualistic in nature. This group of youth felt the need to become competitive, with their sole focus seemingly being to land a solo. One unfortunate downfall of this program was the hierarchical system put in place that forced students to have to audition for select verses.

The Discarded: Children in Foster Care in the U.S.

> *There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. - Nelson Mandela*

In 2018, there were roughly 439,283 children in foster care in the United States (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2020). These children commonly enter the foster care system as a result of at least one family member or caregiver-related trauma inclusive of abuse or neglect. Foster care is a system designed to provide temporary living arrangements for children whose biological parents are unable to care for them. Some of these living arrangements may lead to the reunification of the child in foster care with their biological family, while others lead to adoption (Mann, 2017).

Taken into Foster Care: A Traumatizing Experience

Removing a child from their natural environment is a disruptive and confusing experience. Although a foster parent may have the most honorable intentions, this unforeseen transition can feel very alien to a child. Examples of simple changes that children in foster care incur that the average individual does not have to consider include being relocated to a home which smells

different than the one they are used to, getting used to cold hard wood floors when they may have only lived in residences that were carpeted, sleeping in a bed that is not their own, and having to taking a shower in the home of an individual they just met (Kansas City Star, 2020).

As it relates to the process by which a child is retrieved, it is not uncommon for a case worker from the department of Children and family Services to arrive at the intended child to be removed school, then call 911 to request a police escort be sent to that location for safety. As a twenty-six-year veteran of the Chicago Police Department, I have responded to calls for service of this magnitude often. Officers typically arrive on scene as a precaution, in the event that parents or family members of the child being taken into DCFS custody has been warned (Unrau, Seita, & Putney, 2008). At this point children are typically whisked away and taken to the nearest hospital emergency room to receive what is known as a "medical clearance," essentially checking the child's entire body to ensure abuse has not taken place and to allow for medical treatment in the event abuse has. Medical exams by definition can feel invasive. They often involve asking the child sensitive questions, examining intimate body parts and often time administering distressing or painful treatments (Kansas City Star, 2020).

As a law enforcement officer, as well as a licensed foster parent, I have observed children within earshot of the caseworker calling several homes asking if they are willing to accept the child or sibling group. There are many reasons, however, that a foster parent may decline to accept a child. The composition of the foster parent's family size may have grown, resulting in less available living space, as required by licensing agencies. Another common reason that a foster parent might not be able to commit to a family is that the sibling group is too large. Additionally, a foster parents' work responsibilities may not allow for them to care for children especially if there are specialized needs.

Child Welfare: The Paradox

In an ideal world, the term "child welfare" would include every possible attempt made on behalf of a nation relating to the best outcome for its youth. Naturally, this ideology would encompass services ranging from educational outcomes to psychosocial to medical services to recreational opportunities. When one pairs this term with children that have been placed in the foster care system in the United States however, this ideology is substantially reduced to meaning "the limited array of social services overwhelmingly focused on the placement of children away from their parents and administered largely through social agencies by professional social workers" (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). This meaning appears to deviate considerably away from the aforementioned concept.

The first bias The Department of Children and Family Services has created is, fundamentally, their programs are said to be constructed to assist African American children whose parents have "fallen through the societal cracks of a system which was functioning well" (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Under this fallacy, any assistance families are rendered is based on the premise that their present order functions well. In order for this ideology to have more legitimacy, better family preservation services would have to be put in place.

Furthermore, a system that is designed to focus on the overall well-being of a child of color must not only look through the lens of a historical perspective but a social perspective. The Black child must be the central focus with social service agencies paying particular attention to challenges rather than being the subordinate recipient's services (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). Aside from race, those who grow up in the foster care system are typically looked at as a subsystem from the rest of society. These individuals are often not considered an integral part of

society. In order for any system to advocate for and represent its members, the system must value and analyze the opinions, emotions and desires of its members as well as those of the larger society regarding its members (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

Systemic Racism

Our country's socioeconomic system functions differently for Black people than it does for Whites (Cross & Cross, 2008). In fact, some of the dysfunction occurring in Black families as well as their communities is a consequence of the dysfunction of the larger society. Paired with white youth and communities, the law enforcement system, educational system, political system, health care system or welfare institutions do not work as efficiently for Blacks as they do for White Americans. This is because from its onset, they were not designed to. There is a Western mindset that embraces the idea that parents who are poor are a result of their inadequacies. Historically, this mindset has transcended throughout all of the social service fields, not just the Department of Children and Family Services (Cross & Cross, 2008). If "individual inadequacy" is thought of as the cause of poverty then a poor family is an inadequate family, and there is little value in maintaining it as a unit. Creating future policies that promote the idea of making financial investments become more difficult when seen as not worth it (Cross & Cross, 2008).

Music Education and at-Risk Children

Children who experience these varying levels of emotional deficits, physical abuse and other stressors have often remained in these environments for years, until a family member, teacher or other mandated reporter intervened. For this reason, music education programs as a means of trauma therapy is healing (Zander, 2013). Music for this group of children assists in addressing abuse, grief, and loss that most children living in foster care experience (Shaw, 2016).

Research indicates music programs assist at risk youths in feeling as if the social challenge of being a student is more fitting for them. Instead of feeling like an outcast due to issues such as impulse control, anger management and aggression that often occur in students who suffer from emotional challenges, music programs help to promote positive social outcomes such as healthy peer relations (Parker, 2010).

Music programs assist youth diagnosed with emotional dispositions to feel a sense of "belong" (Goopy, 2013). There is a difference between being a member of an organization and having a sense of belonging. "Belonging" as defined here, means being one with the music education courses. Basic accomplishments such as creating a music beat can give a child ownership. Due to students collaborating musically with others, music outcomes can assist each student to experience feelings of acceptance, relatedness, competence, and shared control (Parker, 2010).

Zanders (2015) reported that in one of his studies, a 13-year-old boy, (who we will refer to as John) in foster care reported that at the age of 7, his 14-year-old foster brother had previously sexually assaulted him at one of his previous placements. Due to shedding too much light on this particular foster family, which created the potential for the foster parent to have her license taken away, she requested that John be removed from her home. Johns biological mother worked hard to complete the necessary alcohol and drug rehabilitation counseling services, required to get John back so within nine months was successful.

John moved back in with his biological mother who began a new relationship with a male that rather swiftly became John's stepfather. Due to his mother relapsing and battling drug addiction yet again, she spent a considerable amount of time away from home and was often both

physically and emotionally unavailable when she was home. Within a short time, John's stepfather began sexually abusing him. John was removed from his home by the Department of Children and Family Services and placed into foster care a second time.

By this time John began exhibiting negative behaviors, committing acts such as fighting at school. This aggressive behavior resulted in several school detentions and suspensions. Johns current foster parent relayed to John's caseworker that his behavior was "exhausting." One of her responses to John's negative behavior was to punish him by not allowing him to use the bathroom. The alternative was for John to defecate and urinate in a bucket. His foster mother continued to complain to John's caseworker about his behavior. Past experiences that John had undergone caused him to feel anxious, depressed, alone and hopeless. John began to question whether his life had any value at all, so as a result attempted to commit suicide. Following several mental hospitalizations, John's caseworker wrote a referral for him to be placed in a residential living facility. There, he encountered staff with clinical experience that had a better understanding of the effects of trauma as well as the benefit of trauma informed therapy. Within thirty days, John was placed in music therapy services.

One of the parallels between youth in foster care and their music selections is that they tend to choose songs that reflect their life's circumstances. Lyrics to a song that John often sang was written by Tupac and the Notorious B.I.G., titled *"Runnin"* A small portion of the lyrics are as follows: *"Why am I fighting to live, if I'm just living to fight? Why as I trying to see, when there ain't nothing in sight? Why am I dying to live, if I am just living to die?"* Music therapy assisted in helping John to learn breathing techniques that helped him to slow his racing thoughts down and become more aware or mindful of his thoughts, emotions and actions but more importantly the consequence for his actions. After months of music therapy, John admitted that when another student teased him during school hours, he still had thoughts of fighting but often chose not to.

As it relates to youth living in urban communities where traumas are increased singing is beneficial (Brown, Garnett, & Anderson, 2017). The idea that there are health benefits to singing was first published in 1948 in a Music and Medicine article written by Schullian and Schoen. Since that time, a considerable body of literature has been written, examining the healing and restoring uses of singing for a broad spectrum of physical, neurophysiological and psychosocial issues including the accessorial role of singing to relieve pain and reduce stress. Singing is beneficial for the lungs capacity, breathing problems, depression as well as restorative outcomes to the sympathetic nervous system (Clift & Hancox, 2001).

Social Justice in Music Education

Dilemmas surrounding social justice issues have become increasingly more important within the past decade. As a result, music educators have begun to address these issues within their curriculums. Vaugeois (2007) argues that in order to address social justice issues, we must develop tools that address injustice and its root causes. In order to address injustices, we must attempt to resolve how we are implicated from a political and historical perspective or no true change will occur. The failure of educators to explore their own philosophical underpinnings places them at a risk of becoming givers of charity while diminishing their students on the receiving end to a position of inferior. Vaugeois argues that Enlightenment philosophy is the basis of what causes a failure to analyze injustice appropriately and that the literature of critical race theory and feminist post-colonial analysis provides the necessary perspectives, as well as analytical tools that are essential to addressing injustice (2007).

The social, economic, legal, and political relationships of Westerners are based on 17th century Enlightenment and its philosophical concepts. Enlightenment seeks to objectively arrive at universal truths and eliminate subjectivity from our understanding of the world. However, the concept of these universal truths was arrived at during the trans-Atlantic slavery era when violence was acceptable and justified within the framework of the philosophy of Enlightenment. Thus, reason, objectivity, and universal truths became weapons of oppression as it relates to slavery and colonization. This philosophy justified the ability to differentiate between those fully human and *Others*, who were considered less evolved.

Our inheritance of this "ahistorical conceptualization" concludes that we are autonomous individuals who are products of our individual efforts, free of legal political, or economic influences (Vaugeois, 2007). This suggests that individuals are exclusively responsible for successes and failures in life, as it conceals historical relationships between groups of people resulting in an erasure of divisions according to race, class, and gender (Boyd & Brock, 2015). Further, individual autonomy conceals violent histories of slavery and colonization while ignoring group conditions of people living in ghettos with limited access to resources.

This narrative promotes the concept of the self-made individual who overcame nature and the odds, and that Westerners are good citizens and democratic heroes. This perspective rationalizes violence against *Others* by classifying it as civilizing people in need. The familiar narrative of Christianity, democracy, and/or capitalism being imposed on indigenous people because of a belief that it is in their best interest and for their salvation has been repeated around the world. The core of this Salvationist narrative is sense of duty to help the underprivileged or the underdeveloped, yet it implicates a sense of privilege for those who desire to possess and or control the *Others*.

Arguments drawn from literature of critical race theory and feminist post-colonial analysis critically dissect the Western narrative of political, economic, and social structures by which race, gender, and class are central themes (Vaugeois, 2007). In general, these issues are ignored in music education, which promotes the false notion that music and music education are not political. This claim is invalid due to the significant role music plays in colonization where it was used to erase existing cultural identities while enforcing new identities thru forced religion and education. Instead, music is a reflection of social values and it constructs social meaning. Different types of music establish and solidify the identities of groups and there is a deep connection to social and political relations based on musical likes and dislikes.

False ideas of equality and universal ideas mask contradictions between the Enlightenment philosophy's preoccupation with order and realties of oppression (Vaugeois, 2007). This concept justifies the rationalization of violence towards those deemed primitive and considered *Others* who are often compared to children. The rational thought process of Enlightenment philosophy made it morally acceptable to control the bodies of *Others* for the sake of civilizing them thru conversion to Christianity. The argument of treating racial identities as the basis of evolutionary development has been replaced by the concept of cultural differences in order to justify differences in access to citizenship economic, and social standing. People continue to be marginalized based on characteristics assigned to their group, which seeks to continue categorizing them as threats. Westerners are colonizers historically speaking and ignoring that history allows us to proclaim innocence while hiding the origins of relationships created from the colonization process.

There are many of the said contradictions in the education system within the United States. Research continues to show that public schools receive more funding for education in the United

States when housed in affluent communities compared to those located in impoverished ones. A considerable number of students who live below the poverty level come from communities where the ethnic minority populations are the largest. These characteristics have become a good indicator that educational disparities and inequalities will follow. In Illinois, for instance, students in grades K-12 receive 22% less in state and local funding. This statistic averages $1,000 less for each student considered low-income (Camera, 2018).

The disparity between the white, black and Hispanic gap is alarming. The Illinois Standardize Achievement test for the year of 2014 showed that only 4 out of 10 children in the third and fourth grades in the state of Illinois read at or above grade level. By comparison 69% of their white counterparts taking the same test read at or above the third and fourth grade levels. The disparity between math outcomes between these same third and fourth grade student were surprising as well lending a 23%-point achievement gap (Camera, 2018).

Critical Approaches in Music Education

Critical Pedagogy was developed by Paulo Freire in the 1960's to teach adults who were uneducated to read Portuguese (Abrahams, & Stormer, 2005). Due to Freire embracing the idea that the foundation of education was based on one's experiences, he developed applicable scenarios that served as a pathway of building blocks towards literacy attainment. For this reason, utilizing these methods have been particular successful in urban school districts (Abrahams & Stormer, 2005). One principle coined by the word "Consciousness" became one of Freire's most important pedagogical tenets. Similar to the metacognitive process of "thinking about your thinking" consciousness is related to the process of "knowing what you know." This process of learning to think more critically assists individuals in "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970).

Critical pedagogy is used in music education to transform students. It is not only concerned with change that occurs in students but change that occurs in educators as well (Abrahams & Stormer, 2005). Here, learning is cyclical. Educators teach their students and student educate their teachers. Music teachers view this opportunity as a collaborative experience, in that there is a mutually beneficial exchange of dialog. In the music classroom, teachers use this technic to empower their students to become creative musicians.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is a form of oppositional scholarship that examines society and culture as they relate to experiences of Whites as the normative standard and categorizations of race, law and power (Allen, 2017). Central to CRT has been the premise that the social construct of racism is central to the alienation and despair experienced by people of color (Crenshaw, 1996). Essentially, CRT argues that laws which have been created are inherently racist. It further asserts that race itself is a socially constructed concept created by white people in the hope of creating greater political division and economic gain at the expense of people of color (Creswell, 2018). These deficiencies largely increase the likelihood of impoverishment and crime rates taking place in ethnic minority communities. Notable scholars of CRT include movement include legal scholars Derrick Bell, Lani Guinier, Richard Delgado, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda, Patricia Williams, and Kimberley Williams-Crenshaw (Allen, 2007).

The more things change, the more critical the eye needs to stay the same. Upon Barack Obama's election as the nation's first black president, there were those that believed racial biases had begun to decrease. Others used this historic event as propaganda to espouse, this outcome placed America in a "post racial" period (Wise, 2010). Yes, one could make a strong argument

that perceptions of racism have changed, however so did the increased opposition to race-related policies. Racism still exists as evidenced by a number of high-profile cases in the U.S. such as Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Trayvon Martin. These intentional acts of violence imposed against black men were acts of intentional violence enabled by systemic power structures.

Hess (2015) argues that anti-racism is a critical theoretical framework for music education that acknowledges the existence of white supremacy and takes an "anti-stance" in order to dismantle this structure. It requires a shift from being "nonracist" to being "antiracist,". This conscientious mental process requires one to take responsibility for racist practices and to commit to help achieve true racial equality. Further, an anti-racist approach to education can combat the effects of an educational system that is clearly racist.

Anti-racism is defined as "an action oriented educational strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression" (Dei, 2000). Similar to Critical Race Theory (CRT), anti-racism presents "counter-stories and counter-narratives" by those typically marginalized in society (Hess, 2015). Although this anti-racism theoretical framework shares many principles as CRT, it seemingly advocates for change more radically than CRT instead of functioning as a tool for analysis.

Specific groups continue to be "racialized," which necessitates candid conversations about racism in order to bring about change. The framework of anti-racism specifically names "issues of race and social differences as issues that relate to power and lack of equity as opposed to matters of cultural and ethnic variety" (Dei, 2000). Anti-racism offers a sharp critique of liberalism, which is committed to the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity while falsely insisting that race is irrelevant. Further, political liberalism draws upon the idea that there is equal opportunity whereas economic liberalism relies on the notion that racial matters are based on individual choice.

The grounded theory of music education as put forth by Butler, Lind, & McKoy (2007) helps us understand the effects of race, ethnicity, and culture on music education. Their theory explores "educational equity in relationship to music education" and seeks to understand the factors that affect music teaching and music learning (Hess, 2015). This theory identifies five relevant factors, which include: the teacher, the student, the content, the instruction, and the classroom content, as they consider the influence of race, culture, and ethnicity on the teacher, the student, and their interactions (Butler, Lind, and McKoy, 2007). This model can aid in the creation of content, instruction, and context, which ultimately can influence music education learning.

Hess stresses that the anti-racist framework is invaluable to music education in order to facilitate change, as she explores three areas of music education. Positionality recognition is the first area where teachers can utilize an anti-racist approach and adjust their teaching methods after gaining an understanding of how the classroom's students are situated (Collins, 2000). In order to have effective dialogue about race, teachers must first be able to look within accurately assess their own perspectives regarding race. If not, any conversations about race will be limited and rather quickly terminated.

Hess identifies the importance of her positionality as a white, middle class academic educator, while identifying the fact she has benefited from unearned privilege due to the simple evolution of biological outcomes. Further, white scholars are well positioned to do anti-racist work and initiate conversations about white privilege because their positionality is often viewed as neutral. Inversely, a person of color may be unable to participate in dialogue on race because they may be perceived as angry or having some form of an agenda. The significance of positionality to teaching and learning is demonstrated by the quantity of literature that explores

this subject on music education. However, this literature does not often explore the theoretical framework that emphasizes the factors that can work against white supremacy as a structure (Collins, 2000).

Hess also promotes the need for a *multicentric* curriculum, which is immensely applicable because it destabilizes Europe as the epicenter of thought and history. Instead, it shifts the power toward the students and the experiences they bring to the classroom. *Multicentricity* shifts the focus to the individual student's experiences. As a result, *multicentric* music curriculum in music education becomes integrative as opposed to an addition to Western forms of music. Thus, destabilizing Europe as the epicenter of knowledge is a significant step towards dismantling white supremacy in music education (Hess, 2015).

Finally, Hess advocates for the pursuit of an equitable music agenda by music educators to combat white supremacy through exposure of its covert operation in classrooms. Referencing a music teacher of affluent, predominantly white students, Hess details the use of Ghanaian melodic notes in music education classes, paying tribute to them by adding to this a discussion of the Middle Passage which traced departure points of enslaved African people. The subsequent study of the richness of Afrocentric music was demonstrated as in spite of slavery rather than because of horrendous violence and oppression to combat the notion of any positive effects of slavery (Hess, 2015).

Summary of Literature Review

For the past two decades, research on music education has been more committed to ways by which identity development and cultural awareness continue to impact youth of color. As such, identity development related to music education or an individual's "music identity," has become a major focus in current research. In addition to music being documented to combat stress and anxiety, it has also been a source for emotional healing and religious/spiritual convictions. Furthermore, music continues to be used as a method of self-expression. For these reasons, individuals may be more likely to express their creative freedoms.

Additionally, music has been a tool used to advocate for social justice initiatives. Understanding concepts such as accepting others, challenging discrimination, as well as being non-tolerant of violence on innocent members of society by those in power, are all concepts which music selections better help individuals in our society to understand. Due to music continuing to assist in breaking down barriers and borders, it has proven to be the perfect remedy for social change.

Role of the Researcher

I have been positively influenced by five of my eight children's music education outcomes as members of the Chicago Children's Choir (CCC). Their length of membership in CCC and musical abilities vary, but their love for music and cultural appreciation is similar. The make-up of my family composition is unique. Of the five children who have been members of CCC, only one child is my biological son. I have a daughter who was adopted five years ago as well as three children which I am currently fostering, pending their upcoming adoptions.

A Cultural Experience: Chicago Children's Choir

As an example of cultural exchange opportunities, my (now) 21year old son, Pierce, a member of CCC from 2007-2017, participated in all of the accelerating levels that this choir offers. In 2017, Pierce was graced with the opportunity to serve as singer's counsel president of the choir's

top ensemble, "The Voice of Chicago." Due to CCC remaining committed to providing culturally yet diverse repertoire to their ethnically diverse membership, Pierce has performed at many venues such as the Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, and the White House. He has also gone on tour performing in Cuba as well as six cities in Italy. From singing alongside Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder at President Barack Obama's farewell address to performing with Chance the Rapper during the promotion of his Grammy award winning mix tape, "Coloring Book," Pierce as well as his siblings have participated in an array of music experiences.

Brief Overview of the Chicago Children's Choir

CCC was founded in 1956 during the height of the Civil Rights Movement. The mission of this organization is to inspire and change the lives of others through music. CCC currently has a membership of 5,000 ethnically diverse children, spanning across the city of Chicago, deriving from varying socio-economic backgrounds. Since the organization was founded, the have focused on building programs that reflect the racial and economic diversity of Chicago. As such, 80% of the youth that they serve are from low-moderate income homes.

CCC also offers music programing in eighty-five Chicago Public schools. This total resulted in the development of one hundred and twelve (112) choirs. These 112 choirs are known as the "in-school choirs" and represent tier 1 of this organization. Tier 2 include choral members from 11 neighborhoods within the city of Chicago. Members that reside in these neighborhoods, represent their community. The communities include Albany Park, Austin, Beverly, Englewood, Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, Hyde Park, Lincoln Park, Pilsen/Little Village, and Rogers Park. Tier 3 includes a group called "DiMension." This unique ensemble of male singers, (ages 12 and above) learn to control their voices as they transition into tenor and baritone. Lastly, there is tier 4 and the choir's top performance ensemble, "The Voice of Chicago." Although the choir's total student body includes 5,000 members, the top tier typically does not encompass more than 125 singers. This is largely due to the choir's expectation that this group of adolescent members retain large pieces of music repertoire while performing dance choreography. Examples of this range from Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Sam Cook's "A Change Is Going to Come" and the Michael Jackson melody encompassing 10 songs (ccc.org).

Chicago Children's Choir's Culturally Relevant Curriculum

The Chicago Children's Choir continues to make a conscious effort to include music repertoire that is culturally relevant to their ethnic minority population of students. They also continue to provide initiatives that allow opportunities for cross cultural exchange and appreciation. Examples of this aim include the "Voice of Chicago" performing Porgy & Bess in conjunction with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at Ravinia as well as singing with the Soweto Gospel Choir in South Africa. Due to the organization's insight, curriculum and compassion for youth, they have assisted in shaping my children into humble yet self-confidant, socially conscience global citizens. I believe that I will forever be an advocate of their mission. As such likened to a beacon of light, which must be shared, I feel compelled to create these kinds of music experiences in communities such as the Roseland community, where they are not offered.

Methodology

I plan to use a basic interpretive qualitative study, drawing on elements of *phenomenology*, which is a qualitative research methodology used to describe the manner by which human beings experience certain phenomenon. This methodology focuses on understanding the meaning people ascribe to events and circumstances in their life (Ravitch & Carl, 2015). A phenomenological study applies a great deal of effort to guard against allowing the researcher's biases to misconstrue information that the participants share.

As a result, phenomenological research is commonly conducted through methods such as interviews, observations and small samples of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). By studying the participant's perspectives, a researcher can look for reoccurring themes in a study. Although the researcher is not able to make generalizations related to outcomes that individuals have experienced as a result to a phenomenon, their research can yield some findings to help inform similar studies. Phenomenological research can be helpful through its rich description of interpretation that may reveal new direction and possibilities for future research (Ravitch & Carl, 2015).

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) is a student-centered approach to teaching that identifies the students' cultural underpinnings for the purpose of becoming strengths. This theoretical framework is more closely related to a cooperative learning style. Under this umbrella, Ladson-Billings (2006) asserts that cooperative learning styles are more effective than competitive ones as it relates to teaching ethnically diverse students in that educational discussions often help to break through some of the stereotypes associated with African American youth. CPR rests on three propositions: "Academic Achievement" or student learning, "cultural competence" and "socio-political consciousness" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Under this methodology, all three propositions are necessary for creating the outcomes that educators would like to see for all students.

Although my research topic looks at the influence music education has on the variables "identity development, cultural awareness, and "trauma" in black youth, and as a result, does not consider "academic achievement" in the traditional sense. In the music classroom, academic achievement has more to do with challenging students to become critical thinkers, through songs that commonly convict, such as the song, "We Shall Overcome." A music instructor could use this experience as an opportunity to ask the thought-provoking question, "Is violence ever justified against peaceful protestors?" I decided to use CRP as one of my theoretical frameworks because I believe it is the best fit for this research topic.

Anti-Racist Theory

Anti-racism is a critical theoretical framework for music education that takes an "anti-stance" against white supremacy in order to dismantle it. This conscious transition requires a mental shift from being "nonracist" to being "anti-racist." This framework can combat the effects of a racist educational system and it is invaluable to music education. Similar to Critical Race Theory (CRT), anti-racism presents "counter-stories and counter-narratives" by those typically marginalized in society (Hess, 2005). Although anti-racism shares many principles as CRT, it is more effective because it pushes towards change instead of functioning as a tool for analysis. The framework of anti-racism specifically names "issues of race and social differences as issues that relate to power and lack of equity as opposed to matters of cultural and ethnic variety" (Dei, 2000).

Further, the Western perspective of viewing the world is substantially impacted by imperialism. The subsequent "racialized discourses" necessitates that we "decolonize" our speech, our thought, our methodologies, and our pedagogies (Bradley, 2006). Decolonization involves the engagement with imperialism and colonialism in order to better understand the underpinnings of racist practices, which will not be an easy task. "A great deal of thought in music education also remains under the influence of lingering colonialism," as race is embedded as a coded language, however, "anti-racism fosters the capacity for intervention" (Bradley, 2006). Hess stresses that the anti-racist framework is invaluable to the music classroom in order to facilitate change. Through an educator's positionality, they can utilize an anti-racist approach and adjust their teaching methods after gaining an understanding of how the classroom's students are situated (Collins, 2000).

Neighborhood/Demographics Use by Name
Chicago Englewood and Beverly Neighborhood Disparities

Englewood
Population - 23,792

- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- Other races
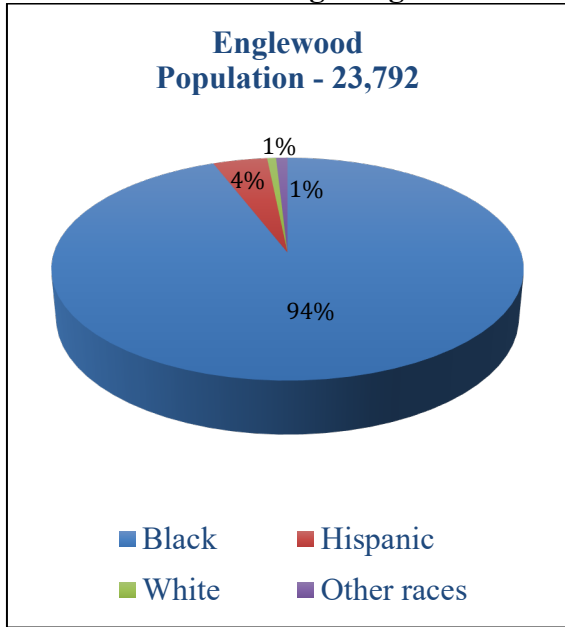
Figure 3: Englewood Population

Beverly
Population - 20,437

- Black
- Hispanic
- White
- Other races
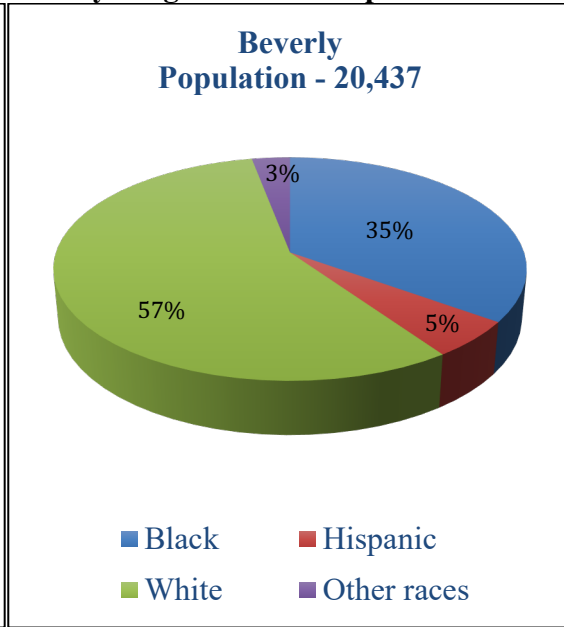
Figure 4: Beverly Population

Englewood
Education Attainment Level

- Less Than High School
- High School or Equivalent
- Some College - No Degree
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate or Professional Degree
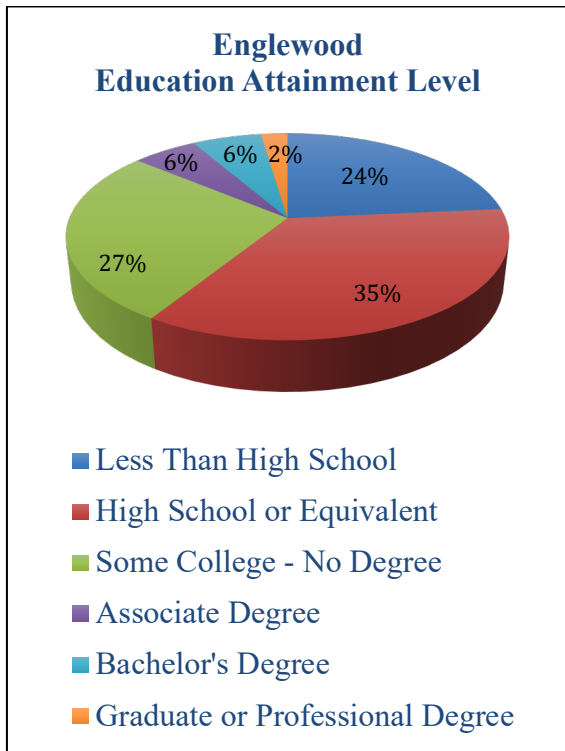
Figure 5: Englewood Education Attainment

Beverly
Education Attainment Level

- Less Than High School
- High School or Equivalent
- Some College - No Degree
- Associate Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate or Professional Degree
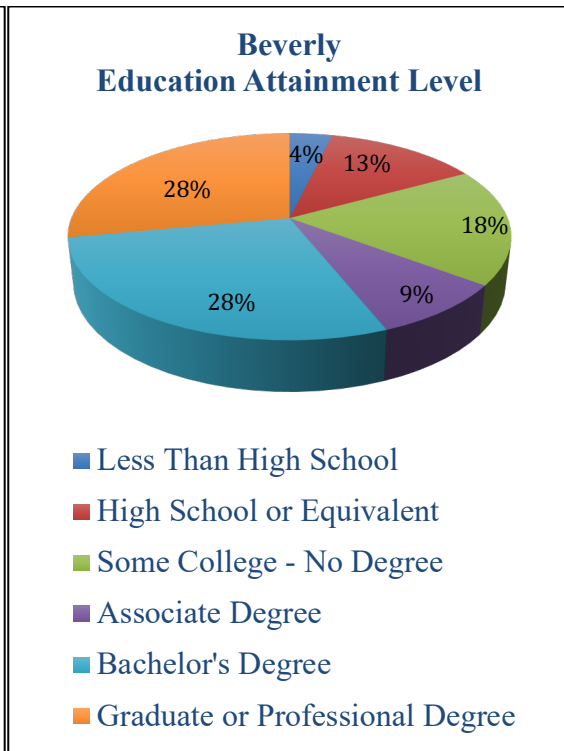
Figure 6: Beverly Education Attainment

Source: http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots

Chicago Englewood and Beverly Neighborhood Disparities Continued

Englewood Income 2014 - 2018

- Under $25,000 — 56%
- $25,000 - $49,999 — 24%
- $50,000 - $74,999 — 10%
- $75,000 - $99,999 — 4%
- $100,000 - $149,999 — 4%
- $150,000 - Over — 2%
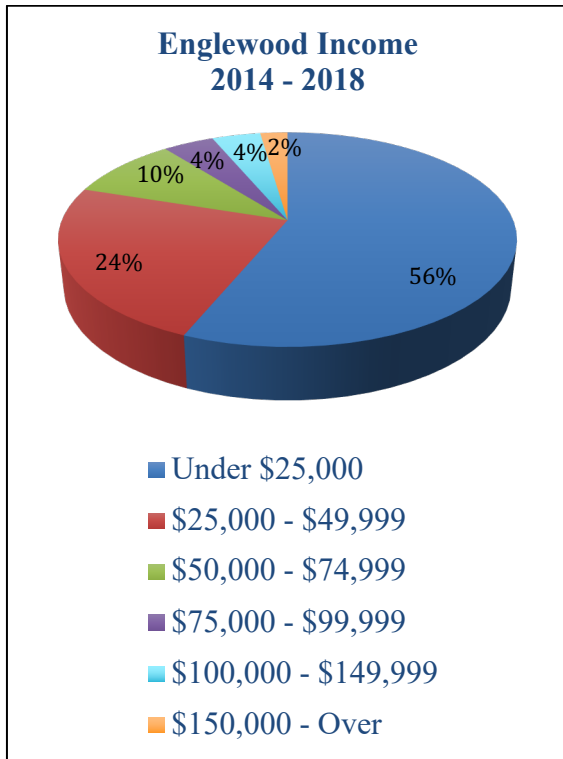
Figure 7: Englewood Income

Beverly Income 2014 - 2018

- Under $25,000 — 8%
- $25,000 - $49,999 — 15%
- $50,000 - $74,999 — 13%
- $75,000 - $99,999 — 15%
- $100,000 - $149,999 — 17%
- $150,000 - Over — 32%

Figure 8: Beverly Income

Englewood Housing

- Owner Occupied — 16%
- Renter Occupied — 48%
- Vacant — 36%
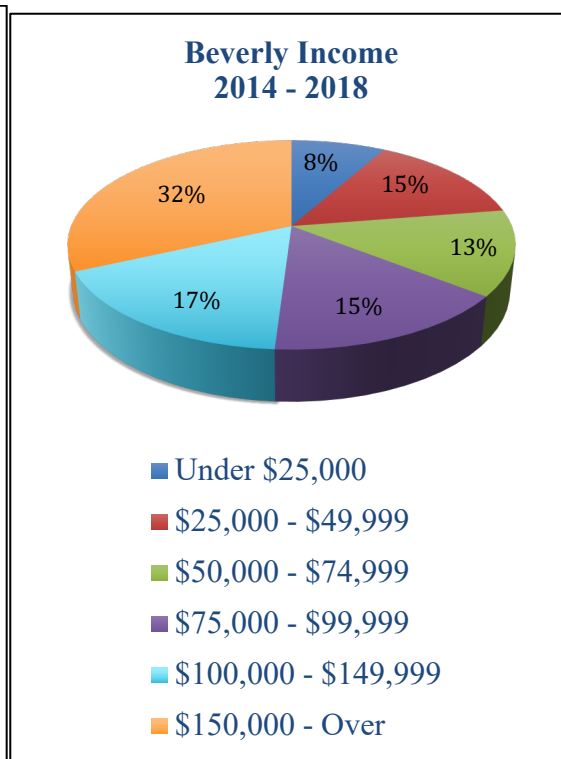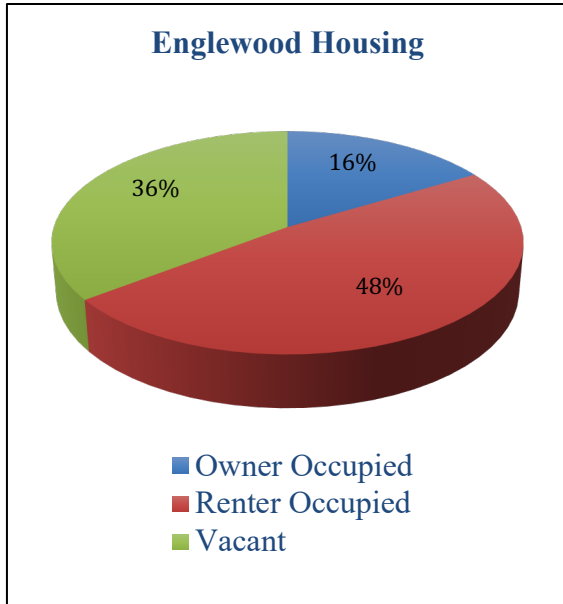
Figure 9: Englewood Housing

Beverly Housing

- Owner Occupied — 78%
- Renter Occupied — 16%
- Vacant — 6%
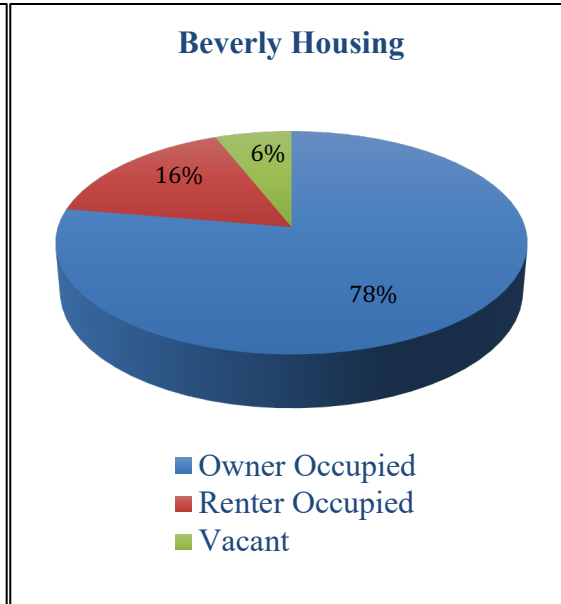
Figure 10: Beverly Housing

Source: http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots

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Englewood vs Beverly

      Many concepts become apparently obvious when looking at the Beverly -Englewood neighborhood comparison descriptive chart. **Race**: 94% of Englewood's residents are African American, with their white population being only 1% and their Hispanic population being 4%, in comparison to 35% of Beverly's residents being African American, with their white population being 57%. **Education**: 24% of the African American population in the Englewood community have less than a high school diploma, whereas only 4% of white residents in the Beverly community have no high school equivalent. 6% of African Americans in the Englewood community have a bachelor's degree in comparison to 28% of white residents in the Beverly community. Most staggering is the idea that only 2% of the African American population residing in the Englewood community have graduate degrees or above while 28% of the Beverly community's white population hold master's degrees and above.

      As we take a snapshot of Englewood's socio- economic statuses, we notice that 56% of their residents have an income of less than $25,000 annually in comparison to 8% of Beverly residents. Most eye opening is, while only 2% of Englewood Residents earn $150,000 a year or more, a whopping 32% of Beverly residents do. These numbers assist in better clarifying why only 16% of Englewood residents own their own homes in comparison to 78% of Beverly residents. My hope is that information from these graphs may give some insight as to the kind of responses which participants from each community may or may not relate.

I examined individual's perceptions of CRP who are alumni members of CCC. I conducted a purposeful sampling strategy of 7 members between the ages of 18-21 years old, with each member not having been out of the choir more than three years.

During these individual's memberships, they resided in demographically different neighborhoods across the city of Chicago. As such, I interviewed alumni members from the Englewood choir or members residing in a similar geographic area, the Beverly choir as well as alumni from the choir's top ensemble, the "Voice of Chicago." These participants largely reside in the Beverly neighborhood, Hyde Park and Lincoln Park communities.

As such, my sample population is intentionally comprised of alumni members who reside in the above neighborhoods, with my focus being placed on the Englewood and Beverly communities. These two communities encompass almost opposing socioeconomic and educational differences. My hope is that I will unearth new information via interviews, as youth who reside in Englewood may experience more trauma such as violent crime outcomes. My aim, however, is to make an allowance for the opportunity of fertile ground when examining each individual's perceptions on CRP.

Setting of Study

Due to the current global pandemic, the methodological decision guiding this study took place via Zoom Video Communications. This medium provides video and audio online services. Information for scientific data generation included 30-45 minutes of open-ended questions during in-depth interviews that was audio recorded with a Q3HD digital recorder. In an effort to establish a more trusting interaction with each participant, I strived to build a rapport with the interviewees. While it was not possible for me to completely bracket my ideas, biases, and assumptions regarding this research topic, I kept a log of my thoughts and feelings via field notes. In an effort to protect the identities of each participant, I used pseudonyms throughout this study. Lastly, I transcribed data after each interview through the use of Trint Audio Services. Upon completion, I emailed each participant a complete copy of their personal interview.

Ethical Considerations

Due to this study consisting of a panel of 7 individual participants, I completed DePaul University's exempt Institutional Review Board (IRB) application and was granted permission to follow through with my research prior to recruiting subjects. Once IRB approval was obtained, I emailed each potential participant to solicit their agreement for my study. If the participant expressed a willingness to take part in the study, he or she was sent an informed consent letter. I assured the participants that the information provided during the interview would be voluntary and that they did not have to answer any nor all of the interview questions. I further explained that if the participant voiced that he or she began to feel uncomfortable, the interview would stop.

Research Questions

How does an urban multicultural choral program positively influence identity development, promote cultural awareness and reduce levels of stress in participating youth of color? To this end, the questions that I will ask the seven (7) participants in my panel are:

1. Has singing become a medium for identity development? In other words, how has being a member of the Chicago Children's Choir influenced you to feel about yourself?

2. How do you perceive your prior instructors' efforts to teach choral music that is culturally responsive? In other words, do you feel that your music instructor selected songs that you could relate to as an African American male or female?

3. Do you feel CCC provided opportunities for inclusiveness and expression on behalf of various ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe CCC created ways for members of all races to feel included and to feel comfortable being themselves?

4. Does singing songs written by other cultures help you learn and grow? If so, how?

5. Do you believe that teachers of one ethnic group can effectively teach music to youth of different ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe that a music teacher has to be the race of their student to effectively teach them?

6. Does music education help to reduced stress? In other words, did singing in CCC help you deal with situations that may have been stressful? If so, How?

Validity & Reliability

1. Field Notes*:* field notes are created by the researcher to remember the behaviors, activities, and other features of the setting being observed. Field notes include written dialog, meant to be read by the researcher in an effort to produce meaning and create an understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied.

2. Member checking involves, "taking data and interpretations back to the individuals from whom they were derived and asking them if the results are plausible" (Creswell, 2009). As the researcher, I reconfirmed my participants responses to questions which I had asked by emailing the participants copies of their transcripts in order to ensure that words and phrases reported had the meaning, essence and significance as what I had interpreted. I requested that each participant return any modifications, corrections, deletions, or additional comments within one week's times.

3. Rich, thick descriptions help "so that anyone else interested in transferability has a base of information appropriate to the judgment" (Merriam, 1988, p. 177).

4. Analyzing the researcher's biases takes into account "the researcher's assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study" (Merriam, 1988, p. 170). With a goal of transparency, I divulged any known biases which I was aware of to better ensure that I would not threaten the validity or reliability of my study. In large part I used a qualitative interview protocol of six semi-structured interview questions. I formatted each question in a way that would not intentionally skew a participant towards a particular response. Additionally, each question was asked in two different ways, making it easier to understand so that participants could answer honestly.

The Process of Creating Codes and Themes

Qualitative data, such as interviews are often given more clarity by a process known as "coding." This process of labeling assists the researcher in organizing information and finding relationships between them. When coding, the researcher may assign labels to words or phrases that represent significant, as well as recurring themes, in their participant's responses. Labels often include the use of colors and numbers as well. In an effort to better organize my participants responses, I assigned a color and theme to their answers. This process of coding qualitative interpretations is known as "Thematic Coding" or "Thematic Analysis." As such, when the researcher uses thematic codes to examine their participant's responses, they become easier to understand. Provided that the researcher finds themes, (often a part of the participants' lived experience) that occur more frequently, it gives the study more meaning. As a thorough researcher, I also worked to elicit any differences in participating Chicago Children's Choir alumni responses.

Data which is gathered through conducting interviews is not only necessary for providing useful research insight but is also essential to build credibility as a responsible qualitative researcher. It is for this reason that I also used a method known as "Interpretive phenomenological analysis" (IPA). This kind of analysis involves the participants' conceptual understanding of their world. I achieved this by incorporating "descriptive" codes. Descriptive codes are assigned to segments of data such as a single word or a very small section of words. An example of one descriptive code which continued to emerge during my interviews was the notion that the Chicago Children's Choir's music education programing provided a "safe space" for choir members. Based on this level of consistency, a theme of "safe space" was created. Upon the conclusion of my semi-structured interviews, I developed a total of ten color coded themes. These themes include the following:

Yellow: Importance of togetherness/group.
Blue: Culturally relevant music.
Red: Music is like a religious/ spiritual experience.
Orange: Learning music without the negative history.
Green: Chicago Children's Choir being a Safe space.
Purple: Metacognition: Educators being aware of their thoughts & feelings.
Burgundy: learning about other cultures.
Brown: Identity Development.
Gray: Music education reduces stress.
Pink: The choir's programing provided validation.

The Participants Responses by Color Coded Created Themes

Below is an example of the manner by which a considerable amount of participant number three's (P3) responses, fit into several themes. I decided to use his interview as an example. Within four of the six questions asked, this participant's responses significantly fit into 9 out of 10 themes.

Participant Number Three (P3)-Question Number One

1). Has singing become a medium for identity development? In other words, how has being a member of the Chicago Children's Choir influenced you to feel about yourself?

(Green Represents, Chicago Children's Choir being a "Safe Space")
(Brown Represents, "Identity Development")
(Yellow Represents, "Importance of Togetherness/Group)

P3: Response: So, before I joined the choir growing up, I dealt with a lot of insecurities, especially as it relates to my look, my ways, and growing up being a big kid, there's kind of a stigma that you're supposed to be funny. However, you really, you know, wouldn't have a lot of friends. You would have horrible success at dating as well. I was really insecure and really good at hiding it, but I was very insecure.
And so, I was apprehensive about joining the choir initially because I didn't really think that singing was my thing. But, by the grace of God and my mother, I decided to join.

And as I reflect on my tenure with the choir, I will say that I began to not be able to recognize the person who joined the choir versus the person who graduated from the choir. Then I started to find my sense of self-worth and started to gain so much confidence and discover music as a passion of mine that allowed me to step outside of my box and be free. One thing about the Chicago Children's Choir was that it was a 100 percent no judgment zone. So, whatever you look like, whatever you sounded like, how you dressed, whatever you did, it didn't matter.

We were going to create music. We were there to be a family. And like I said, over the course of the time, it was just like having come alive on stage. Even in rehearsals, I would come alive and parts of me were scared to show my high school and, you know, my personal friends, that sort of music and singing. But they decided to help me, to see who I was and to reel beyond the insecurity that helped me to start to battle those insecurities and see myself as worthy, being loved, as appreciated, as handsome.
The choir absolutely had a great impact on my identity development. I discovered music as a passion of mine that allowed me to step outside of my box and be free.

Although the green coded theme, "safe space" will continue to be voiced, in several of the participant responses, this term will possess very different meanings. In answering question number one, participant #3's version of "safe space" has nothing to do with being placed in harm's way of physical danger. Instead, it involves the apprehension that often accompanies feeling insecure, vulnerable, exposed, and unaccepted. For participant #3, the Chicago Children's Choir programming's "safe space" encompassed the idea of feeling welcomed and totally accepted. Within this same response, the participant transitions to the color brown, which is representative of "identity development." He expresses an ability (after having been a member of the choir for some time) to be able to recognize his own value as well as contribution within his personal group of friends as well as within the choir. This participant relates that he was then able to see himself as "worthy, being loved, appreciated, and handsome." According to the participant, the choir

encompassed a feeling of family, which is coded in the color yellow and representative of "the importance of togetherness/group."

Question Number Two

2). How do you perceive your prior instructors' efforts to teach choral music that is culturally responsive? In other words, do you feel that your music instructor selected songs that you could relate to as an African American male or female?

(Blue Represents "Culturally Relevant Music")
(Pink Represents "The choir's programing provided validation.")
(Red Represents, "music is like a religious/spiritual experience")
(Yellow Represents, "Importance of Togetherness/Group)

P3: Absolutely. Judy Hanson, who was a Caucasian white female, and Josephine Lee, who was a Korean American female. And we did a lot of music that spoke to the current situation. In times that especially related to the plight of black Americans. So, I was in the choir during the times of the killings and the heightened police brutality on Trayvon Martin and all of these individuals who lost their lives for senseless reasons. The Chicago Children's Choir and my instructors decided to protest.
Either way, which was to say and implement music that was culturally sensitive. So, a lot of times you would hear us do a South African song, and while it may sound nice and made it sound like it was, you know, just great music. The South African pieces and the movements that we did came from the era of apartheid and anti-apartheid in South Africa. So, we would do some work during that time of oppression when they had to fight the oppressors and they didn't have weapons so they would learn to do body movements.
There were no deadly weapons and like sudden onomatopoeia type of feel to intimidate and to fight back. So, we would take those songs and we would see them, and we would combine those with American pieces. You know, "change is going to come," songs like that. And we would create statements and we would process music and people liked that. I felt understood and seen by the music that we were singing. It wasn't like we were just taking a blind eye to the current events that were happening. But because there wasn't a lot of black people in the choir, there was a great deal, but it was majority white. It felt good to be able to sing music that comes from my heritage and make a statement at the same time. I remember when former President Trump was elected to office. The day after Election Day, we all had rehearsal and it was just a crazy day on the ground. And we got there. And the first thing we did before we did any rehearsing was, we gathered in a circle in the rehearsal room and we started to sing "I need you to survive."

P3: You have a song that came out and we decided to sing that song and really minister to each other. So, you saw the blacks ministering to the whites, Asians, the gays in the streets, the male, the female. We all started to minister to each other, with this song. And there was so much healing that happened in the room because of this black song in the midst of a whole lot of white supremacy and craziness going on in the world.

In response to question number two, participant #3 relates that they learned a great deal of culturally relevant music repertoire, which spoke to and addressed the current social climate

inclusive of the excessive and unwarranted use of force by law enforcement primarily on people of color. Due to this participants' Caucasian and Korean American female music conductors deciding to take a stand and protest, it helped him to feel validated. He describes this experience as a "religious/spiritual" one, which is coded in the color red. Additionally, in his testimonial, the theme "safe space" as well as the importance of "togetherness" continues.

Question Number Five

5). Do you believe that teachers of one ethnic group can effectively teach music to youth of different ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe that a music teacher has to be the race of their student to effectively teach them?

(Burgundy Represents, "Learning About Other Cultures")
(Brown Represents, "Identity Development")
(Red Represents, Religious/Spiritual Experience)
(Purple Represents, "Metacognition. Educators being aware of their thoughts")
(Pink Represent, "Student Validation")

P3: *F*or five years, I've watched Judy Hanson and Josephine Lee teach a group of multiracial, multiethnic group of young people music, and they would do it with such excellence. Before we even sang the first note, we went to the history and sometimes some pieces had a very bloody history to it.
And I think that when you teach the history of a piece, that allows everybody to be able to emulate what the spirit of the song was at the time. It may be 100 years later. It may be one year later. But regardless of the time difference, when you learn the history of it, it enables you to go about it with a different understanding and be able to minister with a different understanding and a different place, a place of identity.
If there was ever a time when Miss Hanson or Miss Lee would not be able to understand some of our culturally relevant issues or be able to hire some expert, they would call on us, they would say, "how does this sound?" And they would allow us the space to contribute to whatever the idea or the thought of the song was. They would allow us to, you know, be recognized. ==This wasn't some type of dictatorship and it was a community collective effort.==
And so, I definitely believe that with the right understanding and with the right perspective, someone of a different ethnicity or race and differences outside of their culture, it just comes with understanding and a good perspective.
In response to question number five, participant #3 begins by giving a description of how CCC's choral students were taught about other cultures through music. He relates that before learning the first note, they were taught about the culture's history which actually was "sometimes very bloody." Those responses are coded in burgundy. He then expounds by explaining that upon learning the history of a piece, the spiritual component within that piece remains current. Therefore, whether the song being sang takes place today or 100 years from now, it doesn't matter, it will have the same ministerial power. These responses are coded in red. Due to the Caucasian and Korean American female conductors being aware of their inability to understand, which comes by way of a "lived experience" they would hire an expert. This section is coded in the color purple and related to "metacognition or educators being aware of their thoughts."

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Question Number Six

6). Does music education help to reduced stress? In other words, did singing in CCC help you deal with situations that may have been stressful? If so, How?

(Red Represents, Religious/Spiritual Experience)
(Gray Represent, "music education reduces stress)
(Brown Represents, "Identity Development")

P3: Yes, I do believe the music education and the performing arts can help relieve stress. And I think that because one of the things that most people say at our concerts is that music connects us all. Music is felt in the heart and it penetrates the flesh and penetrates the mind, the brain, and it goes into our core. That's where everybody is able to connect with music. That's why, you know, music is a part of our everyday lives.
And so, with music being limitless and boundless, everybody is able to feel music. and it has so many benefits to as it relates to stress reduction.
P3: And obviously, speaking from experience, being able to be on stage and perform, sing, dance, act, whatever it is, it would literally take my mind off of whatever was going on and allow me to concentrate and be in the moment and whatever was happening afterwards, whatever we were going back to after rehearsal, after a concert, it wasn't as bad as it was when we were finished.
P3: And a lot of times we would come into rehearsal, especially if it seemed like I was having a bad day. One thing that Mrs. Lee would say is, "it doesn't matter what happened before 4:00, dedicate yourself to this moment and immerse yourself in this moment. And then you can go back and deal with it." But you'd find that once you're immersed in music and once you started to mold and be able to do what you love to do… afterwards, you wouldn't even be able to remember what happened to you before practice, because that's what music does, it lifts us and allows us to escape and not escape in a negative way. It allows us to leave whatever sorrow or whatever anger or disappointment we had, and it allows us to see things in a different manner. And it allows you to start to really connect with whatever you're saying.
P3: Yeah, it may be that you haven't sang that song for years, but because of what I just went through, the song means something different to me now. OK, you know, we were singing like Hallelujah and it's not technically a gospel piece. Whatever I was going through, I mean, one day I broke down in tears because it was just like, I can connect with this song now because of what I've already been going through. And for some people, it just may be just the word "hallelujah" but for me as a Christian, I believe it. I'm saying repeatedly it's taking my mind off of whatever I was angry at, whatever was going on. And this now becomes worship to me.

        Here, participant #3 answers question number six by explaining that because music can be felt, it reduces stress. It is cyclical in nature, so it touches the heart of many and connects mankind. This participant gives an account of the many times that his choral performances took his mind off of the magnitude of his stress. Once the performance ended, the stress seemed manageable. He additionally describes music as an "escape" to leave behind whatever sorrows you may have had. He then gives an example of how a Christian song titled, "Hallelujah" helped him to mentally and emotionally break free from his stress and transitioned into worship.

Question Number One

1). Has singing become a medium for identity development? In other words, how has being a member of the Chicago Children's Choir influenced you to feel about yourself?

(Yellow Represent the importance of togetherness/group)
(Red Represents, Religious/Spiritual Experience)
(Brown Represents: Identity Development)

P1: I think one of the largest ways that the choir influenced me to think about myself was the ability to think about myself as a part of something bigger. As one member of the larger organism, a lot of times people think of singing or singers as an individual person on stage. But rather than singing in a choir, it's not about you being front and center at all times, it's about what you can contribute to the group. And it takes everybody having an understanding for the group to work well.
Due to Participant #1 believing it was beneficial to be a part of a whole, he connected this idea to his personal development, relating that teamwork was an attribute that helped him grow.

P2: In the choir specifically singing took on a very different connotation because it was something I did with a group of people. So, for me specifically, there were moments where I rehearsed 15 times. But there were also points for me where singing was together. And this group was almost like a religious experience. Like I've told people before. Sometimes the only way I really feel God is through music. And I think the choir was my introduction to that. So, it's special in that sense. But the choir was also my introduction to working in a group like unanimously, for lack of a better word, for the greater good. You know, there are a lot of times when you were required to work with other people, or you end up working with other people.

Participant #2 also discussed how being a part of group collaboration enhanced her idea of identity development. Although the color brown is coded as representing identity development and the color yellow as representing the importance of togetherness/group, this participant as well as the last (in response to this question) felt that being a part of something bigger helped to define her identity.

P3: And as I reflect on my tenure with the choir, I will say that I begin to not be able to recognize the person who joined the choir versus the person who graduated from choir. Then I started to find my sense of self-worth and started to gain so much confidence and as I reflect on my tenure with the choir, I will say that I begin to not be able to recognize the person who joined versus the person who graduated. Then I started to find my sense of self-worth and started to gain so much confidence and like I said, over the course of the time, it was just like having come alive on stage. Even in rehearsals, I would come alive and parts of me were scared to show my high school and, you know, my personal friends, that sort of music and singing. But they decided to help me, to see who I was and to real beyond the insecurity that helped me to start to battle those insecurities and see myself as worthy, being loved, as appreciated, as handsome.

Participant #3 expresses an ability (after having been a member of the choir for some time) to be able to recognize his own value as well as contribution within his personal peer group of friends as well as within the choir. This participant relates that he was then able to see himself as, "worthy, being loved, appreciated, and handsome."

P4: I think what the Chicago Children's Choir provided for me that definitely the public school system never does is that it gave me a connection not only to African American history, but the African diaspora. And I got to learn about my roots, which was largely stalled for African Americans like me seeing a lot of songs from South Africa, we sang some Nigerian songs. So, I was just able to feel more connected to my original people because everything in school was about the start of slavery. We don't learn anything about Africans before they came to America. So, it made me feel prouder of my people and more connected to where my blood originally comes from. The choir absolutely has a great impact on my identity development. I discovered music as a passion of mine that allowed me to step outside of my box and be free.

It appears that participant #4's self-concept was largely related to her ethnicity. Having become educated about her historic roots gave her a sense of belonging to a geographical group of individuals like herself, in this case, from Africa.

P5: For me, the choir influenced my sense of cultural awareness, because we got to meet a lot of cool people and see a lot of cool things that, you know, it's just, it's amazing.

Participant #5 believes that he has developed as an individual, largely by learning about the culture of others.

P6: And I was able to understand my voice and just have so much confidence because like when I'm with people who can't sing, I feel great and feel good about it. And it's just nice to have that. Even if I'm like, alone, I can sing, I'm just like, this is great.

Participate #6 gives an account of her identity development through an introspective lens. She gives a privileged account of her voice. Whether she's alone or is in the company of others who can't sing as well, she sings with confidence.

P7: It definitely made me confront public speaking in a way that I would not have otherwise had access to. Just like in terms of getting comfortable. I was like a work in progress over time. But I think that I kind of transitioned in terms of identity development. I'm thinking about my role in my class, maybe in terms of taking more of an active role in discussions.

Participant #7 attributes his personal growth to the choir's requirement that members get used to speaking publicly. This face-to-face interaction with live audiences allowed him to become more comfortable with himself.

Question Number Two

2). How do you perceive your prior instructors' efforts to teach choral music that is culturally responsive? In other words, do you feel that your music instructor selected songs that you could relate to as an African American male or female?

(Blue Represents Culturally Relevant Music)

(Pink Represents Validation)
(Burgundy Represents, learning about other cultures)
(Yellow Represent the importance of togetherness/group)
(Green Represents, Chicago Children's Choir being a "Safe Space")

P1: I think yes, and it wasn't by mistake, it was a very thought-out important part of the choir to them. It was something that they prided themselves on. We often would engage with and see other choirs that sang one type of music pretty much always, whereas we made sure to throughout the year, as well as during Black History Month and other parts of the year, learn songs that might have been more important to the African American singers.
In the group there were white singers and speakers of other ethnicities that might not have been as aware of them. For example, it was required for everybody in the choir to know, Lift Every Voice and Sing all the way through, all the races. Even though a lot of the kids in the choir may not have known about the song prior to being in the choir, nor did they know about the song's importance to black people.

With the color blue representing "culturally relevant music," Participant #1 gives an account for the level of importance the choir instructors believed culturally relevant music was. An example of this includes all members of the choir learning the song, "*Lift Every Voice and Sing.*"

P2: I think I can definitely say yes, definitively. They did select music that made me feel valid. They selected music that was familiar. They selected things sometimes that were of my culture that I didn't even know about. So, like I learned about apartheid through choir because we did anti-apartheid music and I'm not South African. But that's still an important part of anti-racism history on the planet, which is relevant to black people everywhere. You know, and I think what's most important is that they didn't just choose songs for that reason, but a lot of it was an exploration of beauty and joy everywhere. So, the best way I can put it is sometimes when you find yourself celebrating Black History Month, you learn all these negatives and these horrible things, and they try to put a spin on it in celebration. But a lot of times, you can't really celebrate the history because it's rough.

But through music, you kind of get to see the beauty and stuff that we're often missing in our cultural education. I don't want to just learn about Jewish people because of the Holocaust or African American people, because of slavery or whatever. I want to go further than that because otherwise we're putting a spin on it. All you see is victims. You don't see anything else. And so, the fact that we learned about… that the music and the cultures without that negative hue over it was really important.

You never know what trauma they are they're bringing with them. But I think they did a really good job of creating a safe space, a place where you could come. And for me specifically, I got bullied in school a lot. At the time, I didn't know if it was racism or sexism or whatever. I just I know that in school I didn't have the words when I was a kid. And the choir was largely devoid of that. I'm not saying that it was perfect, people were still mean to each other because that's life, but it's not something that the organization tolerated and it's not something that they fostered. A lot of times, people intentionally or unintentionally let stuff slide like that.

Participant #2 expresses her gratitude for CCC moving beyond the limitation of exclusively singing traditional black history songs, however instead allowing for South African repertoire to be a part of their curriculum. She relates that she was able to enjoy learning about the African culture through a vast selection of music. She further explained that it was refreshing not to be introduced to this culture via a depressing history, such as songs that start African history with slavery. When music instructors do this, they start with pain. Participant #2 then expounds on her choral experience by describing it as a, "safe space." She believes that due to being biracial (African American & German) she was bullied a lot in Chicago Public Schools. At some point during the interview she exclaimed, "I wasn't white enough for the white children nor black enough for the black children." Due to CCC actively practicing inclusion, she felt safe there.

P4: I definitely think they did a really good job of selecting songs that I could relate to. I feel like even if the song wasn't necessarily from my culture directly, it always connected back to a central theme of civil rights, justice and standing up for people of color, which is something that's very close to my heart. And I think the choir instilled that in me. So, I feel like everything is looked at, I could always relate to because it always had a cohesive theme of doing what's right for people.

Although participant #4 unquestionably believed that CCC did a good job selecting songs which were culturally relevant, the choir's decision to protest during several "Black Lives Matter" marches, or what the participant coined as, "doing what's right" seemed to matter the most here. Largely due to this participant being African American, this participant expressed these actions were "very close to her heart." The choir's social justice stance helped to make this participant feel validated as an African American Female.

P5: Though we did a lot of different cultures and we did do a lot of African music… we did do a lot of music made by African American people. We also did a lot of music from like, you know, Asia and Europe and South America. So, I guess kind of what I thought, even though it goes both ways. I've met people from different parts of Africa before. And now to be talking about like, oh, I know these small fun facts about Africa. I know this because of Miss Lee and Miss Hanson. They were teaching us stuff about other countries. They made sure that no one was ever disrespected. They made sure that if I was ever talking to a person from Korea, like, I would know how.

In addition to songs more closely associated to African American music, such as Gospel, Rhythm and Blues and hip-hop, participant #5 gives a testimonial to CCC's aim to create global citizens by providing music repertoire from geographical spaces such as Asia, Europe, Korea and South America. The instructors also ensure that students understand social and cultural norms of the foreign countries that they learn about or visit.

Question Number Three

3). Do you feel CCC provided opportunities for inclusiveness and expression on behalf of various ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe CCC created ways for members of all races to feel included and to feel comfortable being themselves?

(Purple Represents, "Metacognition. Educators being aware of their thoughts")
(Burgundy Represents, learning about other cultures)

(Yellow Represent the importance of togetherness/group)
(Green Represents, Chicago (Children's Choir being a "Safe Space"))
(Pink Represents Validation)

P1: Yes, I think so, because in my time in the choir, the number of songs that we sing from different places, different cultures and different languages is almost countless. I think at any point anybody in the choir could have felt represented most of the time when a new song was introduced, especially if that song is in a different language. Somebody in the group, which was about a hundred and ten people, would tell the story of knowing the song or maybe what that song meant to them. So, I think the diversity of the repertoire, the diversity of the locations that we did performances in made a tremendous difference.
Well, obviously, being acquired from Chicago, it's very easy to focus on just things happening in Chicago or just things happening in this country, but every year annually, the choirs top performing ensemble, "The Voice of Chicago" would tour somewhere out of the country that wasn't focused on just places in Europe which are sometimes seen as singing capitals, places that are known for their music, like Italy. It wasn't just places like those, it was also places like Cuba or South Africa or India.
In the second half of the year, we would set up the year in February with what we call the "World Music Festival" with our director of World Music, Mollie Stone. We would sing 20 to 30 songs from different places in the world. So you might find something there that you relate to directly after that or the Black History Month concerts where we learned a lot of music that was important to African-Americans.

Due to the choir's student body being composed of a multiethnic membership, participant #1 celebrates CCC providing opportunities through their music curriculum for student inclusiveness and expression.

P4: I feel like they're one of the only institutions that I've ever been a part of that has made a conscious effort to make everyone feel included and everyone feel comfortable on everything. We sing in 22 different languages, for example, and we celebrated the Golden Years festival every year. We celebrated all different types of cultures from indigenous people in America to the Filipino people, like there was never anything at all that we left unturned.
And, even if it was something that our conductors weren't necessarily an expert on, they always brought people from different cultures. So, they took that very seriously and nothing was ever surface level. We always learned the lyrics and what they meant, and they always translated it so that we were saying it properly. So, I feel like they did a very good job of making sure everyone's cultures were respected and valued.

Participant #4 conveys that CCC's ability to make every student feel included is unparalleled. In areas where the instructors lack a knowledge base, they seek assistance from individuals from that specific culture. It is also important to each instructor that the representation of the way a word is spoken is correct.

P5: From my perspective, I say 100 percent. Yes, yes. Because I feel comfortable being myself, because I was surrounded by people that were like me. I felt as though the people that were around me were safe and they were nice. And, you know, we were all there for a purpose. And we all liked each other. And we kind of grew to love each other over the time. And, you know, they kind of became a family. The fact that I'm here talking to you right now is because of the choir. Yeah.

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Participant #5 attributes his opportunity to be interviewed by the researcher as one that would not have taken place had it not been for the choirs positive influence in his life. The expression of choir members as "family" continued to be illuminated throughout the interview.

P7: Yes, I definitely think that they were like promoting inclusiveness. I don't think they shun people or any of that was tolerated. I think they were very adamant on calling it out when people were creating a hostile environment based on some kind of like racial factor for example. They were really on top of that.

Participant #7 agrees that CCC did not compromise on their goal to make every student feel included.

Question Number Four

4). Does singing songs written by other cultures help you learn and grow?

(Burgundy Represents, learning about other cultures)
(Yellow Represent the importance of togetherness/group)
(Brown Represents: Identity Development)

P1: I think that singing songs by other cultures can help humanize people that you might not have otherwise related to, and it's very easy to live in our own bubble, living in our city or our neighborhood or whatever, not easily being able to relate to people on the other side of the world or even close by in other countries. So, I think what singing songs from other cultures is extremely beneficial when you have the background of the songs, when you understand why those songs exist and what they mean. It can help you relate to them on a more personal level.

I learned protest songs from different countries and as a black person, it made me realize why other people who put their lives on the line in other countries, just as black people did in the United States, to protest for what they believe was right, sometimes makes you understand the struggles that other people might have gone through.

Participant. #1 explains how effective CCC's music education programming was toward helping to make individuals within other cultures feel more relatable to him. He has learned that we as human beings have more in common than not. When you understand a cultures history, you better understand how its history influences that culture.

P2: I think learning about other cultures through music is a wonderful way of learning about other people who you might never come across. You know, I learned music from the Republic of Georgia, what's the chance that I'd ever go to the Republic of Georgia? I think that's important, you know, in a world where a lot of people are very xenophobic, and xenophobia is encouraged. We watch movies where, you know, every time we go to the Middle East, everything's tinted orange and everybody there is evil. But then we learn about the music. We got to hear their music. We get to learn about how their music is.

Participant #2 explains, rather than becoming conditioned by American propaganda, which is often biased and misleading in an effort to promote a particular political point of view, she traveled as a member of CCC to various countries where she had the opportunity to experience the culture, people and their music. It was a positive experience.

P4: I think that it definitely does, because it embraces the barrier that I think is put on a lot of times that you need to only focus on your people and your people's problems. And it. Makes you realize

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that a lot of people have similar problems and it's something that everyone can do about it. <mark>We all join together.</mark>

Participant #4 expresses how singing songs written by other cultures helps him learn and grow by looking at solutions to problems as a group effort.

P7: Definitely. Just being exposed to so many different cultures and being able to, travel to so many different places was definitely eye-opening experience. I will say that they were delivering on teaching you to be a global citizen because we were familiar with cultures from all over the world. We had a pretty substantial South African repertoire because of our conductor, Molly Stone had a doctoral degree and loved South African choral music.
We would put on a World Music Festival, typically in January, which would include a month of rehearsals where we'd be exposed to South African work just because of her proximity to that. But I can remember times we were doing songs from Estonia is coming to mind. We performed Korean music; we definitely visited the big Western European cultures.

From leaning about South African music to Korean and Estonian, participant #7 believes the exposure to many genres of music helped him to learn and grow.

Question Number Five

5). Do you believe that teachers of one ethnic group can effectively teach music to youth of different ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe that a music teacher has to be the race of their student to effectively teach them?

(Purple Represents, "Metacognition. Educators being aware of their thoughts)
(Burgundy Represents, learning about other cultures)

P1: I do not think that the teacher has to be the race of the students who effectively teach them, that would be hard to do if you're teaching a diverse group of people such as the choir. I think that a person of any race, if they have the right intentions and are willing to listen to people of different races than theirs can teach, but I also do think it's important to take into account the opinions of people of different races.
What I'm saying is a white teacher may be able to teach black students because they might really care, and they might have an understanding of a lot of things that even other black people may not. It is also the white teacher's responsibility to be open to feedback, criticism or thoughts that those black students may have, because to a certain extent, that teacher may never be able to fully relate to them.

Participant #1related that due to the ethnic diversity of CCC, it would be virtually impossible for their choir directors to match the racial composition of the choir. For this reason, he does not see race as a prerequisite. This participant does, however, feel that an instructor would need to honor the opinions of their ethnic minority students and be open to constructive criticism.

P2: No, I don't think it's a requirement and I don't think that it is necessary, but I think it's really important that a teacher be willing to examine their own bias and be well educated in other cultures. You really have to be willing to examine your whiteness if you're not a person of color, you have to be willing to examine your white fragility. And I had conductors that were amazing that a lot of the things I know about other cultures I've learned from white people. So, I think it's a person-by-person basis and education really matters. The bottom line as a teacher is, you got to do the work.

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My interpretation of what respondent #2 related is, although it is not necessary the educator be the color of the culture they are trying to teach, they must make an active effort to be anti-racist to do those cultures any justice.

P4: I don't think it can ever be a completely effective job, because once again, like with bringing in the experts of other cultures, no one is going to know everything about every single culture. So, if you're not open to collaborating with other people, you can't really get the full experience and actually educate children fully.
 I don't think they have to be black. I think that they have to converse and collaborate with many black people in their lifetime so that they have a vast array of knowledge to give to their students.

Participant #4 relates, multiculturalism promotes the integration of various cultures as well as the sharing of ideas and perspectives. Collaborating with black students can assist a teacher to have a better understanding of the inner workings which take place within their culture.

Participant #7 had difficulty answering this question, relating that his answer would not be an absolute "yes" or "no." For him, the truest answer to the question centered more on the instructors, "intentionality." He believes that it is critical for each music instructor who is not of African American decent to metacognitively look within themselves and monitor their understanding of the fact that they did not have the lived experience to some of the challenges that youth of color were going through. He does not believe that recognition was always there.

Question Number Six

5). Does music education help reduce stress? In other words, did singing in the Chicago Children's Choir help you deal with situations that may have been stressful?

(Gray: Music education reduces stress)
(Brown Represents: Identity Development)
(Green Represents, Chicago Children's Choir being a "Safe Space")
(Yellow Represent the importance of togetherness/group)

P1: There were times that I stress relief or guilt, just less stress than I had previously. But it is an environment in which excellence was expected of you. And therefore, that meant sometimes there would be three rehearsals in a week and two more performances and I would still have homework and family life and relationships to maintain. So, I think yes and no sometimes. It could be a source for lessening stress, sometimes it could add to stress. I do think that it doesn't mean it was any less worth it. And sometimes stressful situations yield the best results, but sometimes the worst.

Participant #4 relates, due to the choir's expectation of excellence and many hours of required practice, at times multitasking between academic and home life expectations became stressful. There were also times when being a part of this organization decreased stress. Neither made the overall outcome less worth it.

P2: I would answer those two questions very differently, I would say that music education in and of itself can be stress relieving and music in general can be stress relieving. I would not say that the Chicago Children's Choir was necessarily a stress relieving experience. And I can explain that further by saying, one, it was very, very demanding. And I think that was a good thing because it's one thing to be committed to something like school or work that is required of you. It's another thing to voluntarily commit to something and see that through. But I can't act like an extra 15 hours

a week of rehearsal commitment wasn't hard, but it's a commitment I chose to make. And so, I think I learned a lot about. Expecting the best of myself and doing my best and sometimes failing, sometimes succeeding, you know what I will say, though, is, as I said before, for me personally, the choir was a safe space. So, although it was very demanding and time consuming, it wasn't in and of itself stressful.

Participant #2 relates, she would agree that music education may be stress relieving, however, the time commitment and expectation of CCC was not. Throughout this process, she learned more about herself, her limitations, as well as how much she really could accomplish. Due to CCC being a "safe space" for her, this experience in and of itself was not stressful.

P7: I think music has always been a kind of norm for me because I was doing music outside of choir, I was in band for the majority of my time in grade school and in high school. I can say that it gave me enjoyment and the feeling of fulfillment from expressing creativity in that way. I learned that you could, exert your body and get your lungs moving, activating your diaphragm and your breathing, it made me feel more alive, more engaged. And having a group of people. Doing the same exact thing is also very powerful.

P7: I like listening to music as a stress relieving experience, but I also liked performing when it was good, that was also a very relieving situation. However, there's also the moments that we don't like to remember when things didn't go right. I remember this one experience where we had to run our concert and we were going to Wisconsin. And so basically, we rode on the bus for a couple of hours, went straight there, but the bus still got there late. So, we had a five-minute sound check and time to get set up. We hadn't run through the music, hadn't practiced.

One of the choir members was scheduled to do a solo within the song but came in entirely too early. But continued to sing anyway. I'll never forget the look on our conductors' face, I will remember it forever. And what followed after that set, after we finished the piece. It was just like a really tense situation.

They're just comes a lot with that where it's like how much was music education and how much was trying to get the choir to perform well. There's a lot of over treating us like professional musicians. We had commitments besides music and trying to kind of just also develop an identity, a sense of like who we are. When it's time to go, you know, it was time to go. But, you know, you get to the point where it's like, well, I've been in the choir for like eight, nine years. It's a shame to not be able to stay the full ten years.

Participant #7 agrees that listening to music can be a stress relieving experience as well as the times when his CCC performances were successful. However, there are some not-so-good memories which are seared into his memory. He questions how much of this music program was geared towards teaching versus to promote positive performance outcomes. He believes that too much of an a professional, more adult like expectation was placed on members. He asserts, when things get too emotionally heavy, you know it's time to go but stayed desiring to complete the highest level of commitment of the choir which is 10 years (age 8-18).

The Voice of One: A Different Perspective

I interviewed a total of 7 participants. I asked each individual six questions. There were a couple of responses that were vague, short, and lacked content so did not fit into any themes create. However, there was one participant that from the very beginning appeared to be a bit of an outlier. Like most other participants, his responses were clearly thought out and well communicated. However, they often differed from other members of my target group. Of the six questions asked, sections of his responses fit into the created themes, so I paired them. This participant's last two

responses, however, changed the trajectory that my research study was going. Although this participant represents, "the voice of one" I feel his perspective has value. Below are two questions, along with Participant #7's responses that I felt compelled to include.

Question Number Two

2). How do you perceive your prior instructors' efforts to teach choral music that is culturally responsive? In other words, do you feel that your music instructor selected songs that you could relate to as an African American male or female?

P7: I am thinking about songs that had just been a part of the choir's repertoire, that they'd been doing like forever. But I'm also thinking about the choir's new selection of music. I feel like choir was beginning to operate very much, singing like through a post-racial lens. With one conductor saying verbatim, "I don't see color." This is not to say that they did not see me having a problem dealing with race, but do not necessarily address the actual issues regarding race or consider its impact. So, I felt like wow, on the surface because of the history of the way we have access, it's kind of like cultural relations to important black movements that kind of like was a bit more so like performative in the years and quietly, I was never going to like to say, this felt more performative than my time with the choir during the earlier years.

P7: And especially considering the population increasing from when I started. In eight years, the choir's population went from 2,000, to 4,000, and by the time I was in high school, I was like, ok, now we're at 5,000. We began doing a lot of gigs for places like Allstate.

Question Number Five

5. Do you believe that teachers of one ethnic group can effectively teach music to youth of different ethnic groups? In other words, do you believe that a music teacher has to be the race of their student to effectively teach them?

P7: Obviously, that's not a yes, no question. It depends a lot like intentionality. But intentionality is also different than how you act about it. It really has to be someone that's like "I am aware, and I understand that I am not black, and I'm not connected to this history, into this culture." I do not necessarily feel like that recognition was always there with all of the instructors, so felt like this is kind of like really problematic, that we're performing blackness to a bunch of white people that own all these major corporations.

I mean, we're talking about like Blue Cross Blue Shield, like Allstate Insurance. There are a lot of layers to it. I remember there was one experience, too when we went to New York, we went to Harlem. We went to go visit some choirs, like actual church choirs from Harlem. And they were like, "oh yeah." Even if they didn't like our intentionality, it's also about execution. If, as a choir, you're not connected to the history and you're not getting people that actually know how to teach that, but you're also recruiting kids from all over that aren't going to be exposed to that, you lack a certain kind of vocal athleticism, like singing in a church, their songs sounded really developed and powerful.

Discussion

For decades, research has continued to document scientific outcomes that suggest a positive relationship between music education programs and student academic achievement. Seldom, however, do studies look at the influence music education programs have on emotional competencies such as self-concept or its impact on African American youth that live in economically disadvantaged communities.

In addition to these factors, an immense amount of past research has been conducted predominately on European American youth. Due to it being plausible that these large bodies of research do not represent youth of color, the purpose of this research study was to examine the influence music education programs have on identity development, cultural awareness, and trauma on African American youth who live in urban settings.

Seeking to ascertain the manner by which an urban multicultural choral program influence identity development, promotes cultural awareness, and combats levels of stress in youth of color, I utilized a basic interpretive qualitative study design, drawing on elements of phenomenology. As such, I interviewed seven (7) Chicago Children's Choir adult alumni participants. These participants' gender and ethnic make-up included two African American females, four African American males, and one Caucasian female.

After reviewing the participants' interview transcripts, ten (10) themes emerged that were related to the research question: (a) the importance of togetherness/group, (b) culturally relevant music, (c) music being like a religious/spiritual experience, (d) learning about music without its negative history, (e) Chicago Children's Choir being a safe space, (f) Educators being aware of their thoughts and feelings, (g) learning about other cultures through music, (h) Identity development, (i) Music education reduces stress, (j) Chicago Children's Choir provides validation.

Identity Development: Establishing a stable sense of one's self-concept is imperative for ensuring a healthy self-image. CCC's music programing has been shown to assist in creating a higher sense of self-concept. Through CCC's music education curriculum, pride of a considerable number of African American students' cultural identities was acknowledged, nurtured, accepted, and valued.

Within the theme of the "Importance of group/togetherness," participants continued to discuss their appreciation for CCC's cooperative group settings as opposed to a more Western European one, largely rooted in individualistic and competitive values. Each participant continued to give several accounts of how their CCC peers feeling more like a family helped them get through some challenging times and assisted each member to grow cognitively and emotionally. Student involvement in this culturally relevant music program better ensured that information being taught was more contextually understood, so it was more meaningful. CCC's socio-political consciousness stance assisted some students to feel empowered and worthy.

The Theme of "safe space" continued to emerge throughout each interview, however, took on a different meaning for each participant. For one participant who discussed being overweight and tall for his age during his adolescent years, the term "safe space" had more to do with this young man finding an emotional refuge in the CCC organization, more so than this term being referred to as protection from a physical threat. Another participant discussed being biracial (African American and German). She expressed how she was not fully accepted by white or black students at her Chicago Public School. For this reason, CCC became a "safe space" because of the organization's zero tolerance towards intolerance. Contrary to what I presumed to be reasonable,

participants living in or closer to the Englewood communities' geographical borders did not mention the importance of CCC being a "safe space" more than participants living in middle/upper-class communities such as Hyde Park, Lincoln Park, and Beverly.

As it relates to the theme of stress, the participants agreed that although listening to music can be a stress relieving experience, due to membership in the CCC organization having the expectation of excellence and being extremely time consuming with 2-3 practices a week plus performances, this music education program did not always decrease levels stress. Each participant agreed that they have no regrets about their membership and that these experiences helped them to grow and achieve their best potential.

Every participant talked about the extensive attributes of learning about other cultures through music experiences and world tours. One of the main benefits cited was building social connections by acknowledging shared experiences, as well as some of the amazing differences between cultures. With music tours assisting to facilitate learning, they helped to build new relationships. Tours to South Africa, for example, helped African American youth learn more about their own identity and culture. Instead of this outcome being through the violent, gory, and degrading lens of the enslavement of Africans, it took place through music and exposure to cultural exchange.

According to a considerable number of participants, being a member of CCC was very validating at times. Where the instructor's expertise ran out, they would often ask African American students their opinions, as they were keenly aware that they lacked the African American experience.

Participant #7, conceptually seeing things different from the other six (6) participants, believed that in comparison to the direction the past music choreography had gone, some of the newly taught songs did not mirror our current social/political climate.

He had a difficult time answering question number five, which asked whether he believed that teachers of one ethnic group could effectively teach music to youth of a different ethnic group. He responded relating that his answer would not be an absolute "yes" or "no." For him, the answer to this question centered more around the instructors, "intentionality." He believes that it is critical for each music instructor who is not of African American decent to metacognitively look within themselves and monitor their understanding of the fact that they do not have these student's lived experiences. He does not believe that this recognition was always there.

As I listened to his testimony, there seemed to be this sadness related to the absence of the spirit behind the songs from the prior repertoire and now a regurgitation of it. Due to these music selections being done over and over again with no true spirit behind them, no true connection to the much larger multiethnic membership, currently present, songs felt more "performative" in nature. With one instructor exclaiming, "I don't see color" during one rehearsal, there is a hint of naivete present. Participant #7 stated "choir was beginning to operate very much… singing like through a post-racial lens." When we think of a post racial lens, for instance, as it relates to former president Barack Obama, who was elected for two terms, some may begin to ponder the question, how could there be racism in America when the leader of the free world is a black man?

This would obviously be a very naïve question, as if his presidency eradicated racism in the same sense that because the Chicago Children's Choir music curriculum includes singing songs of the social justice struggle, their programing somehow could not use refinement. The reality is, that without balance, without a true identification of what "the struggle" is, students such as

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participant #7 may continue to experience the feeling that something is missing, has been taken away, or that the organization's prior passions and/or convictions feel impossible to recover.

In regard to the testimony of the one instructor saying, "I don't see color," it is possible that his or her intension was to feel comfort knowing that he or she was a part of the solution of making change. This slogan is thrown around all of the time, "*Be the Change.*" However, it has no true substance provided that you do not fully understand the problem. It sounds like what participant #7 was saying is that some of the conductors do not have a true connection to "the struggle," and do not understand its full ramifications, nor implication of being black but in their own way try to do their part.

The question is, is that good enough, is that operative enough, does that bring about change, is this the beginning of change, and is this a natural progression of change? There are additional steps that go beyond instituting a music curriculum that sings harmoniously and makes an honest and conscious effort to ensure that all students understand that we are all the same. Educational institutions of all kinds must go further.

Unless white and typically middle-class instructors have ever experienced being searched by the police with the officers' guns drawn, being stopped illegally on a traffic stop, or being wrongly accused of a crime, they may continue to lack the knowledge base for what is vital in music education courses as it relates to students of color. I do, however, believe that CCC makes a substantial effort to understand the effects of race, ethnicity, and culture on music education. Their mission explores and takes an account of the educational inequities in relationship to music education and seeks to understand the factors that affect music teaching and music learning.

Social Implications

The results of this study that I have drawn from may be important for future policy, practice, or theory. These variables demonstrate the manner by which Chicago Children's Choir music education programs positively impact the identity development and cultural awareness of African American youth. Six of the seven alumni members interviewed, directly attributed their level of self-confidence, music experience, and cultural exchange to this organization, as they identify as "global citizens." In addition, a considerable number of participants credited their abilities to welcome new challenges and become aware of their personal best, as traits learned via CCC. Further, all participants spoke in great detail about their team building and collaboration abilities with others as skills they attribute to being a member of CCC.

These findings are especially important as music programs in urban settings continue to be regarded by policy makers as non-core subjects during budget cuts. As a result, it is my aim that this research study may assist in educational facilities re-evaluating funding. Lastly, it is my hope that educators, students, parents, as well as other advocates for music education, make use of this research to gain a better understanding of how music education programs positively influence African American youth.

Limitations for Further Research

One limitation of this research study is that its' findings are based on the interviews of seven (7) participants who are all alumni members of one choir. For this reason, a future researcher cannot assume that the findings of this study would be applicable across a broad spectrum of music students selected from multiple music programs outside of the Chicago Children's Choir. Another limitation is that with the exception of one Caucasian participant, all of respondents were African American. Questions evaluating student perceptions, such as whether or not they believed Chicago Children's Choir conductors provided a diverse repertoire of music which African American students could relate to, may have been able to be effectively answered using participants of any race.

The study's findings suggest the below recommendations for further research:

1. The study's homogeneous criterion sample of Chicago Children's Choir alumni members was limited to three (3) groups of seven (7) participants under the umbrella of the same organization. For these reasons, there may be a future research benefit from including a larger sample of participants.
2. Future researchers may also benefit from including quantitative methods such as self-reporting surveys as an assessment tool during data collection.

My Capstone Business Model

The proposed music program will be a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization dedicated to creating greater accessibility to music to at-risk youth living in urban settings. The primary goal is to remove economic barriers to participation, assist youth in the attainment of their full musical potential, and stimulate personal growth for ethnically diverse members.

To Serve and Protect: The Community That I Patrol

I have been a Chicago Police Officer for the past 26 years. Of the five districts that I have served during this time period, I have worked the night shift for most of my career. I am currently assigned to the 005th district. This district encompasses the Roseland community (largely African American), the historic Pullman area (considerably white), and the west Pullman area (largely Hispanic). Due to this neighborhood having a small blend of ethnic diversity within the Roseland community, I thought the development of a music education program could be essential here. Although the historic Pullman section of the Roseland community has predominately middle-class residents and relatively low crime rates, the Roseland community as a whole is a high crime area that experiences a great deal of violent crimes and is comprised primarily of residents that live in socio-economically deprived settings. Without some intervention taking place, youth in this community run a risk of becoming both victims and perpetrators of violent crimes.

Trauma and Trauma Informed Care Services

Trauma can be defined as a psychological and/or emotional response to an event or an experience that is deeply distressing or disturbing (Rosen, 2019). When we think of trauma, we often envision images such as someone being sexually assaulted, shot, or murdered. Although these horrible incidences are inclusive of traumatic experiences, trauma more loosely conceptualized also includes stressful experiences such as being involved in an automobile accident, sustaining and injury, going through a hurricane, or losing a loved one. Due to experiences being processed internally, they are subjective in nature. Hence, interpretations defining trauma sometimes vary.

Trauma informed care is defined as practices that promote a culture of safety, empowerment, and healing (Tello, 2020). Having a trauma informed trained staff involves knowing the difference between a staff member asking a child, "What's wrong with you?" versus "what happened to you?" (McCarthy, 2021). Likewise, having a trauma informed organization also includes the wherewithal to focus on staff members as well and how they may become emotionally impacted by this depth of work. As such, I believe that my organization would benefit from being paired with an outside institution such ones found within the community. Due to

Chicago State University being eight blocks away from the geographical site where my 501(c)(3) would be located, I felt this option would be a good fit.

The Chicago State University's counseling program offers a Master of Arts degree in Counseling Psychology. The "Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs" (CACREP) is recognized by the "Council for Higher Education Accreditation" (CHEA). This highly specialized program focuses on training counselors to become culturally relevant and work with urban youth and their families. Students who complete this program have the opportunity to become a licensed practitioner by sitting for the Illinois Licensure examination. I have conversed with some of these students in the past during various community initiatives and continue to be in awe of their cross-cultural sensitivity, patience, professionalism, and sheer problem-solving abilities. Due to the Roseland community that I serve encompassing Chicago State University's campus, I surmised that this educational institution would serve as a good fit towards using services available in the community.

Chicago State University's clinical students must complete an internship of 600 clock hours to graduate. Due to the duality between these students needing to work with individuals in the community and my organization needing clinicians who understand the importance of counseling services, I believe that this arrangement would be optimal.

Three Dimensions to This Music Program

There are three dimensions to my organization's music program. Each dimension was dually chosen as a form of art expression as well as a therapeutic remedy to help combat the challenges youth in this community tend to face. As such, programs that youth will have the opportunity to select from consist of three options:

1. Wind Instrument Instruction: Youth that experience chronic (reoccurring) trauma often breathe *more shallow* than their counterparts who have not experienced a great deal of stress. Learning to play a wind instrument could assist a child to become more mindful of his or her breathing and learn to inhale more deeply, taking deeper breaths. This exercise will assist in decreasing anxiety as well as creating a better musician.
2. Choral Programing: Youth that decide to become members of the choral programing tier would benefit from this art form. In addition to teaching youth to be more vocally assertive, performance-based singing has been documented to yield charisma. In this way, students learn to draw their audiences in and gain positive attention instead of, for instance, negative attention as a result of unwarranted behaviors.
3. Music Technology: Youth in this tier will learn to use computer technology to create instrumental sounds. As audio engineers, they will go into the recording studio and create music beats, as well as assist choral performers to reach their creative goals.

In this way, students will be encouraged to develop an entrepreneurial spirit. My hope is that they will feel more justified in expressing their creative freedoms. Students may feel less hesitant to imagine, create, and express themselves, permitting themselves to go beyond the obvious and mundane. Through this process, students can begin to create unseen, unheard, and unfelt unique possibilities.

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