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*Georgia State University*

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ACCEPTANCE

This dissertation, A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES GAINED DURING PRE-SERVICE MUSIC TEACHER PREPARATION OF BLACK URBAN BAND DIRECTORS, by GREGORY LAMAR DENSON, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy, in the College of Education and Human Development, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chairperson, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty.

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Gregory Lamar Denson

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES GAINED DURING PRE-SERVICE MUSIC TEACHER PREPARATION OF BLACK URBAN BAND DIRECTORS

by

GREGORY LAMAR DENSON

Under the Direction of Patrick K. Freer and Gholnecsar E. Muhammad

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to be an exploration of the pre-service experiences of 10 Black urban band directors. The focus of this study was on the experiences of the individual teachers. This study was loosely based on Fitzpatrick's (2008) study of urban instrumental music teachers in the Chicago Public Schools. This phenomenological study utilized Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to frame the participants' stories. There were two phases of data collection: Phase I: phone interviews and Phase II: In-person interviews. The participants consisted of

Black band directors selected from middle and high schools located in one urban school district in the Southeastern part of the United States.

The following research questions framed this study: 1) How have experiences during pre-service music teacher preparation programs supported Black urban band director's capacities to teach in the urban setting? 2) How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors? and 3) How do in-service Black urban band directors who have been teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher? The following seven themes emerged: 1) teaching experiences needed; 2) managing the classroom; 3) overcoming challenges; 4) mentoring; 5) building relationships; 6) establishing sense of worth; and 7) rewarding experiences. The findings from this study offers a counter-narrative of the deficit laden views of teaching band in urban settings. Implications and suggestions for future research address pre- and in-service teachers and music teacher educators.

INDEX WORDS: Urban music teacher preparation, urban education, culturally relevant pedagogy, pre-service music teacher preparation, Critical Race Theory, Black urban band directors, Blackness



A PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF THE EXPERIENCES GAINED DURING PRE-SERVICE MUSIC TEACHER PREPARATION OF BLACK URBAN BAND DIRECTORS

by

Gregory Lamar Denson

A Dissertation

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Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Teaching & Learning

in

Music Education

in the

College of Education and Human Development  
Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA  
2019

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents; Ernest Carlton Denson, Pollie Mae Denson, Arthur Lee McKinnie and Bessie Mae McKinnie. Words cannot express how grateful I am to have had you in my life. Your love, encouragement, and constant reminders that education is power will never be forgotten. Thank you. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents Jerry and Marian Denson for your unwavering support and love throughout my educational journey! Thank you for the constant prayers, words of encouragement and belief when I felt like I wasn't good enough and wanted to throw in the towel. I hope that I have made you proud and I love you all dearly!

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"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him." (James 1:12)

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

The racial composition of public schools in the United States is becoming more diverse. Dunac-Morgan (2015) asserts that urban areas account for 80.7% of the U.S. population, which is an increase from 79% reported in 2000. The National Center for Educational Statistics reports that 30% of students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools are located within urban schools (NCES, 2013). Likewise, statistics show that 59% of the total population of students in urban schools in the United States consists of Black and Latino students, despite the fact that only 24.1% of the teachers are Black and Latino as compared to the 71.1% who are White (NCES, 2013). This means that our student population is highly racially, culturally and linguistically diverse while the teachers are mostly White, female and monolingual (NCES, 2013). In addition to the lack of teachers of color, what is also problematic is that the majority of the teaching population overall is not prepared to address this disconnect in teaching and learning as evident by the structures of teacher preparation programs and a lack of criticality, high numbers of school push out rates across the United States and the low national achievement scores on assessments across disciplines (Felton, 2016; Goldhaber, 2019; Harris & Sass, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The extant literature problematizes urban schools as a collection of low socio-economic students who lack parental support, have low academic performance, and present behavioral challenges (Boggs & Dunbar, 2015; Ingersoll & Perda, 2009), however the literature does not adequately depict the history of urban schools and the systems of oppression that do not provide the financial, educational, and political capital to provide equitable access to the same resources and quality of teachers as suburban White schools. More specific to the current dissertation study

of teaching band in urban schools, there is a disproportionate amount of research that focuses on the challenges, versus literature that celebrates the beauty of Black excellence that exists within urban band programs. The literature centered in deficit views is positioned through the lens of Whiteness or seeing White people and White ways as the standard for excellence and therefore seeing people of color, particularly Black people in disparaging ways. As a Black urban band director, it is my hope that this current research study will provide wider narratives of urban music education and Blackness to counter the negative depictions of teaching band in urban schools. Research that centers the excellence of urban education will begin to create a pathway for other teachers to benefit pedagogically. To commence to illustrate this point, I begin with the current state of urban schools and schooling for youth in these spaces, who are largely African American.

### **Current State of Urban Schools for African American Students**

In May of 1856 the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of a separate but equal society, which constitutionally legalized racial segregation in the United States (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1856). This ruling stated that public facilities were legal, so long as the facilities for Blacks and Whites were equal. Yet, Blacks were barred from riding the same buses, schools, and facilities as Whites. Overall, the resources, funding and facilities were not at all equal thus, Jim Crow laws were established. In the early 1950s, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed law suits on behalf of plaintiffs. However, the most well-known case involved Oliver Brown, who filed a class action lawsuit against the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. Brown was enraged after his daughter was denied admittance into an all-White elementary school. Brown argued that the all Black schools were not equal to the all-White schools. In 1954, the Supreme Court rendered a verdict that overturned the segregation

of public schools. Chief Justice Warren wrote that in the field of education, separate but equal has no place, and that segregated schools are inherently biased. Although this history depicts the desegregation of schools in the United States and essentially the dissolving of Black centered education, over time schools have become increasingly more re-segregated (Mungo, 2013). In other words, urban schools are currently becoming re-segregated and schools that serve Black and Latino children have gone back to being under-resourced. Public school systems have shifted to neighborhood schools that are comprised of the students that live in those communities; consequently, leading to many schools that consist of a highly concentrated population of students from low-income families and therefore poorly funded. This system of strategic re-segregation has systematically played a role in the weakened educational opportunities for minoritized students. This can be seen across the nation's most racially and economically divided cities—cities like New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Atlanta.

The results of re-segregation have significant implications on teaching and learning programs in racially and economically divided schools, but I focus specifically on the implications it has on music education and band programs, an understudied area of research in music education. Schools in areas that serve low-income families do not have the disposable income to fully support their student's participation in band programs. And financial resources are key as music and band programs have costs associated with participation and to have a quality participatory experience. Kelly (2009) stated, "family variables such as socioeconomic status, cultural expectations, and access to resources frequently create inequalities before some individuals even begin school" (p. 72). This statement speaks to the notion that urban schools are often not on equal footing from the very beginning. Therefore, the desegregation of schools

in the 1970s provided African Americans equal access to physical resources, however, many Black students lost the community and cultural capital instilled from their Black educators.

Urban schools can now be defined as schools with predominately Black or Latino students from lower-middle class families (Tatum & Muhammad, 2012). However, some suburban areas are now experiencing a shift in populations due to gentrification in urban cities. Many urban neighborhoods that have historically been home to low-income families have seen an upsurge in construction and an increase in new residents, usually White middle- and upper-class individuals. The process of gentrification is forcing these low-income Black families to spend more of their income on housing in order to afford their current home, compete for limited affordable housing in their current neighborhood, or move to suburban areas. Gentrification has negatively affected the amount of resources families have available for food, utilities, healthcare, childcare, and their children's academic needs. Families are forced to work multiple jobs in order to provide for their families. This is why framing parents in urban schools as unsupportive is often a misrepresentation and is out of context. Parents are working to be able to provide for their children and family.

### **Urban Schools and Race**

Students of color, namely Black youth, are capable of achieving at the highest levels. However, socially constructed systems (schools and society) have ineffectively provided the educational support necessary to ensure that Black students succeed. Historically, urban schools have been understood from a deficit model, meaning that teachers have viewed urban classrooms from a collection of perceived shortcomings (Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Teachers have seen Black youths' identities and ways of knowing as deficiencies to overcome rather than resources (Paris, 2012). Educational psychologists coined the phrase achievement gap to describe the

deficit that exists between students of color and their White counterparts. The gap between Black and White students' standardized test scores particularly in urban schools has been a point of discussion in educational research and has been framed from a cultural deficit perspective (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Wasserberg, 2017). The negative narrative surrounding Black students and the disparities in academic achievement often does not account for the non-academic factors and other social ideologies in place that denies access to the highest qualities of education (Wesserberg, 2017). This dates back to the early 1950s and 1960s with cultural deficit theorists. Researchers posit that cultural deficit theorists believe that achievement gaps exist for students of color because they enter school lacking certain skills and dispositions associated to the dominate culture that would otherwise support student success (Hess & Shipman, 1965; Dee & Penner, 2016). Transferring to music education, some music educators view urban school music programs as lacking the capacity to perform on a high level. Despite examples of urban schools and school districts consisting largely of Black and Latino students exemplifying the highest levels of musicianship, those stories are missing from the extant literature. Regardless of the diverse student populations of urban schools in the U.S., public education policy has struggled to facilitate equitable teaching practices that validate and embrace the culture of students of color, specifically Black youth (Allsup, 2016; Benedict, 2006; Bond, 2017; Campbell, Myers, & Sarath, 2016; Emdin, 2017).

In her 2006 American Educational Research Association Presidential address, Gloria Ladson-Billings challenged her colleagues to reconceptualize the notion of achievement gap and to reconceptualize this notion and think of it more as an education debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). She outlined two problematic issues with this notion of an achievement gap. First, Ladson-Billings articulated that referring to the inadequacies as an achievement gap purports that one

group remains stagnant while the other tries to catch up. This simply is not how educational achievement works. High performing students do not slow down their performance while lower performing students catch up in their performance. Also, Ladson-Billings suggested that an achievement gap does not address the systematic infrastructures that play a critical role in the education of students of color such as funding, healthcare, and wealth. Secondly, Ladson-Billings articulated how the talk of achievement gap is substantial. Even today, the vestiges of cultural deficit theorists' language are still present. While it is believed by some that the language of "cultural deficit" is no longer used, I do not believe it. The philosophy behind this paradigm remains present. I have often heard utterances such as those listed below from teachers throughout my career to explain the low performance of students of color:

- *They can't afford a pencil, but they have the latest Jordan's*
- *I've never seen their parents*
- *They don't value education*

The aforementioned statements are often at the heart of discussions surrounding teaching band in urban schools. While the educational injustices and marginalization of Black children has been explored extensively in other areas of educational research such as mathematics, science and literacy, the scarcity of research in music examining race and teaching band in urban schools is startling (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Wasserberg, 2017). Of my review of peer reviewed articles published between 2009 and 2019, only seven articles specifically dealt with race and teaching band in urban public schools. These narratives are largely situated from the perspective of White researchers, many of whom exacerbate the negative stigmas of teaching band in urban schools. My research in the current study is intended to provide a counternarrative or what Muhammad (2015) calls the original narrative and highlight the historical excellence of teaching



band in urban schools. While I agree that there continues to be a gap in the academic achievement of the teaching and learning of students of color, it is counterproductive to continue to rehash the deficit orientated views of Black and Brown youth without highlighting what band directors are doing to successfully teach in urban schools.

### **Urban School Band Programs**

To teach band in an urban school encompasses many different meanings. Most urban band directors are responsible for teaching various large ensembles such as marching, concert, and jazz band along with non-ensemble related classes such as music technology, music theory, or music appreciation. However, the limited research literature posits the perceived negative aspects of teaching band in urban schools as having low parental involvement, a lack of financial resources, and scheduling issues and positions these characteristics as the reality of teaching in urban schools (Day, 2018; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2008). In fact, since 2009, only one peer-reviewed article has had a focus on the rewards of teaching music in an urban school (Bernard, 2010). In this study, Bernard interviewed five music teachers who worked in two large urban cities in the northeastern part of the United States. Participants offered their beliefs of teaching music in urban schools. From their conversations three themes emerged: 1) students in urban schools can do everything that other students can do; 2) it is important for music educators to provide opportunities for students in urban schools; and 3) building effective relationships with students is a vital part of teaching music in urban schools (Bernard, 2010). The themes from Bernard (2010) suggest that the perceived deficits of urban students may have been attributed to the beliefs of the teacher and not the students or their families. This is echoed by Gay (2000) and Rist (2000) who submit that teachers' attitudes of academic achievement are directly connected to race and social class. Watson, Charner-Laird, Kirkpatrick, Szczesiul & Gordon (2016) assert

that “often White teachers have negative views, attitudes, and beliefs about difference, which they may see as something to overcome or correct” (p. 396). The differences in race between urban band directors may provide an explanation of the disparity of excellence being reported in the research literature. The participants in my study were all African American and taught at schools that served populations of Black students. It was important to understand their perceptions of teaching band in an urban setting and the impact that their pre-service music training had on their ability to teach band in urban schools. To gain a better understanding of how urban Black band directors are able to navigate teaching in urban schools, it is important to explore their pre-service teacher training.

### **Urban Music Teacher Preparation**

The ways in which music educators are prepared to teach in urban settings has begun to receive more attention, specifically within the last 10 years. In a more historical study designed to look at the opinions of urban music educators and their perceived preparedness to teach in urban school settings, most felt woefully unprepared (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). Participants in Fiese & DeCarbo’s study felt prepared in terms of their pedagogical training but felt ill-prepared for teaching students that did not fit culturally dominant norms. Differences in teacher/student backgrounds coupled with the complexities of the urban setting and potentially inadequate pre-service preparation to teach in an urban environment can lead to teachers harboring unexamined negative attitudes toward and lowered expectations of urban students (Delpit, 2006; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2006; van den Bergh, Denessen, Hornstra, Voeten, & Holland, 2010). Doyle (2012) posits a “large portion of the new and existing teaching force comes from mostly suburban, less-culturally/racially diverse, middle to upper class backgrounds” (p. 1). So, the question is now how do we diversify the experiences gained during pre-service teaching

preparation to prepare band directors to teach students in urban settings who may differ from their cultural and socio-economic background? What experiences should be part of pre-service preparation programs? There is a need for more research that specifically explores the pre-service experiences of urban band directors to gain a better understanding of the experiences necessary to help prepare band directors for urban schools.

To respond to this need, in one recent case study designed to gain insight into the experiences of novice urban music educators, Day (2018) explored the perceptions of three urban music educators; Liz, a 24-year old White female elementary general and band teacher; Jonathan a 30-year old Black male public charter band director; and Sarah a 24-year old White female middle school choir director. The study sought to explore the teachers' perceptions of their preparation to teach music in an urban classroom, the role of students' culture in their teaching, and the meanings that beginning teachers placed on their experiences of teaching music in an urban setting (Day, 2018). The findings in relation to the participants' perspectives of their preparedness to teach in an urban school were centered around four broad themes "lack of pre-service urban context specific teaching, outside resources as support, individual professional development, and providing hope through music education" (Day, 2018, p. 92). In relation to the role that the students' culture impacted their teaching strategies, three themes related to "connectivity & relatability, concerts, and differentiated instruction" (Day, 2018, p. 94). However, the findings from Days' study do not address my concerns of the types of pre-service experiences that Black urban band director's feel are essential to pre-service training in order to be better prepared to teach in urban schools. Days' study did not have a focus on the experiences of Black urban band directors which is the biggest difference between Days' study and the current study. Connected to this point, Valencia, Martin, Place, and Grossman (2009) submits,

“what we learn from studying the process of learning to teach depends on whose voices are being heard” (p. 156). In other words it is vitally important to examine the perspectives of those we choose to listen to when defining teaching in urban settings. The voices of Black educators, in this context, Black band directors is missing. Therefore, there is a need for the current study to specifically examine the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors that teach in schools that consist of majority Black students. This is extremely important to the current field of music education so as to provide a rich and descriptive counter-narrative that is from the perspective of Black band directors in the urban classroom. Examining the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors may provide the music education profession insight on ways to better prepare pre-service teachers for urban environments.

### **Shifting Focus**

When discussing issues of urban schools and students, we have to examine the role of race. Characteristics of urban schools generally consist of a high population of Black and Hispanic students, as well as English language learners (Welner & Carter, 2013; Fitzpatrick-Harnish, 2015). Fitzpatrick-Harnish (2015) states that “the term urban can mean many different things to different people – primarily because urban comprises a complex system of social, cultural, organizational, and socioeconomic issues. So finding a consensus on a useful definition has been difficult” (p. 20). Fitzpatrick (2008) describes urban school’s populations as “the majority of its population is non-White, it is located in a city, it has a variety of income levels, and/or has low levels of socioeconomic status” (p. 27). Likewise, Doyle (2012) defines urban schools as those that are “located within large, densely-populated cities with concentrated populations of people of color, whose schools have been mostly designated with a Title I status” (p. 17). Largely, people of color are Black or African American. By these two definitions alone,

we have to acknowledge the role of race and for the sake of my study, it grounds the need to explore the experiences of Black urban band directors.

Prior to data collection, my study was designed to explore the experiences of urban band directors regardless of race. The sampling procedures were designed to elicit the participation of middle and high school band directors in a large urban school district. Based on the population of teachers located within that school district, the sampling procedures produced a population of all Black band directors. Also due to the population of the students within the school district, my participants taught predominately Black students. Because the participants were Black, the students that they served were Black, and six out of 10 participants attended a Historically Black College and University, there was a need to change the focus of the study to explore the experiences of Black urban band directors. Shifting the focus of the study also required examining the role of race in teacher preparation. The research questions were altered by adding the term *Black* due to the focus of the study shifting to the experiences of Black urban band directors. I also added the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory to examine the role of racism and the disparities within the educational opportunities and achievements of minoritized populations.

My interest in urban music teacher preparation stems from my past and present experiences as a Black urban band director. I began teaching in an urban high school in southwest Atlanta at the age of 23. When I started teaching, I had many ideas of how I wanted my band program to be structured and where we would eventually perform. However, I quickly learned that there was more to actually being a band director than performing and taking trips. While my experiences were consistent with the research indicating the challenges of teaching in an urban setting such as low enrollment, a lack of financial resources, limited working

instruments and significant scheduling issues, I had a determination and a drive to ensure that my students had the same high quality experiences as some of the more affluent and predominately White band programs in neighboring school districts (Anderson & Denson, 2015; Day, 2018; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Kendall-Smith, 2004). Although I only taught at that high school for two years, those were two of my most rewarding years as a band director and served as the impetus to my yearning desire to continue to teach in urban schools.

I often examine my role as a band director, my pre-service and graduate teacher training, my role as a mentor of student teachers and as a teacher leader. I find myself asking these questions: Am I equipping my student teachers as well as colleagues with the tools and resources necessary to effectively teach in urban school settings? How much of my pre-service and graduate training has shaped my pedagogy, knowledge of my students and their backgrounds, and prepared me to teach in urban settings?

### **Purpose of the Study**

These questions, led me to the purpose of this study, which was to understand the pre-service experiences of in-service Black urban band directors in order to provide insight on the types of experiences that they perceived as necessary for the preparation to teach in an urban environment. The focus of this study was on the perceptions of Black urban band directors and the experiences gained from teacher preparation programs that may have contributed to their understanding of and capacities to teach in urban settings. It was the intent of this research to deepen the music education profession's understanding of the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors and the impact it had on their teaching and learning practices in the urban setting. Therefore, I chose a qualitative methodological design and employed interview methods. By identifying and analyzing elements of the pre-service experiences of urban band directors,

music teacher educators may be able to incorporate specific experiences rooted in research to help prepare future urban band directors.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study:

1. How have experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs supported Black urban band director's capacities to teach in the urban settings?
2. How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors?
3. How do in-service Black urban band directors who have been teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher?

There were two phases of data collection. Phase I included the phone interviews, Phase II consisted of the in-person interviews. Researcher memos and member checking was used to establish trustworthiness. All in-person interview sessions were audio recorded. All participants of the study were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identities.

### Significance

Samuels (2009) performed an in-depth qualitative study of Alfred Watkins, retired Director of Bands at Lassiter High School located in Marietta, Georgia to describe the components that contributed to the success of the Lassiter High School band program. Although Samuels' dissertation is primarily about Alfred Watkins and the Lassiter Band, his early years at Murphy High School in an urban school district is relevant to the scope of this study. Murphy High School was an economically disadvantaged poor urban school plagued with drug use and violence located in Atlanta, Georgia. Alfred Watkins, a graduate of Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University, a Historically Black University located in Tallahassee, Florida began his teaching career at Murphy High School was located in downtown Atlanta. Murphy High School

was a part of the Atlanta Public Schools System and the school was approximately 95% free and reduced lunch (Samuels, 2009). The band program did not have financial resources to hire clinicians to work with the group, however, by the time Watkins left the band program, it was playing level VI literature (Samuels, 2009). Samuels illustrates how Watkins was able to systematically transform the Murphy High School band program into a high performing ensemble through a sound pedagogical foundation and strategic teaching. Watkins set high academic expectations for Black students in a school and community that many may have deemed impossible to build a band program to perform at the highest levels. The documentation of the success that Alfred Watkins success at Murphy High School is significant to my study because it provides an example of a Black director establishing an expectation of excellence and not settling for less. Mr. Watkins' philosophies towards strategic classroom management, character development within students, establishing an innate sense of pride, and laying a pedagogical foundation rooted in individual skill development in every student helped to build a strong band program at Murphy High School.

Fitzpatrick (2008) performed a study that examined urban instrumental music teachers in the Chicago Public Schools. Fitzpatrick (2008) performed a mixed methods study designed to provide an in-depth analysis of the complexities of teaching instrumental music in the Chicago Public Schools. The design of the study resembled Creswell and Plano Clark's (2007) two-part Triangulation Convergence Mixed Methods Design, with an added initial exploratory focus group (Fitzpatrick, 2008). The study was conducted in three phases; Phase I consisted of a focus group of seven instrumental music teachers. The data from the focus group helped to develop the questionnaire for Phase II. Phase II involved a survey of 90 instrumental music teachers in the Chicago Public Schools. Phase III of the study consisted of observations and interviews with



four instrumental music teachers also from the Chicago Public Schools. This study sought to understand the contextual knowledge that the teachers held regarding their students, communities, the skills and techniques they used to be successful, the teachers' attitudes and beliefs about teaching in urban schools, and the challenges and rewards of teaching in urban school settings (Fitzpatrick 2008). The findings from Fitzpatrick's study suggest that urban instrumental music teachers utilize context specific knowledge to modify their teaching practices to serve their students; believe there are specialized skills necessary to successfully teach in urban schools; understand that teachers also experience challenges while teaching in urban schools, and acknowledge that the teachers found reward and satisfaction in teaching in urban schools; this study does not address the element of race or place an emphasis on understanding the pre-service experiences of the instrumental music teachers. My study was positioned to explore the pre-service preparation experiences of Black urban band directors and their perceived preparation to teach in urban schools. With the urban schools becoming more diverse, and research exploring best practices and how music teachers navigate teaching in urban schools, there is a heightened need for research that involves the voices of Black urban band directors.

In order to begin to reimagine the perception of urban schools, the voices of Black urban band directors must be at the core of the conversation. There is a gap in the present literature that explicitly explores race and teaching band in urban schools. In other words, the current body of literature excludes the huge elephant in the room—race. This begs the questions: *How have experiences from undergraduate music teacher preparation programs supported Black urban band director's capacities to teach in the urban setting? How have the experiences from undergraduate music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors? And how do in-service Black urban band directors who have been*

*teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher?* Without this missing element, the conversation will continue to be one-sided. Therefore, I decided to examine the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors.

In Chapter Two, I present a review of the relevant literature describing the characteristics of urban schools, the deficit versus non-deficit views, and urban music teacher preparation programs. Chapter Three describes the methodology used for this study. Chapter Four discusses the results and findings and Chapter Five provides a discussion and implications for future research.

## 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Introduction

Despite the shifting sociopolitical climate and increasingly diverse student populations, current music education programs still adhere to the out-of-date standards, curriculum, and pedagogical paradigms from the early twentieth century (McKoy, 2018). Because of this, music curriculum is becoming more and more detached from the reality of today's diversifying environment and is losing relevance for students, especially urban youth (Emdin, 2017; McKoy, 2018). Regardless of the steady increase in research on urban music education (Day, 2018; Eros, 2018), teacher turnover rates remain 50% higher in high-poverty schools (Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016), and yet there has not been a critical lens used to examine the systems and structures that often put urban school music programs, more specifically schools serving high populations of Black and Brown students at a disadvantage. The purpose of this study was to understand the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors and identify the experiences from pre-service teacher training programs that prepared them to teach effectively in urban environments. The findings from this study may provide insight into undergraduate music teacher training experiences that are context-specific and that should be incorporated into pre-service training to better prepare teachers to teach in urban band programs.

I reviewed the following online databases and search engines to assist with writing the literature review: JSTOR, SAGE, EBSCOhost Online Research Databases, Google Scholar, and SpringerLink. The following key search terms were entered into the online databases both individually and in various combinations: *urban schools*, *urban environments*, *urban settings*, *music teacher preparation*, *urban music teacher preparation*, *music teacher certification*,

*Critical Race Theory, Black urban education, Black teacher preparation, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, urban teacher preparation, urban teacher residencies (UTRs), community service learning, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy.* The literature that was deemed most relevant and applicable to the research questions and purpose of the study were included in the literature review. Of the 82 peer-reviewed sources included in the literature review, 74 sources (90.2%) were published between 2016 and 2019. Seven sources (8.5%) were peer-reviewed materials published before 2016, which will provide a foundational understanding of key concepts and phenomena that will frame the discussion for the review. This literature review helped to establish a foundational understanding of the existing research on teacher preparation for urban schools. This literature review will discuss the theoretical framework used in the study, followed by an overview of urban settings. Next, I explore the challenges of teaching in an urban setting, culturally responsive education, urban education teacher preparation, and finally music teacher education and certification processes.

### **Urban Settings**

Lewis (2016) suggests that urban schools consists of a variety of minority groups and communities of low socioeconomic status. In contrast with Lewis (2016) the schools in my study served a variety of minoritized populations. As evidenced by the schools represented in my study, many urban schools serve extremely homogeneous populations. In my study, eight out of the 10 schools where my participants taught served populations that were comprised of 90% Black and Latino students. The contrasting differences between criteria to define urban school populations remains a point of discussion.

**History of urban music programs.** More scholars have begun to analyze the preparation of urban music teachers (Fitzpatrick, 2008; Frierson-Campbell, 2006; Baker, 2012; Day, 2018),

and begin to challenge the analysis of music education and pedagogy that has thrived for centuries. Allsup (2016) stated, “public schools and the universities that prepare their teachers must address the questions that emerge from a society’s changing demographic needs” (p. 80). In the January 1970 *Music Educators Journal’s* Special Report: Facing the Music in Urban Education, it included the article, “Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs” included seven recommendations to prepare successful urban music educators. The recommendations in the article were:

- 1) Teacher education courses should be directed by competent personnel who have firsthand knowledge of the situation and who maintain close connections with music education programs in city schools;
- 2) Prospective music teachers should be provided with a thorough and realistic on-the-spot picture of urban teaching conditions;
- 3) Prospective music teachers should be equipped with the most up-to-date information, understandings, materials, and techniques;
- 4) General music and general musicianship should be given special attention;
- 5) Prospective music teachers should develop skills in communication and the ability to relate to others- students, parents, community, administrators, and fellow teachers;
- 6) Knowledge of the widest possible variety of music;
- 7) Music teachers should be required to develop in-depth cultural, sociological, and psychological understanding of the students they will be teaching (Jan. 1970).

These recommendations came during a time in which music education scholars were receiving criticism for not adequately preparing teachers for urban schools. Forty-five years after the Special Focus, Denson & Anderson (2015) examined how scholars in the *Music Educators*

*Journal* had addressed these recommendations. While the authors report there have been many articles in *MEJ* that addresses the rewards and challenges of teaching in urban settings, there is a dearth of articles that examines how colleges and universities are preparing urban music educators.

In terms of teaching band in urban schools, we must address how best to support teachers in schools serving high populations of Black and Latino students. We must embrace their cultures and the ways in which they interact with music outside of the classroom, as well as understand the inequities that place and keep them at a disadvantage, but also work to correct the injustices. Despite the racially diverse student bodies of urban schools, US public schools have historically struggled to facilitate equitable teaching practices that validate and embrace minoritized students' own cultures (Allsup, 2016; Benedict, 2006; Bond, 2017; Campbell, Myers, & Sarath, 2016; Emdin, 2017). It was not until the beginning of the 1970s that multicultural music education was introduced in hopes of increasing educational equity for all students (Walter, 2018). At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, public school music teachers and teacher educators began to suggest more culturally responsive and student-centered teaching approaches that took into consideration the ways in which other racial groups interacted with music (Walter, 2018). Due to the increasing racial make-up of student populations in the past few decades, teacher preparation programs began offering diversity trainings in attempt to cater to student populations from a wider variety of backgrounds (Robinson, 2017). However the field of music education has not adequately addressed the need for more Black and Latino professors who are researching, teaching, and leading diversity trainings and sharing the experiences of marginalized populations at the university level. In the 1990s, music education researchers and practitioners rejected the elitism that was ubiquitous in earlier educational efforts and moved

toward an understanding of music that incorporated voices from multiple cultures, all the while simultaneously validating the influence of individual identities and psychological elements in music (Allsup, 2016). Despite the increasingly progressive outlook on music education, innovation and self-expression have only been accepted and appreciated within established boundaries.

Allsup (2016) holds that these boundaries have historically enforced a hierarchical, master-apprentice type teaching relationship, prioritizing the position of teachers over that of urban students. Teachers are still often White, with suburban, middle class backgrounds, and when entering low-income environments with students of minoritized backgrounds, there is a clear discrepancy in privilege (Bauml, Castro, Field, & Morowski, 2016; Doyle, 2012; Reed, 2019; Soto; 2018). Furthering the issue of power and representation for minoritized students, White teachers, usually originating from more privileged backgrounds, tend to have inadequate understandings of the backgrounds of low-income or minority students, and frequently rely on stereotypes of Blacks and Latinos to determine pedagogical techniques (Benedict, 2006). This means that the musical experiences and representation of their culture for urban minoritized students are significantly uneven in comparison to other demographic groups in suburban environments.

**Overview of teaching music in urban schools.** Exploring what it means to teach band in an urban setting from the perspective of Black band directors is imperative to this study. The meanings derived from the participants' experiences during pre-service training may provide a contextual foundation for the attitudes that Black teachers possess towards teaching in urban settings, as well as provide context for understanding the philosophical paradigms employed by

the directors in these urban environments. Fiese & DeCarbo (1995) examined how urban educators viewed their teaching situations. The participants were asked the following questions:

- 1) Do you feel that your undergraduate/graduate education prepared you to teach in the urban setting?
- 2) Can you describe one or two specific teaching techniques, strategies or approaches that you found to be particularly effective for teaching music in the urban setting?
- 3) What factors have most contributed to your success as a music teacher in the urban environment?
- 4) Do you have any general observations for ways to improve music education in the urban schools? (p. 27-30)

The findings suggest many urban music educators do not feel that their undergraduate/graduate program prepared them to teach in an urban setting. Many of these educators felt they were prepared in areas such as theory, history, and performance. However, they did not receive contextually specific training for teaching in an urban setting. The participants felt that more training is needed to help future music educators deal with the emotions and trauma of students from different social and economic backgrounds (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). Several participants also reported that “many of the teacher-education courses and the professors who taught these classes were many years removed from the realities of modern urban schools and lacked relevancy” (p. 3).

In response to particular teaching techniques and strategies found to be useful in the urban classrooms, the participants suggested teachers should experiment with specific methods to see which work for their particular environment. Additionally, teachers must be well versed in their content area, in addition to the knowledge of as many instruments and performing artists as



possible. Having a working knowledge of current technology and finding ways to relate to the students and adapting the curriculum to fit the population was also highly recommended.

Establishing and maintaining control and a positive learning environment is also vital. Teachers must have the respect of the students and control of the learning environment. Several of the participants also acknowledged the importance of the students having input regarding their instruction (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). When asked what factors have most contributed to their success in the urban setting, several teachers identified support networks of teachers, music supervisors, mentors, and others. Professional development, conferences, and clinics were also listed as contributing factors to success. Several teachers also highlighted their relationships between the students and parents. The participants also stated to improve music education in urban schools; more teacher training is needed in the area of management skills, knowledge of how to select repertoire, and knowledge of the psychology of urban students. The implications of Fiese and DeCarbo (1995) were also echoed by Baker (2012) who examined characteristics of an effective urban music educator.

Baker (2012) examined the educational background, effective and ineffective characteristics, perceived challenges, and traits that educators needed to be able to sustain a long-term career in an urban setting. The findings suggest an effective urban music educator is empathetic, patient, flexible, enthusiastic, and committed to students' learning. Career urban music teachers (those who spend the majority of their teaching career in urban settings) were said to be “flexible, compassionate/caring, determined/persistent, committed to working hard, loving and respectful of students, patient, and knowledgeable” (p. 49).

A study conducted by the Texas Education Agency in 2009 selected three Texas urban school districts based on criteria set by the Texas Education Agency. The requirements stated

that counties with populations of 735,000 or more with more than 35 percent of the students identified as economically disadvantaged were classified as urban schools. The results revealed that participants who attended urban schools had the most extended tenure teaching in urban school settings. The most reported challenges for urban school teachers were discipline issues, uninvolved/unsupportive parents, lack of funding for instruments, private lessons, camps, and resources, and economic and cultural diversity. The most frequent recommendations to university teacher training programs for preparing future urban music educators include observations, laboratory and or student teaching in urban schools, and discipline/classroom management support. Similarly, the most often cited reasons teachers chose to work in urban settings were the availability of jobs, having a positive impact on students' lives, residing in the neighborhood, feeling needed, providing students a quality music education, seeking challenges or change, and wanting to give back to the community.

Socioeconomic status and inadequate funding play a pivotal role in a student's ability to have access to instrumental music instruction. The issue of insufficient funding compounds concerns of access by limiting quality instruments available for student use at school (Jones, 1987). Funding for many instrumental programs is received from parent organizations (Galloway, 1985). However, for students in urban schools, often parent organizations are not active due to working multiple jobs to provide for their families. Prescott (1982) proposed that the rising cost of participation in the band has contributed to the reason why students have dropped out of the band. Slowly the financial responsibility of running and maintaining instrumental music programs has shifted greatly from the responsibility of the school district to the music teacher and parents. Again this is an example of the disparities between urban school

districts and suburban school districts were access to proper funding allows for greater access to band and the proper resources for instruction.

**Teaching band in urban settings.** There is a dearth of research specifically addressing teaching band in urban schools. At the time of this study, Fitzpatrick's (2008) and Day's (2018) dissertations were the only studies to specifically examine instrumental music teacher's preparation to teach in urban schools. Day's dissertation examined beginning music teachers' perspectives of the relationship between culturally relevant pedagogy and music instruction in urban school settings. This study explored the beginning teachers' perspectives of their preparation to teach in urban schools, the role of culture in the teacher's pedagogy, the meaning they place on their experiences of teaching music in urban schools. Fitzpatrick's study was purposed to explore the ways in which urban teachers understood their students and communities, the techniques and skills the teachers used to be successful, their attitudes and beliefs about teaching in urban settings, and their perceived challenges and rewards associated with teaching in their schools. The findings from Fitzpatrick (2008) suggests that urban music teachers modify their pedagogical techniques based on their understanding of the urban context, the teachers believe there are urban context specific skills and training required to be successful, believe in their students' development and potential, and despite challenges to the success of their programs perceive the rewards of teaching in urban schools based on their personal and musical improvement displayed by their students. While Fitzpatrick's study served as a guide for my study, my study differs in three distinct ways 1) the focus of my study is on the experiences of band directors, 2) the voices represented in my study are of Black directors and 3) the focus is on the experiences gained during pre-service music teacher preparation. Prior to data collection, this study was purposed to elicit the perspectives of urban band directors. However, due to

sampling criteria and population of students and band directors in the school district selected for the study, the participant pool resulted in all Black band directors. Therefore the research questions were modified by adding the term *Black* to explore the perspectives of the Black urban band director. This modification aligns well with the use of Critical Race Theory and to provide a counter-narrative to the deficit laden views of urban settings.

**Black excellence in urban academia.** As previously stated, the present body of literature highlights the challenges of teaching music in urban settings really well. However, there is a paucity of research that depicts urban music programs as excelling. Whereas this may not be intentional, the lack of research detailing the excellence that exists in urban schools perpetuates the negative stigmas associated with schools serving Black and Latino students. However, in the field of general education, more research has unequivocally linked the high academic achievement of Black students in urban settings to having access to more rigorous coursework and the high expectations of teachers (Haper, 2006; Perry, Stelle, & Hilliard, 2003; Tatum, 2007). Siddle-Walker (2000) reiterated how Black teachers worked tirelessly to help their Black students learn. Siddle-Walker (2000) stated how Black teachers are:

consistently remembered for their high expectations for student success, for their dedication, and for their demanding teaching style, these [Black] teachers appear to have worked with the assumption that their job was to be certain that children learned the material presented (p. 265-266).

This is an example of how Black urban educators consider their students to be intelligent and capable of achieving and are committed to their student's success (Tillman, 2004). Mitchell (1998) shared the perspective of eight recently retired Black teachers and explained how Black teachers are often aware of the student's experiences "both in and out of school, and of the

contexts shaping these experiences” (p. 105). Therefore, the teachers were able to connect with students and understand their behaviors were rooted in external factors. This informed the ways in which the teachers reacted and informed their classroom practices all the while maintaining high academic expectations. The underlying message is that Black urban educators understand the social and economic injustices that urban students face and although there are numerous challenges, the success of their students is the ultimate goal.

**Challenges of teaching in urban settings.** Urban schools face many challenges such as having low quality and inconsistent teaching staff, an unbalanced amount of high-poverty schools and schools with a high minoritized population are designated as “low-performing” (Shaw, 2018), but urban students are not given the funding, resources, and quality education that might enhance their academic performance. Therefore, the quality of education for students of color from poor and minoritized backgrounds in urban schools has been systematically hindered through obstacles not often present in majority White schools (Gorski, 2017). Existing research indicates that low-income individuals care about their education just as much as their higher-income counterparts, and scholars suggest that, therefore, the so-called achievement gap between students of higher and lower socioeconomic statuses is actually an institutionalized opportunity gap that should be addressed by educational reforms (Gorski, 2017). However, teachers continue to face challenges in urban environments.

Because geography perpetuates certain assumptions about student populations, music teachers tend to enter urban environments with preconceived notions that society has disseminated as typical of these contexts (Benedict, 2006). These assumptions include lack of funding, ill-prepared teachers, uninvested parents, behavioral difficulties, and cultural tensions (Baker, 2012; Bauml, Castro, Field, & Morowski, 2016; Benedict, 2016). In a qualitative study

of 20 education pre-service teachers' concerns about urban settings, participants expressed the general sentiment that entering an urban school district would simply be too difficult as a first-year teacher (Bauml et al., 2016). Interview data indicated that the pre-service teachers' fears revolved mostly around classroom management issues, limited resources, and a cultural disconnect between the background of the teacher and the backgrounds of the students and their families. Few participants were able to identify specific teaching practices that would serve them well (Bauml et al., 2016).

In addition to urban band directors dealing with the negative perceptions of teaching in their settings, they are also presented with the additional barrier of chronic underfunding (Gorski, 2017). Due to a lack of funding, resources such as an adequate number of instruments, funding for new instrument purchases and repairs, and funds to purchase materials and method books, the arts are usually the first subjects to be cut from school curricula (Gorski, 2017; Baker, 2012). In comparison to schools that provide adequate funding for arts education, the financial investment required to purchase and practice an instrument impedes extremely on the musical learning of students from lower socioeconomic statuses on both an individual and institutional levels (Fitzpatrick, 2011). Multiple studies have revealed that schools consisting of a high proportion of students of color and students in poverty are least likely to offer music education opportunities for students (Gorski, 2017; Salvador & Allegood, 2014). A study of music programs in charter schools and public schools in an urban district in Chicago revealed that all of the district's schools offered significantly fewer musical opportunities than national averages (Kelley, 2016). Charter schools in the sample were more likely to offer music during the school day and were more likely to offer band, choir, and orchestra as electives. However, all schools in the sample that offered music programs reported higher test scores and attendance rates than schools that did

not offer music, even after controlling for differences in socioeconomic status (Kelley, 2016). These findings suggest that students' engagement in music programs may result in higher performance in their academic courses and more educational progress, which would undoubtedly benefit urban schools.

Existing research details how involvement in extracurricular activities can lessen adolescents' problematic behavior, promote academic success, and decrease the likelihood of them dropping out of school (Dosman, 2017; Kelley, 2016; Peguero, 2016). Musical settings such as band, orchestra, and choir have also been shown to promote life skills such as teamwork, social connections, cooperation, artistic expression, problem solving, and skill development (Hedemann & Frazier, 2017). This finding suggests that opening doors to accessible, high-quality music education might address some of the concerns expressed by pre-service and in-service teachers in urban environments regarding behavior and classroom management. Existing research also suggests that students from marginalized and disadvantaged backgrounds have the most to gain and may reap the most benefits from high quality arts education (Salvador & Allegood, 2014). Unfortunately, due to chronic underfunding, urban student populations and students of minority racial/ethnic groups have limited access to the extracurricular opportunities and activities that might promote their development as both students and individuals (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Peguero, 2016; Salvador & Allegood, 2014).

Despite the historic socioeconomic inequalities in the US, many continue to believe that public education serves as a great equalizer, despite the fact that the country's public-school systems actually reinforce the existing socioeconomic disparities between students through inequitable allocation of funds and varied education quality (Bates, 2018). Poorly funded schools are often staffed with less invested, less qualified, and less enthusiastic teachers, intensifying the

educational disadvantages of urban students (Gorski, 2017; Robinson, 2018). A study of music teacher retention and turnover indicated that music teachers transfer or leave schools mainly due to the actions of school personnel, the desire for a better school, and discontent with administrators and their working conditions (Hancock, 2016). However, urban schools have a higher teacher turnover rate than schools in more privileged communities, further undermining consistent, high quality music education for all students (Baker, 2012; Cross & Thomas, 2017; Lewis, 2016; Robinson, 2018; Williamson, Apedoe, & Thomas, 2016).

### **Challenges to Urban Student Learning**

There are a variety of real and perceived challenges expressed by pre-service and in-service music teachers regarding urban schools (Benedict, 2006; Bauml et al., 2016; Emdin, 2017). Despite growing efforts to diversify music education programs in urban schools, research indicates that educators have continued to misunderstand the realities of students attending urban schools (Benedict, 2006).

**Deficit orientation.** Historically, urban schools have been understood from a deficit orientation. This means that teachers have viewed urban classrooms as a collection of perceived deficits that contribute to their deficiencies in school (Benedict, 2006). Unfortunately, this teaching model has facilitated an immense misunderstanding of how to effectively teach and interact with urban students, leaving teachers under prepared to teach in urban settings (Benedict, 2006). Some music teacher educators provide teaching techniques from a deficit orientation, creating pre-service programs and training that prepare teachers to survive what they present as a hostile, demanding, and desolate academic setting, thus framing urban schools as a battleground before teachers enter the classroom (Benedict, 2006). However, this can negatively affect teachers' interactions with students (Bauml et al., 2016).



Rather than instructing students according to negative assumptions and stereotypes, scholars suggest adopting an asset-based perspective of urban settings, viewing diverse classrooms as communities that are rich in culture and capable of success (Bauml et al., 2016; Benedict, 2006; Shaw, 2012). Existing literature indicates that teachers' expectations of their students are more visible to their students than teachers may assume, affecting students' views of themselves, and thus, their learning and achievement (Doyle, 2012; Gorski, 2017). Therefore, while it is important to keep in mind the disadvantages urban students face, music teachers must reject the stereotypes and biases that perpetuate the idea that students in urban schools cannot succeed as well as their privileged counterparts. Teachers who approach the classroom with a deficit-based perspective instruct and interact with students according to negative judgments, rather than their assets, inhibit students' realization of their full potential (Bauml et al., 2016). This orientation guides teachers to attribute students' struggles or shortcomings to their backgrounds and to the urban environments, rather than viewing their difficulties as a result of the inequalities and socioeconomic factors that have historically held back their experiences in academic environments (Bauml et al., 2016). Therefore, deficit-oriented teachers address these concerns by targeting the student, not the environment perpetuating their struggles; thus solidifying the need for more training and ways to include culturally responsive teaching.

**Color-blind pedagogy.** Like deficit thinking, color-blind pedagogy is based on stereotypes and preconceived assumptions about urban environments (Cobb, 2017). Color-blind pedagogy is the belief that White educators do not see color or race (Gorski, 2017). Color-blind perspectives blame unequal and unjust race dynamics on naturally occurring societal circumstances and factors that are inherent to cultures themselves. For example, this ideology attributes the demographics of a low-income school to the families' choices to reside in urban

areas, and attributes the achievement gap between disadvantaged and privileged students to cultural differences in commitment to academics (Cobb, 2017). Color-blind frames deracialize inequality, claiming that oppressive practices, policies, and social constructs result from the choices and inherent nature of people of color (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2016). This ideology minimizes the lasting consequences of discrimination, insisting that racial discrimination is no longer a central factor influencing the treatment and experiences of racial minorities (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2016). However, this ideology fails to account for the institutionalized inequalities that have historically placed students of minority and lower-income backgrounds at a deficit, impeding their opportunities for academic success.

Color-blind pedagogy delegitimizes students' experiences, beliefs, and behaviors that are unique to cultural backgrounds, heritage, and race (Benedict, 2006). Though color-blind pedagogy operates under the notion that all students should be treated equally, this approach negates the goal of incorporating the diversity and culture of less advantaged students. Far from promoting equality, color-blind pedagogy actually facilitates oppressive learning environments and a cycle of misunderstanding, creating tension between teachers and students (Benedict, 2006). Schools have historically facilitated barriers to the success of students of color and lower socioeconomic status and are thus obligated to deliberately shape curriculum and pedagogy to include students' personal experiences, music tastes, and interests into their music curriculum (Hess, 2017). This claim supports the suggestion that teachers should actively challenge the institutionalized structures that have systematically oppressed some students over others, no matter how covert (Hess 2017).

Instead of making a color-blind attempt to place all students on an equal playing field, teachers must acknowledge, identify, and recognize the barriers that urban students face so as to

best identify bias, differences, and obstacles in the classroom (Gorski, 2017). This will allow teachers to address these obstacles effectively and eliminate stereotyping in their curriculum (Gorski, 2017). Existing research indicates that some teachers are nervous to engage students from diverse backgrounds and ask their opinions, as they are concerned it would be socially awkward or insensitive (Lind & McKoy, 2016). However, failing to incorporate the voices of urban students inadvertently silences them and limits the number of students who feel that the music curriculum and experiences in the classroom reflect their personal realities (Hess, 2017). Color-blind pedagogy promotes a white, middle-class norm by which other students are compared, fall short, and then deemed inferior (Benedict, 2006). Despite growing awareness of diverse student populations, this white, middle-class standard has been perpetuated throughout the history of music education and is still deeply ingrained in music teachers' pedagogies (Emdin, 2017; Hess, 2017; Kindall-Smith, McKoy, & Mills, 2011; Kruse, 2016).

**Whitewashing music education.** The term *whitewashing* refers to the process by which colonizers systematically stripped minoritized ethnic groups of their cultures and belief systems, replacing them institutionally with White, Western ideals (Emdin, 2017). Urban youth have been, and continue to be, forced to prioritize the cultural values, ideals, understandings, and norms perpetuated by White, Westerners at the top of the socioeconomic hierarchy (Emdin, 2017). Though school curricula have become increasingly inclusive of popular and culturally relevant music, some scholars argue that music programs continue to reflect White, male, middle-class perspectives (Kindall-Smith, McKoy, & Mills, 2011; Kruse, 2016; Walter, 2018). Research conducted on secondary school music education revealed that content in music classrooms, such as curriculum, music, and classroom décor, has historically been based on the Western canon and has excluded non-western musical content from the learning environment

(Walter, 2018). Even if unintentional, whitewashing music education has systematically excluded culturally rich musical content originating from different genres, styles, and musicians of color (Walter, 2018).

By consistently reflecting and prioritizing White, Western European culture in music education and teacher preparation, both music teachers and music teacher educators are negating and invalidating musical material from other cultures, perhaps even the cultures of their students (Kindall-Smith et al., 2011). Curricula that do introduce musical contributions from other cultures usually only introduce this content on a superficial and basic level, thus reinforcing stereotypes about cultural minorities (Kindall-Smith, McKoy, & Mills, 2011). Instead, Emdin (2017) suggested that educators embrace students' diverse cultures and incorporate their experiences directly into the learning environment, thereby mitigating any potential tension between students' lived experiences and their experiences in the classroom. In addition, university programs for music teachers have historically focused on performance traditions of achievement and excellence, however, in his analysis of literature on music educators' training programs, Allsup (2016) recommended questioning how music teachers understand and relate to achievement and excellence, as these two concepts tend to align with cultural privilege.

**Challenging the “ideal” student.** Educators' expectations of how a student should behave originates from their own culture, norms, and the status quo (Benedict, 2006). In academic environments, the dominant culture has established the normative yardstick against which all students, regardless of race or ethnicity, are measured. Like deficit teaching and whitewashing, measuring students against this status quo perpetuates social injustice, hierarchy, and dominance of one culture over another (Benedict, 2006). Emdin (2017) posits that this construct of the student ideal compromises the learning process of students whose lived

experiences differ from the culture and expectations enforced in whitewashed learning environments. Therefore, to promote a just learning environment, music teachers must reconceptualize what it means to be a good student perhaps re-envisioning what has previously been established as disruptive or inappropriate class behavior (Karvelis, 2017).

Music teacher education programs and in-service music teachers should learn how to best validate the experiences of urban students, recognizing the systemic obstacles faced by students from marginalized backgrounds that place them at a disadvantage to privileged students. However, scholars warn strongly against lowering expectations of disadvantaged students, regardless of privilege, so as to avoid a deficit-based, color-blind mindset. Instead, music educators should adopt a culturally responsive approach (Cobb, 2017; Conkling, 2016; Doyle, 2012; Gorski, 2017).

### **Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive pedagogy as “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 113). Music education researchers have begun to explore more ways to incorporate tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy teaching strategies that could enhance the quality of music education in urban settings that serve racially diverse students. Culturally responsive pedagogy validates and appreciates students’ experiences and teaches to the strengths that are specific to the students’ backgrounds, therefore culturally validating and affirming the students (Bond, 2017; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995). This approach to teaching incorporates the cultural knowledge, life experiences, frameworks, and music styles of ethnically diverse students so as to ensure that their learning environments and class content are relevant, engaging and effective (Gay, 2000). This approach

helps situate the classroom within a broader, dynamic, and diversifying climate that is influenced by political social, economic, and cultural factors (Kelly, 2016). Due to the increasing diversity of the United States, it is crucial to incorporate cultural consciousness into music education programs and practice culturally responsive teaching techniques into classroom practices (Conkling, 2016; Karvelis, 2017). Unfortunately, institutional change necessitates challenging traditions that have been solidified in music education curriculum for over a century (McKoy, 2018).

Instead of taking a traditional approach to music education, it is vital that teachers practice culturally responsive pedagogy because the vast majority of music teachers are from White, English speaking, middle class backgrounds, often having grown up in small cities and suburbs (Bond, 2017). Failure to take a culturally responsive approach further perpetuates the Western European ideals that have been a priority throughout history, including in urban environments, regardless of the cultural displacement (Bond, 2017). Instead, culturally responsive pedagogies can be used to help create musical learning environments that deliberately account for the rich cultural differences offered by the students from their diverse backgrounds, including those at urban schools, therefore presenting more engaging and relevant learning material. In some cultures, music serves as a key element of identity formation, so it is crucial that schools facilitate the development of students' identities through culturally responsive music pedagogy (McKoy, MacLeod, Walter, & Nolker, 2017). Acknowledging urban students' realities and incorporating their experiences into the classroom promotes their sense of empowerment and pride in their backgrounds (Bond, 2017), as opposed to practices that negate and silence them.

In addition to including culturally relevant content into urban schools' music curricula, pedagogy should be tailored to the school's social and cultural context, as effective teaching

techniques depend on specific settings, available resources, and teaching skills (Emdin, 2017). Odegaard (2018) recommended that music teachers consistently and frequently evaluate their teaching strategies and techniques to ensure that class content and learning processes are relevant to students, maintaining their engagement, and thus enhancing their quality of learning. In a thorough analysis of urban education curricula from several higher education institutions, Lewis (2016) determined that to be an effective teacher in the urban setting, aspiring music teachers must be able to identify their own preconceived notions about the school where they were training, recognize how educational practices and pedagogy affect urban schools, and define and understand culturally responsive pedagogy. Bates (2017) suggested that teachers can promote equity in classrooms with students from disadvantaged backgrounds by embracing and validating music traditions from lower income communities, versus prioritizing musical traditions from affluent backgrounds and teach for long-term music making.

Despite the general consensus among urban music education scholars that music teachers should practice culturally responsive pedagogy and incorporate culturally relevant content into their curriculum, the Task Force on Undergraduate Music Major has remained unsatisfied with music teacher education programs. After a year and a half of discussion and consultation, the TFUMM released a formal document summarizing the issues experienced by university music majors. The task force concluded that the university music programs require a fundamental reconstruction so as to successfully close the gap between academic music education and the real-world musical context that current and future generations experience (Campbell et al. 2016). In accordance with other literature, the TFUMM recommended that music educators adopt a more global view to music education and incorporate music from other cultures into the western traditions that are typically taught to music majors in class. The changes recommended in this

document were based on three tenets: creativity, diversity, and integration, suggesting that students and staff share the responsibilities of developing and planning curriculum (Campbell et al., 2016).

**Democratic classrooms.** Along with incorporating culturally relevant content, multiple education scholars have recommended taking a student-centered approach to music education, rather than a tradition-directed framework (Allsup, 2016; Benedict, 2006; Butterwick, 2018; Karvelis, 2017; Whitener, 2016). Student-centered classrooms promote inclusive learning environments by distributing the role of educator across teachers and their students (Karvelis, 2017). In democratic classrooms, teachers create curriculum alongside their students rather than for their students, allowing students to democratically choose topics that they deem worthy of study. From there, teachers can apply themes from students' suggestions across genres and class materials. Not only does coteaching promote student learning, academic involvement, and students' notions of self-worth, but it also gives educators the opportunity to observe how students use teaching methods that they think are most effective in the classroom (Karvelis, 2017). Additionally, democratic classrooms promote cooperation between students, helping them practice effective social skills and develop more positive perceptions of their schools and peers (Whitener, 2016).

The teaching force has historically consisted of White, middle class, English speaking educators (Bond, 2017) which is glaringly different to the student and demographics of urban schools (Benedict, 2006; Emdin, 2017; Eros, 2018; Lewis, 2016). Instead of promoting a White, western learning environment that forces minority students to conform, researchers are recommending flipping the narrative, positioning the teacher as the other who conforms to the educational needs of the students (Benedict, 2006; Butterwick, 2018). Benedict (2006)



recommended that teachers embrace the role as the other when entering the urban classroom, rather than approaching the setting as the dominant culture to which the students must conform. Butterwick (2018) referred to this approach as the community as teacher frame, which consists of being taught by the other. This approach recognizes the rich community culture and orients the teachers toward an asset orientation to engagement rather than a deficit approach (Butterwick, 2018). Gould (2008) suggests that failure to engage as the other in the urban classroom emphasizes a domination relationship which does not support a collaborative classroom. However, successfully establishing a collaborative, democratic classroom with culturally relevant pedagogy necessitates specific pedagogical techniques that must be taught through specific urban music teacher training programs.

### **Urban Education Teacher Preparation**

Music instructors are encountering the most culturally and ethnically diverse populations of students in the history of public education (Robinson, 2017), increasing the importance of effective teacher preparation for work in diverse environments. Extant literature emphasizes the importance of teacher preparation programs that are purposeful about identifying specific elements of the teaching environment that may influence the effectiveness of certain teaching techniques (Hammerness et al., 2016). However, the generic music teacher education model that has been firmly established in music education programs continues to compromise teachers' abilities to effectively prepare for complex urban settings (Hammerness et al., 2016; Robinson, 2017). Studies of academic achievement have historically ignored the powerful influence of geography and community context on teaching and learning, despite the fact that there is a general consensus among teachers that instructing students in urban environments necessitates a distinct skill set and pedagogy (Allsup, 2016; Hammerness et al., 2016). Teacher preparation

programs have focused on general teaching skills, ignoring the variety of urban situations that present unique obstacles and require distinct skill sets, techniques, and resources (Allsup, 2016).

Teacher educators face the difficult task of balancing the experiences provided to pre-service music teachers that will lead to success in a variety of contexts while being sensitive and aware of the distinct student populations that a teacher might encounter (Goodwin et al, 2016; Hammerness & Craig, 2016). Therefore, music teacher training programs must develop deliberate focus on providing pre-service teachers with the skills and techniques that are universally applicable, while also teaching pre-service music teachers pedagogical skills and techniques that are effective with specific student populations. The generic programs currently preparing music educators have ignored the urban context, therefore the pedagogical practices necessary to be successful in the urban context are not taught, leaving urban music teachers feeling unprepared for the urban environment (Hammerness et al., 2016).

**Inadequate training for urban environments.** Urban music educators who participated in studies on the topic felt that their university training and preparation did not adequately prepare them for teaching in urban schools (Fiese and DeCarbo, 1995; Baker, 2012).

Administrators and district leaders have also expressed concerns with traditional, generic music preparation programs and have suggested that they are not effective in preparing teachers to work in their urban communities (Hammerness, et al., 2016). Survey data from 71 music teachers in an urban, Title I public elementary school in two different counties indicated that most teachers came from different demographic backgrounds from their students (Doyle, 2012). Participants expressed that their university courses did not adequately address urban education and therefore they felt unprepared to teach students from different cultural backgrounds to their own (Doyle, 2012). In other words, the present model of music teacher preparation is not

providing pre-service teachers with a toolbox to teach racially, linguistically, and economically diverse students. Due to increasingly diverse populations, teachers cannot afford to be ill-equipped to teach students from varying backgrounds.

Regardless of specific context, research suggests that urban environments should be considered with more depth versus viewing them as a static environment with universal features and characteristics (Hammerness et al., 2016). Therefore, music teacher preparation programs should address the complexity of urban school settings and identify the various factors that differentiate one urban school from another. By providing this contextual information, educators can gain a more thorough understanding of urban communities through direct engagement with the schools' surrounding communities (Shaw, 2018; Tinkler & Tinkler, 2018).

**Qualities of music education preparation.** Though researchers and educators have not yet agreed upon the best method of assessing pre-service teachers' instructional abilities, some researchers have explored characteristics held by effective teachers and their teaching practices (Kelly-McHale, 2019). Existing literature indicates that music teachers who succeed in urban environments exhibit specific personality traits, such as enthusiasm, flexibility, compassion, determination, intellect, commitment, empathy, and patience (Baker, 2012; Lewis, 2016). Allsup (2016) suggests that effective urban school music teachers think less rigidly about music instruction and are adaptable, flexible and fluid across traditional and innovative teaching practices. Lind and McKoy (2016) also mentioned that high quality teachers promote students' self-efficacy, academic success, and the freedom to be ethnically expressive, which is critical in urban environments. Therefore, teachers in urban environments must be culturally aware and cognizant of preexisting biases. Bauml et al. (2016) suggested that teacher educators teach pre-service teachers how to identify forms of deficit thinking, including overgeneralizations of

students' backgrounds and assuming that a student will be unsuccessful before they are given an honest chance. Music teachers, particularly those in urban settings, must fully understand the role of culture and race in students' academic experiences (Bauml et al., 2016).

Teacher education programs should take into consideration the teaching characteristics and culturally responsive pedagogical techniques that have proven effective in urban classrooms. Research on teacher preparation indicates that programs that focus on context-specific factors for a specific setting produce teachers that remain in teaching longer than those who completed programs that did not address context-specific factors (Hammerness et al., 2016). This reveals the positive effect of context-specific and culturally aware teacher preparation on teacher retention rates. Additionally, Robinson (2017) suggested incorporating diversity training in music teacher preparation programs so that preservice teachers can gain a strong understanding of access and social power structures, intersectionality, and myths of urban teaching. By including sociological perspectives in music teacher training programs, music teachers can be well-equipped to use pedagogical and musical approaches that connect school music with music experiences outside of school, in turn creating meaning and relevancy for the students (Kelly, 2016).

Lewis (2016) echoed the idea of including sociologically informed teacher preparation. Lewis (2016) proposed an introductory course on urban music education in all music educator training programs. To create content for this training, Lewis (2016) maintained that music teacher educators must research methods that have proven effective in urban music education environments, passing those pedagogical methods along to future teachers. Lastly, teacher educators must have authentic, open, and honest conversations with music students about what challenges and experiences to expect in urban schooling environments (Bauml et al., 2016). By

inviting open and honest discussions about the challenging and rewarding aspects of teaching in urban classrooms, teacher educators can provide urban districts with more informed and culturally-aware teachers.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

According to *The Child's Bill of Rights in Music* (Glenn, 1992) the quality and quantity of music education should not be compromised by children's geographical location, social status, racial or ethnic status, place of residence, or the economic backgrounds of their parents or communities (Lewis, 2016). Though culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy are becoming increasingly familiar to educators in public schools, practical applications and tangible steps are often missing from the discussion, maintaining an inadequate level of training for urban environments (Kelly-McHale, 2019). Teachers should enter urban schools viewing the challenges presented as situational and capable of development and being changed, rather than a fixed situation (Benedict, 2006). By emphasizing sociocultural consciousness and culturally responsive music pedagogy in music teacher training and certification programs, music teacher training programs might better address the specific needs of urban communities that serve high populations of minority students.

Despite the steady incline in literature on urban music education there are still specific research gaps that must be addressed to enhance pre-service teachers' abilities to work effectively with students in urban environments. Some scholars suggest more study on the content and effectiveness of music teacher training, and how they will provide more contextualized perspectives on urban settings and challenge stereotyping and overgeneralizations (Hammerness et al., 2016). Further, despite the wealth of literature on education in urban environments, there is a seeming lack of literature specifically on the pre-service experiences of

urban band directors. This study addressed this gap in literature by exploring the experiences of Black band directors in urban environments. By contributing to the existing literature on music education in urban schools, this study provided further insight on how music teacher educators can better prepare, train, and support music teachers to be successful in urban settings that serve diverse populations.

The following chapter will provide the research design and methodology for this study. In consideration of the problem and identified gap in literature, this phenomenological study will explore the pre-service experiences of urban band directors.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the pre-service experiences of in-service Black urban band directors in order to provide insight on the types of experiences that they perceived as necessary for preparation to teach in an urban environment. Previous qualitative and mixed methods studies have explored context specific knowledge, skills to be successful, beliefs and attitudes about teaching in urban schools, challenges and rewards of teaching in urban schools (Fitzpatrick, 2008; Day, 2018) and the impact of undergraduate preparation (Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995). For the current study, a qualitative design was chosen to provide a space for the voices of Black urban band directors to be heard. However, this study differs from previous studies in the area of urban music teacher preparation (Day, 2018; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2008) in that the primary focus is on the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors. The focus on Black urban band directors is especially important because the dominant narrative accepted by many has positioned urban schooling through a Whiteness lens and does not celebrate the excellence of urban schools and Black and Latino students. Nor, do we hear from the voices of teachers of color. The deficit view often leaves the stories of Black urban band directors and students within narratives of assumptions, biases and stereotypes (Martignetti, Talbot, Clauhs, Hawkins & Niknafs, 2013). By studying the experiences of Black urban band directors and utilizing Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to frame and understand the data, I offer the participants' stories to contribute to the invisibility that currently exist. The following research questions were used to guide my study:

1. How have experiences during pre-service music teacher preparation programs supported Black urban band director's capacities to teach in the urban setting?

2. How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors?
3. How do in-service Black urban band directors who have been teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher?

I chose phenomenology as my methodology because it afforded the opportunity to explore the experiences of Black urban band directors and their perspectives of their pre-service training through thick descriptions. By framing this study through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT), music education research can begin to highlight the culture of Black excellence where students in urban schools are expected to thrive both academically and musically, and directors are able to share their positive experiences teaching in such schools. This study consisted of three central sources of data: 1) phone interviews, 2) in-person interviews, and 3) researcher memos. Member checks were utilized to triangulate data and to assist with establishing credibility and trustworthiness.

In the next section, a brief description of the methodological design will be provided. I will discuss the theoretical framework of Critical Race Theory, the research design, and how the data were analyzed, interpreted, and triangulated.

### **Epistemology**

I examined the data through a constructionist lens to emphasize participants' social construction of the meaning of their perceived pre-service music teacher training and its impact on their teaching/learning practices. Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of an interaction between people and their world and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). Burr (1995) defines four broad social



constructionist tenets: 1) a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge; 2) historical and cultural specificity; 3) knowledge is sustained by social processes; 4) language and social action go together. From the constructionist view, meanings are constructed by humans as they engage with the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 1998).

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Critical Race Theory**

This study is grounded in Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical Race Theory derived from critical theory which examined issues of racism within legal discourse (Closson, 2010). While the origin of critical race theory lies within legal studies, CRT has since been extended to the field of education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Clossom, 2010; Pelzer, 2016). The basic tenet of CRT have been summarized by Solórzano (1997) into five themes (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*5 Themes of Critical Race Theory (Solórzano, 1997)*

Theme	Description
Centrality and intersectionality of race and racism	Starts from the belief that race and racism are endemic, permanent, and central in defining and explaining individual experiences
Challenge to dominant ideology	Challenges traditional claims of objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity
Commitment to social justice	Has a commitment to social justice and eliminating all forms of racism, including gender, class, and sexual orientation
Centrality of experiential knowledge	Recognizes the experiential knowledge of women and men of color as legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, practicing, and teaching in relationship to racial subordination
Interdisciplinary perspective	Insists on analyzing race and racism by placing them within a historical and contemporary context using interdisciplinary methods

CRT can be utilized to concentrate on a multitude of racial and social justice issues. However, in this study I have used CRT to elucidate the dearth of research examining the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors. I utilized Critical Race Theory as a way to challenge the hegemonic ideologies about teaching band in urban schools and to begin to create new narratives that are authenticated through the cultural experiences of the participants (Pelzer, 2016). For example participants in my study did not describe their schools or students from a deficit point of view. Instead, they highlighted the need for their students to see Black musicians who look like them excelling at the highest levels. There is a need for critical scholarship that provides the spaces where the stories of urban Black and Latino band directors are told that are centered around the excellence of their students.

### **Reframing Urban Band Programs Using Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory examines race and racism and situates race as a socially constructed paradigm that exists and is reinforced by society (Gillborn & Ladson-Billings, 2010; Latunde, 2018). Because race is deeply embedded within the American culture, it is also embedded within our school systems (Delgado & Stafancic, 2001). Whether explicit or implicit, racism can also be subconsciously engrained within school band programs. Racism can manifest itself in a variety of contexts; stereotyping associated with race, socio-economic status, and religious beliefs. Critical race theory provides a framework to begin to examine these constructs and to offer counter-narratives that provide insight from the Black urban band directors and their experiences.

Critical race theory provides an optimal theoretical framework to examine the pre-service experiences of Black urban band directors and the impact their pre-service experiences had on their teaching practices. My study provided the opportunities of my participants to tell their

stories and racialized experiences as Black urban band directors. Examples of these experiences are expressed as the directors expound on why they continue to teach in urban schools, the training experiences they received from professors during pre-service training, and in their philosophical underpinnings regarding teaching and learning.

In extending the work of critical race theorists to music education it is important to begin to examine the hegemonic paradigms centered around Whiteness and the depictions of urban schools as centers of low-performing and under-achieving students of color. One of the most valuable tenets of CRT is the use of experiential knowledge. I employed the experiences of the Black urban band directors in my study to begin to form counter-narratives to the deficit laden views of urban schools. Solórzano & Yosso (2002) offers the use of counter-stories as a viable way to reframe urban teaching in my study. Critical race theory utilizes three main types of counter-stories: 1) autobiographical, 2) biographical, and 3) composite stories. I utilize composite stories in order to draw on the multiple narratives of the participants to retell the experiences of minoritized Black band directors (Yosso, 2013). Solórzano & Yosso (2002) further described counter-storytelling as a method of retelling the stories of marginalized populations as a way to explore, critique, and counter hegemonic paradigms produced by dominant cultures. This means in my study, I utilized counter-storytelling as a way to summarize the individual pre-service training experiences of the Black band directors teaching in an urban setting. Counter-storytelling provided the opportunity for my participants to recount their experiences during their pre-service music teacher training, and how they describe their teaching experiences. Composite counter-storytelling is an extension of phenomenology and follows the principle tenet: “to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and can provide a comprehensive description of it” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 4).

Therefore, the intersections of CRT and phenomenology affords the Black directors the space in which they may position themselves as the authorities of teaching band in urban schools (Reynolds & Mayweather, 2017). This also means that the directors' stories are not viewed through the lens of Whiteness and or the dominant paradigms established and serving as the norm. Bell (1990) urges scholars to critically examine the interpretations of Black experiences offered from the White perspective. The counter-narratives provided by the Black band directors in my study provide competing perspectives with those in the extant literature; thus situating urban schools from a positive perspective.

### **Phenomenology**

Phenomenology is a method that helps researchers understand the essence of an experience and how participants come to make sense of their experiences (Grbich, 2013). Schwandt (2001) suggests that "phenomenology is oriented...toward describing the experiences of everyday life as it is internalized in the subjective consciousness of the individuals" (p. 191). Phenomenology places emphasis on understanding the experiences of the participants from their perspective. This directly aligns with the purpose of the proposed study. Nevertheless, I aim to describe as accurately as possible the experiences of the Black urban band directors in my study while refraining from any preconceived understandings, while staying true to the facts (Groenewald, 2004). I aim to see if the participants in my study would produce a counter narrative to the current beliefs regarding teaching band in urban schools. I employed qualitative interviews to collect data. Thus through phenomenology, the composite stories offer the perspectives on how Black urban directors make sense of their pre-service music teacher training.

## **Qualitative Interviews**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, qualitative interviews have been used to varying extents in social science research (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Many sociologists and anthropologists have used informal interviews to gain valuable insight from their participants. For example, sociologists studied the urban experiences in the Chicago schools during the 1930s and 1940s through qualitative interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These studies have come to serve as foundational material for the usage of interviews in social science research. Qualitative interviews were helpful because they allowed me to gather rich descriptive data in narrative form from the participants.

In the design of this study, I sought to explore the experiences of Black urban band directors in the urban setting. Kvale (1983) stated that the qualitative research interview serves the purpose of gathering "descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 174). According to Weiss (1994), qualitative interviews are an acceptable source of data collection when the researcher aims to: 1) develop detailed descriptions; 2) integrate multiple perspectives; 3) describe the process; 4) establish holistic description; 5) learn how events are interpreted; and 6) bridge intersubjectivities. Intersubjectivities allows for the participants and researcher to understand the content of the interview in context.

The goal of using interviews in the current study was to gain insight into the background of the participants; their experiences of teaching band in an urban setting, as well as the degree to which they felt their undergraduate music teacher training prepared them to teach. Kvale (1983) suggests qualitative research interviews that are "semi-structured" therefore the interview is not

completely rigid in structure, nor is it a free conversation (p. 174). Further, Kvale (1983) provides 12 main aspects of the qualitative research interview which include:

1. Centered on the interviewee's life-world
2. Seeking to understand the meaning of phenomena in his life-world
3. Qualitative
4. Descriptive
5. Specific
6. Presuppositionless
7. Focused on certain themes
8. Open for ambiguities
9. Changing
10. Dependent on the sensitivity of the interviewer
11. Taking place in an interpersonal interaction
12. A positive experience (p. 174).

Collectively these 12 aspects of qualitative interviews were used to form the research questions utilized in the interview guide. The interview guide was used to help focus the interview (see Appendix C). The interview questions that I utilized were designed based on the abovementioned criteria. The interview protocol consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions designed to elicit rich descriptive narratives of the directors' experiences during their middle and high school band experiences, pre-service teacher training, and teaching experiences in urban schools. My objective was to describe and understand the stories from the participants self-reported experiences. It was important to understand each participant's individual

experiences, including their racialized experiences of teaching band in an urban setting and the degree of perceived preparation received during their pre-service music teacher training.

### **Research Design**

I chose a qualitative design for this study. I utilized a phenomenological methodology to acquire in-depth narratives of the experiences of Black urban band directors and their perception of the impact of their pre-service music teacher training on their teaching/learning techniques used to teach in an urban setting. The design of this study is based loosely on Fitzpatrick's (2008) study of urban instrumental music teachers in the Chicago Public Schools. Roulston (2010) suggests, that qualitative research serves as a method to understand, critique, evoke change, and or to understand a current phenomenon. For the purposes of my study, I used a qualitative design as a way to critique and deconstruct the current understanding of teaching band in urban schools and to provide the perspective of the Black urban band director. Therefore, this study was based on a need of understanding the pre-service training experiences of Black urban band directors.

### **Research Site**

My study took place in a large urban school district located in the Southeastern part of the United States. Sachs (2004) describes urban schools as those schools that are in metropolitan areas that serve populations that are subject to social, economic, and political disparities due to population mobility, serve diverse ethnic/cultural identity, low socioeconomic status, and/or limited language proficiency (p. 178). I selected this school district because it is located in a large metropolitan city, serves a population that consists largely of Black and Latino students and because of professional affiliations with the band directors located within the school district (see Table 2).

Table 2  
*School Demographics*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>Population # of Black Students</b>	<b>Population # of Latino Students</b>	<b>% of Population Who Are Minority</b>	<b>% of Free and/or Reduced Lunch</b>
Malik	Butler HS	1,833	746	388	62	35
JoAnn	Smith MS	618	603	11	99	100
Matthew	Nims MS	664	608	46	98	100
Alicia	Archer HS	1,138	965	55	90	100
Andrew	Tillersson HS	886	847	30	99	100
Stephanie	Mitchell MS	304	294	8	99	100
Philip	Lakeland MS	818	765	43	99	100
Tariq	Anderson HS	412	395	15	99	100
Steven	Henry MS	1,091	379	91	43	30
Patrick	Simpson MS	666	609	52	99	100

### **Participant Selection & Sampling Methods**

I used purposeful sampling to choose the participants for my study. Moustakas (1994) recommends participants that "have experienced the phenomena, [are] intensely interested in understanding its nature and meaning, and [are] willing to participate in long interviews" (p.107). While Moustakas (1994) suggests long interviews, this is not a necessity. It was imperative that the individuals in my study were Black band directors who have been teaching for five or more years and were able to reflect on the experiences they encountered during their pre-service music teacher training and how it impacted their ability to teach in urban schools.

Prior to the start of the study, I had planned to recruit 22 middle and high school band directors who had been teaching for five or more years. This number represented all of the middle and high school band directors located in the school district. In order to be a part of this study, individuals had to be a Black band director, currently teaching band in an urban middle or high school and had taught for a minimum of five years. I specifically sought band directors who



had taught for five or more years so they would have developed a pedagogical and philosophical understanding of what it means to teach band in an urban school (see Table 3).

Table 3  
*Demographics of Participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Undergrad</b>	<b>Degree Level</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Years of Experience</b>
Malik	36	Butler HS	HBCU	Masters	Black	13
JoAnn	54	Smith MS	HBCU	Doctorate	Black	27
Matthew	30	Nims MS	PWI	Specialist	Black	10
Alicia	34	Archer HS	HBCU	Masters	Black	10
Andrew	37	Tillerson HS	HBCU	Masters	Black	14
Stephanie	35	Mitchell MS	PWI	Masters	Black	5
Philip	27	Lakeland MS	PWI	Bachelors	Black	5
Tariq	35	Anderson HS	HBCU	Specialist	Black	13
Steven	34	Henry MS	PWI	Masters	Black	12
Patrick	35	Simpson MS	HBCU	Specialist	Black	10

I sent out a recruitment email to each of the band directors. Sixteen directors responded to the recruitment email stating they were interested in participation. Based on the criteria for inclusion, only 12 directors were eligible to participate. An initial round of phone interviews was conducted with each of the 12 respondents. After completing the phone interviews, individuals were contacted via email to schedule a one hour in person interview for Phase II. Ten participants were available to schedule the interview (see Appendix C).

The participants represented 10 Black band directors with a varied level of teaching experience in the urban setting, diverse undergraduate educational background, and varying levels of education (see Table 1). The participants in my study were able to share their experiences from their music teacher pre-service training, and their perceptions of teaching band within the K-12 urban context. This was critical for the narratives of teaching band in urban schools to be reframed and to highlight the perspectives of Black band directors, it must be

rewritten from a self-authored perspective. Therefore it is imperative that more research in the field of music education is centered through the lens of Blackness.

### **Study Participants**

Participants in my study were a purposive sample of 10 middle and high school band directors in a large urban school district in the Southeastern part of the United States. All participants had taught band for five years or longer. In order to protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms have been assigned to the names of individuals and schools.

#### **Malik – Butler High School**

Malik was a 36-year-old African American male who has taught at two urban HS. Currently, Malik is the Director of Bands at Butler HS. He teaches marching band, beginning band, intermediate band, jazz band, percussion class, and music technology. Malik stated one of the rewards of teaching at Butler HS is “seeing a kid that came in very rough and develop and blossom into a responsible young adult.”

The school where Malik teaches is comprised of a diverse ethnic population of Black, White, Latino, and Asian students, and it once served as the Performing Arts Magnet within the school district. The school is located in the northern region of the school district and considered to be a more affluent part of the district. Malik recalled being attracted to Butler HS because of the “performing arts magnet and starting as an assistant band director with Mr. Kimpson.” In 2007, the magnet program was removed however the fine arts faculty and course infrastructure remained. Malik shared the following regarding his early years’ experiences with music:

I went to a neighboring middle school [it] was pretty close I could walk to middle school a pretty diverse demographic because where I'm from there was an initiative put in place maybe the late 70s early 80s where they bused kids to make it all the high schools

in the city were equally diverse. So, you didn't have the rich kids at the top of the city and the poor kids bused them all over across the town.

Malik spoke enthusiastically of middle and high school band, stating, “Middle school band was phenomenal. I had a great middle school director...I had a great time, very confident program in middle school . . . High school was about the same . . . I had a great experience.”

Malik stated that he had been uncertain of what he wanted to study in college, but that he received a scholarship to study music after auditioning on French horn, and this opportunity encouraged him to enter the music profession. He chose to become a band director because of his love for the work, saying, “I was very passionate about band from middle school, all the way up.” Family role models also determined his choice to teach. He stated, “it runs in my family. There are a lot of teachers and administrators in my family, so [teaching] came really natural for me.” He said he chose to teach in the urban school district because the district chosen offered him the most interesting opportunity when he graduated from college: “it was an arts rich school . . . One with the whole kit and kaboodle. I felt like my talent would be best served there.”

### **Alicia – Archer High School**

Alicia a 35-year-old African American female band director at Archer HS. She taught in a neighboring school district that she considers to “share urban traits” although is considered a suburban area. She explained how the Archer High School community is becoming more diverse socio-economically, however many of the more affluent families in the area are choosing not to send their students to Archer High School.

Historically, Archer High School has struggled to establish and maintain a vibrant band program. Alicia is the fourth band director in ten years. Butler High School offers band, orchestra, chorus, piano, dance and visual art. Alicia also teaches beginning band, intermediate

band, and marching band. When asked about her experiences in middle and high school band, Alicia expressed “my middle and high school band experiences were very thorough . . . very well-rounded experience from marching band to concert band, symphonic band, jazz band...Thoroughly enjoyed it.”

She said she entered the music field because her mother’s tutelage had given her a head start: “Honestly, having a mother that has done it before kinda gave me an advantage, a super advantage. I already knew about ear training, and I already knew about theory lessons.” Alicia said of her mother, “She’s a retired music educator. She taught 36 years in music.” She chose to teach in Davis Public Schools because of, “the money. They pay, and I feel like, as a teacher, yes, I work very hard, so I want to be compensated monetarily. But also, they were the only ones to give me a chance,” of the high schools where she applied for a job.

### **Philip – Lakeland Middle School**

Philip a 27-year-old African American male and a graduate of a predominately white institution completed his student teaching assignments in an urban middle school (part-time) and a suburban high school (full-time) that he stated, “exhibited urban tendencies.” Philip, currently the Director of Bands at Lakeland Middle School describes the Lakeland community as a middle-class community. He stated that the clientele in the community has changed drastically within the last seven years and is not “what it used to be.” Philip expressed how the Lakeland community was once affluent and had more support within the school. However, currently the school is transitioning and is unstable, so therefore it is affecting the band program. Lakeland Middle School offers band, orchestra, chorus and art as music electives.

Philip spoke of participating in band while growing up as a kid. “I started band in sixth grade playing trumpet...I had a very enjoyable middle school experience and it definitely set me

up for my future going into high school.” Philip chose to enter the music profession through the influence of a role model in high school: “my high school band director was very influential in my music career, in my pursuits of music, so I started to fall in love with band in high school, which led me to pursue it post-high school.” Philip chose to teach in Davis Public Schools for the challenge and because it was an available job: “I knew I wanted to teach middle or high school. It was one of the middle school jobs open. It was also something I found that would be somewhat of a challenge.”

### **JoAnn – Smith Middle School**

JoAnn spoke very adamantly regarding her experiences as a band director at Smith Middle School. As a graduate of a Historically Black College and University, she felt her pre-service experiences helped prepare her to teach in the urban setting. She stated that Smith is the fourth school in an urban school district that she has taught at. Prior to teaching at Smith Middle School, she taught high school for five years in the same school district. She described the community as a low-socioeconomic community. The school is located on the Southside of the Davis Public School district. JoAnn, a 54-year-old African American woman, stated teaching at a high school within the district. Prior to teaching in public school, JoAnn taught band at the collegiate level. She stated she was offered the position at Lakeland MS 17 years ago, but “turned it down. JoAnn spoke highly about her experiences in middle and high school band. I had the same band director from the sixth grade through twelfth grade . . . my band director required us to play twelve major scales and three forms of minor scales when I graduated. Of this experience and its relationship to JoAnn’s decision to enter the music profession, JoAnn stated, I just feel like he required us to do a lot of things that I think prepared me or gave me a desire to become a band director.

JoAnn's band director was influential because, "he instilled in us that we [the band] were a family and that we were there for each other, and that we need to lift each other up. Of choosing to teach in Davis Public Schools, JoAnn said, I didn't really want to...I don't know why. She was denied a job in a different county as a perceived result of sexist hiring practices, however, so she chose to teach in there because a job was available there, and she already lived in the city.

### **Matthew – Nims Middle School**

Matthew, a 30-year-old African American male, and a product of the urban school district, recalled how his middle school band program suffered from a high turnover among band directors. Matthew detailed how in sixth grade his school only had a band director for half of the year. "We only had a band director for half of the year. Our band director at the time got ill, probably due to stressors of the job." He further detailed how the school hired a non-music certified substitute teacher for the remainder of the year, and the students "basically sat in the class and did nothing." Matthew reported that, for this reason, "I got my musical experiences from other places that were not connected to my school to be able to play at a high level and still get the experience that I should have gotten in school." Thus, his playing experience as a teenager came from local youth orchestras and ensembles, rather than his school band.

Although Matthew's middle and high schools had high turnover in band directors, his elementary school band director inspired him: "My elementary band director...spent a lot of time with me...and always kept in contact to see how I was doing throughout school. So those experiences made me wanna be a band director." He added that his elementary band director's influence, "made me wanna impact children in that same manner and try to make a difference

within that way.” He chose to teach in Davis Public Schools because he was a graduate of the school district.

### **Tariq – Anderson High School**

Tariq a 35-year-old African American male and graduate of a local Historically Black College and University has taught at 3 urban schools in the same school district; one middle and two high schools. Currently the Director of Bands at Anderson High School, Tariq describes the community as “interesting based on the culture and infrastructure of the school.” Anderson High School was created as the result of a merger between two single gender academies, however the administrative teams from both schools remained. Therefore, Anderson High School has two principals and operates as two separate schools within one building. As for the band, orchestra, chorus, and dance teachers, they are the only teachers who are shared across the two schools. Tariq has described the challenges of this structure as difficult because you’re “having to appeal to two different visions, and philosophies, which can make running a band program difficult.” Tariq expressed how he has worked to unify the two campuses by building close relationships with both principals and always keeping the students well-being first.

When asked about his band experiences as a child, Tariq stated “I started playing trumpet in sixth grade, through my school's band...From there, because I became really interested in music, I went on to a performing arts school that we had.” He added, “I really thought very highly of my band director.” He chose to become a band director because he enjoyed the work: “When I couldn't think of anything else to do for a living, upon attending college, I just told myself, ‘Hey. Why don't you just continue to do what you enjoy the most, which is band.’” He said of choosing to teach in Davis Public Schools, “it was one of the first true band jobs that became available to me...the first band offer [I] ever received as a young teacher.”

## **Steven – Henry Middle School**

One of the first things you notice about the Henry Middle School community is its location. Located in the heart of the city, Henry Middle School is in a very affluent area. The community is known for its expensive housing and restaurants. The community is also known for hosting many arts related festivals. Steven described the school and community as racially and socio-economically diverse. Steven a 35-year-old African American male who graduated from a predominately white institution stated

“I think that it's important for students to see people that look like them, look like me. Frankly speaking, the first black, male teacher I had was in grad school, is my drum set teacher. I'm talking pre-K all the way through undergrad. That does make a difference. It makes a big difference when you see somebody that looks like you are playing really, really well. I think that's the best investment I have in my community for this particular time period. Continuing and showing them that if we have the right systems and you have the right attitude and effort and I continue to adjust and make improvements, then we can do some pretty amazing things together.”

When asked about his experiences in middle and high school band, Steven said, “I started band when I was in sixth grade. My middle school director was also my high school band director. I started marching band when I was in the eighth grade. I participated in our region, our district band...Those were some great experiences.” Steven decided to become a band director after observing other band directors in Georgia: “moving to Georgia, I saw a different kind of band director and I thought it was something that I could do.” Steven chose to teach in Davis Public Schools because the city was where he had chosen to live: “I live in the area...I thought



it'd be better to work closer to home and pour more so into your environment, as opposed to somewhere else.”

### **Andrew – Tillerson High School**

Tillerson High School and band program had a long history of excellence. Historically, one of the strongest band programs in the school district with representation in District Honor Band and the All-State Band, Tillerson High School produced many talented musicians. Tillerson High School is located in the southwest part of the school district and served a student population was largely African American, and low-socioeconomic.

Andrew, a former graduate and drum major of Tillerson High School recalled his elementary experiences in band as being enjoyable. He stated,

I only experienced middle school band in the eighth grade, 'cause my elementary went all the way up to seventh grade. I went to a predominantly African American middle school. The band director was a very seasoned and experienced band director. My experience with that group, that was the first time I played in a band that was, I wanna say, more than 40 people, that I can remember. And I really enjoyed the sound.”

Andrew went further and said high-school band was, “a good experience” that prepared him with enough music education that he was able to receive a music scholarship to college. He identified his success in receiving a music scholarship as the reason he decided to become a band director, saying, “that was the segue into wanting to give students like me an opportunity to have a good college experience.” He chose to teach in Davis Public Schools because he found an open position in a school with which he was familiar.

## **Stephanie – Mitchell Middle School**

Stephanie is currently the Director of Bands at Mitchell Middle School. She is a 34-year-old African American female and a graduate of a predominately white institution with a degree in music education. She describes her school as a Title I school where the student body is 100% Free Lunch. She stated that the community that Mitchell Middle School serves is going through gentrification, however the student population is not reflecting the changes. Furthermore, Stephanie describes the population at Mitchell as 90% African American and 10% Latino with a faculty and staff that is 98% African American, with 1 Caucasian and 1 Latino teacher. She stated that a lot of the students at Mitchell have experienced a lot of trauma in their personal lives, and sometimes that impacts their development at school. “The students have seen a lot, and although it hinders them in some ways, it also helps them. A former student stated band was the only reason they came to school.”

When Stephanie was asked about her middle and high school band experiences, she stated, “my middle school experience was really fun. That was the first big band that I played in, and it just so happens that I played the same instrument as my band director, so I could look up to her.” She said of high school, “when I got to high school, I marched for my first three years. When I was in the ninth grade, the assistant band director was a female, and she kind of took to me.” Stephanie trained to teach music because her father encouraged it for practical reasons: “I wanted to major in performance, and my father, who is a retired band director, insisted that I major in music education because he did not want me to be a starving artist.” She said of choosing to work in the Davis Public School district, after the district offered to let her earn her license while she was employed as a teacher, “I ended up here, and I'm glad I did, because it's

right in my dad's backyard. He knew the lay of the land and was basically able to mentor me through everything.”

### **Patrick – Grover Middle School**

Patrick is a graduate from a Historically Black College and University with a degree in music and completed an alternative music teacher certification program. He is currently the Director of Bands at Grover Middle School. Patrick has been at Grover since 2007. During Patrick’s pre-service training he took general education courses such as cognition and educational psychology, educational technology while at a neighboring college. Before graduating, he was exempt from taking PRAXIS I because he scored a 1000 on the SAT. He did have to take and pass the PRAXIS II (Music Content) test. The PRAXIS tests measure the academic skills and subject-specific content knowledge needed for teaching. This test was required by individuals entering the teaching profession as part of the certification process required by states and professional licensing organizations. After passing PRAXIS II (which served as the equivalent of completing one’s music education certification courses) he was granted a professional teaching certificate. He completed further music education certification coursework at a local university.

### **Data Sources**

There were three main sources of data for this study; phone interviews, in-person interviews, and researcher memos. Following I provide a detailed description of each data source.

**Phone Interviews.** I applied for and received permission from Georgia State University's Institutional Review Board and the Institutional Review Board for the school district where the study took place. As part of the application, I received permission to obtain email contact

information through the state Music Educators Association for the directors in the school district selected for my study. After consultation with the Fine Arts Coordinator, a recruitment email (see Appendix A) was sent to 22 middle and high school band directors in the school district. Of the 22 directors who received the recruitment email, 16 responded, however four were ineligible for participation based on the minimum 5 years of teaching experience required. The phone interviews were scheduled between March 2018 – May 2018. I conducted a 10-minute phone interview with each of the 10 middle and high school band directors. A set of interview questions were used during each phone interview (see Appendix B). Ten participants were available to participate in the in-person interviews.

**In-Person Interviews.** Each of the 10 participants available for the in-person interviews was sent an email asking for a day, time, and location for their interview. Each interview was scheduled to last approximately one hour, and a follow-up interview scheduled if necessary. All in-person interviews were scheduled between June 2018 - September 2018. The objective was to garner rich descriptive data. Interviews were audio recorded for transcribing purposes.

During the interviews, a set of in-person interview questions was used to guide each interview session (see Appendix C). The interview protocol was developed to address each research question and to provide an outline to be followed with each participant. The interview protocol questions were divided into three sections. The first section focused on the participants' personal middle and high school band experiences, what motivated them to teach band, and why they decided to teach band in an urban setting. The second section dealt with the participants' experiences within the urban classroom; perceived challenges, rewards, and reason for continuing to teach in the urban setting. The third section explored the participants' experiences during undergraduate music teacher training (see Appendix C). Patton (2002) suggests this form

of interviewing provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject...it makes sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation (p. 343).

At the start of the interview session, I thanked the participant for agreeing to take part in the study. Following, the informed consent form was read aloud to the participant and they were asked to reply "I agree" if they agreed to proceed with the in-person interview. Also, the participants were notified of the possible risks and benefits of their participation and were informed that they may choose to withdraw from this study at any time.

**Researcher Memos.** Memos were written throughout data collection, analysis and interpretation. Prior to the start of data collection, and during the data explication process, I used memos to bracket out my subjectivities. This was done to help make myself aware of my preconceived perceptions regarding urban music teacher preparation. Because I identify as an urban music educator, it was important for me to be aware and make known my personal biases as to protect the trustworthiness of the study.

I also wrote memos before and during the data collection process. Memos were written regarding my initial reactions to comments from participants regarding pedagogical techniques, specific experiences during their pre-service training, interesting thoughts/ideas participants may have shared, or narratives shared during their interviews. I wanted to make certain my thoughts were recorded to make sure I interpreted the data from the perspective of the participants and did not impose my thoughts on the data.

### **Analysis Interpretation, and Triangulation of Data**

There were three phases of data analysis, interpretation, and triangulation in my study (see Table 3). I utilized Hycner (1999) data explication process to analyze and interpret the interview data. This process helped me to understand the experiences of the band directors. Hycner suggests “the term [analysis] usually means a ‘breaking into parts’ and therefore often means a loss of the whole phenomenon ... [whereas ‘explication’ implies an]...investigation of the constituents of a phenomenon while keeping the context of the whole” (1999, p. 161).

**Phase I Data analysis.** Hycners’ (1999) explication process has five distinct steps which include: (1) bracketing and phenomenological reduction; (2) delineating units of meaning; (3) clustering of units of meaning to form themes; (4) summarizing each interview and validating it, and; (5) extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary (see Table 4).

Table 4  
*Phases of Data Analyzation, Interpretation, and Triangulation*

Phase	Methods Used	Data Sources
1	Data analysis (Hycner, 1999) to examine units of meaning	In-person interview transcripts
	Clustering of units to form themes	In-person interview transcripts
	Summarizing interviews, validating and/or modifying	In-person interview transcripts, member checking, researcher's memos
	Forming composite summaries	In-person interview transcripts, researcher's memos
2	Member checking	In-person interview transcripts and composite summaries
3	Triangulation	External Inter-rater coder

Explication suggests a study of the parts of the phenomenon while keeping the perspective of the whole (Grant, 2008). The explication of the interview data was done through understanding and clarifying the meaning and the essence of the pre-service teacher training and urban teaching experiences of the band directors. This was accomplished by identifying themes that emerged within each interview.

**Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.** First, bracketing and phenomenological reduction took place. Prior to the first in-person interview, I bracketed my initial thoughts. I kept a journal and wrote my initial thoughts and responses regarding my topic. Since I identify as a Black urban band director, it was important for me to reflect on my personal biases as not to impose them on the data. Following the first phenomenological interview, I wrote my initial thoughts regarding the interview and the responses of the participant. My main objective during

bracketing and phenomenological reduction was to remain as true to the data as possible (Hycner, 1999).

**Delineating units of meaning.** Secondly, delineating units of meaning followed. This process consisted of reading each transcript multiple times to get a good sense of the story and to elicit the participant's meaning. As suggested by Hycner (1999), "this is a step whereby the researcher still tries to stay very close to the literal data" (p. 282). I read each line and made notes using the participants' words in order to understand the participants meaning. I utilized line-by-line thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) to examine how the participants described their experiences. The literal words were used to create codes during the coding process. For example, I mean, it was a good first job to have, especially not having any teacher training. I didn't have a traditional background, any kind of pre-service teaching. It was a good experience, considering that, there weren't any expectations. I was the first music, true music teacher at the school. I kind of wandered my way through some things. I think that was really a good stepping stone, before I actually took on my first band job at Carter Middle School. At that point, I always came to the table, kind of having a better understanding what I probably needed to do. (Tariq)

In the above text, the first line the meaning was delineated as not having any teacher training. The code no teacher training was created and used to code the first sentence. The code lack of pre-service preparation was used for the second sentence. While the first two sentences the meaning was no pre-service teaching experience. I tried to use as much of the phrase as possible when defining the units of meaning and generating the initial set of codes.

During this same step of delineating units of meaning, I engaged in open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) concurrently while collecting interview data. During the first round of coding, my code book consisted of 203 codes. Some of the codes included abolished fine arts position,



unsupportive administrator, lack of pre-service training, mentor teacher helpful, and band program showing progress. At the conclusion of the initial round of coding, I began creating groups to assist with organizing the code book. I created 38 groups. Some of the groups were administrative support, advocacy, challenges, classroom management techniques, culture, diversity, mentorship, overcoming challenges, reasons for staying in an urban school, and student academic success.

During the second round of coding, I engaged in axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to find connections between the codes. Axial coding provided a method that I used to consolidate, condense, rename, and delete codes. This was achieved by merging codes of similar meaning and deleting codes that were not relevant to answering the research questions. I also engaged in open coding to help elucidate themes (see Appendix E). These codes included showcase black excellence, students need us, methods courses, pedagogy preparation, HBCU bands recruiting, parents supported band program/director, parent figure to students, sense of community. During the final round of coding, I confirmed code groupings.

I recoded all 10 interviews and engaged in the coding process a second time to ensure I accurately interpreted the data and captured the essence of the participants stories. This process was informative because I was able to gain a better understanding of the data. The themes that emerged from the data were made more transparent through this process of double coding.

**Clustering units of meaning.** The third step is clustering of units of meanings to form themes. During this step, I went through the units of meanings to reorganize the themes. This process allowed me to consolidate, merge or delete themes that were redundant. Clusters of themes were formed by grouping (consolidating) meanings together and significant themes were

created. I searched the units of meaning to try and find any commonalities that would allow the units to begin to emerge to form themes.

**Summarizing each interview.** The fourth step was summarizing each interview, validating it, and where necessary, modifying it. During this phase, I sent each participant a copy of the transcript from his or her interview to validate the data and provided the opportunity to modify as necessary. No participant suggested any modification to the data was needed.

**Extracting general and unique themes.** The fifth and final step was to extract general and unique themes from all the interviews and make a composite summary. During this process, I looked for themes that were shared amongst all of the interviews, as well as for unique themes that emerged from the data. The groups served as a method to organize codes that shared similar meanings which also helped to elucidate themes across the data. For example, the group overcoming challenges consisted of the following codes: band program showing progress/growth, create the program you want, developed relationships with admin/counselors, establish rapport with students, establish worth to student/school/community, high expectations/high quality instruction, parent figure to students, stay in contact with parents, and visible program/great product. The overcoming challenges group highlighted how the band directors were able to identify and overcome many of the challenges that they mentioned during their interviews. I found this theme interesting as the directors' perspectives were rather positive and offered encouraging ways to mitigate perceived challenges. I referred back to the interview transcripts to confirm the language used to ensure the codes, groups and themes captured the essence of the participants stories. Finally, a doctoral research colleague was asked to check my data analysis through inter-rater reliability. I met with my colleague to discuss the coding process. We discussed how the interview transcripts would be shared, how to share the

codebook, how to code the data, and a timeline. I provided my colleague with three interview transcripts which he coded separately. I used the inter-rater reliability feature within HyperResearch to calculate the rating. After the initial round of coding, I noticed the agreement rate was unacceptable. This was partly due to the number of codes within the codebook and the amount of text applied to the codes. Prior to the second round of coding, I consolidated and condensed the codebook, met with my colleague to discuss the length of text that should be coded. We agreed to code entire phrases or complete sentences that pertained to the code used, including any punctuations. After the second round of coding, I received an acceptable agreement rate of 90%. See Phase III below. At the conclusion, a composite summary was written.

**Phase II: Member checks.** Prior to data analysis, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity. Participants were emailed a copy of their transcript and asked to check for any inaccuracies or misrepresentation of their stories. I followed up with the participants and asked them if they felt like they were speaking from their racialized/Black identity and what it is like being a Black urban band director. All 10 participants confirmed accuracy of the transcripts from their interview and confirmed they were speaking from their Black perspective. The participants also shared their stories of what it is like being a Black band director. Following the conclusion of data explication, I emailed each participant a copy of my interpretation of their interview. Participants were asked to provide feedback regarding my interpretations of their story and given the opportunity to modify any inaccuracies. Each participant responded stating that I had accurately interpreted his or her story. Member checking served as another method used to help establish trustworthiness and to strengthen the analysis of the data.

**Phase III: Inter-rater reliability.** After I completed the first round of coding for the first interview, I had established over 203 sets of codes which included: developed relationships with admin/counselors, comprehensive band program, developing the whole child, mentor teacher first year helpful, and establish worth to school/community. After I had coded three interviews, I met with my colleague to discuss inter-rater reliability. I chose my colleague because he had recently completed a Ph.D. in the same degree program and was familiar with phenomenology and qualitative research. We discussed how the interview transcripts would be shared, how to share the codebook, how to code the data, and a timeline. I provided my colleague with three interview transcripts which he coded separately. After he coded all three interviews, he shared the data with me, and I used the inter-rater reliability feature within HyperResearch to calculate the rating. After the initial round of coding, I noticed the agreement rate was unacceptable. This was partly due to the number of codes within the codebook and the amount of text applied to the codes. I began to consolidate and merge codes and to organize the codebook as I moved through the second round of coding (see Appendix E). During this process, codes were deleted if I considered them to be duplicates, merged with another code if the code shared a similar meaning, or renamed. This process allowed me to condense the codebook to 161 codes. Some of the codes include networking while in college, give back to the community, seek advice from other urban directors, bond with students, rewarding, fair/consistent treatment of students, preparing for success no matter what, students need us. I met with my research colleague again to discuss inter-rater reliability. Prior to sharing my codebook the second time, we met to discuss how we should code the transcripts. We came to the consensus that a code would be applied to the entire sentence(s) that were directly related to the code. I provided my colleague

with the same three interview transcripts which he coded again. After the second round of coding, I received an acceptable agreement rate of 90%.

### **Data Protection**

Data were stored on my personal, password-protected laptop and an external hard drive dedicated to the data for my study. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant as well as to the school system and any individuals named during their interview. This was done to protect their identities.

### **Trustworthiness, Credibility and Validity**

#### **Trustworthiness**

Establishing trustworthiness, credibility, and validity in qualitative research is imperative. Multiple forms of data which included phone interviews, in-person interviews, and researcher memos; along with the use of inter-rater coding, and member checking provided measures of establishing credibility and validity for this study. In my qualitative study, this allowed for greater validity due to the subjective nature of the phenomenon being studied. As suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985), member-checking was employed to enhance the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the interpretations of the participant's experiences. Each participant was given the opportunity to review his/her transcripts and the preliminary explication results for accuracy of interpretation. Participants identified no errors. To allow future researchers to assess transferability, detailed methodological descriptions have been provided in chapter 3, along with rich descriptions from the individual participant's experiences are provided.

## **Credibility**

In qualitative research, measures must be taken to establish the soundness of qualitative research. Lincoln & Guba (1985) proposed alternative criteria to the more traditional quantitative criteria of internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. Instead, they propose credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is establishing that the results are believable from the perspective of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following actions were taken to ensure participants were not led to a desired outcome during this study to ensure credibility was established. I achieved credibility by journaling my thoughts prior to collecting data in Phase I, after transcribing the first interview, and during the coding process.

## **Validity**

Member checking was also employed as a means to establish validity. As suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1985) member checking was used to determine the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations of the participant's experiences. After each interview was transcribed, all ten participants were emailed a copy of their transcript and asked to review for accuracy. This process took place once after the phenomenological interview session. Participants were also emailed individual copies of my interpretation of their narratives as completed summaries. If there were any errors, I edited them accordingly and resubmitted to the participant for a final check. There were no errors reported.

## **Transferability**

Transferability is the process by which the researcher provides a description of the time and context in which the hypotheses were found (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, my goal was to “provide thick descriptions to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (p. 316). I wanted to

provide descriptive accounts of the participants' experiences to enable other researchers to be able to draw their own conclusions about future studies on urban music teacher preparation.

Purposeful sampling was utilized to help select participants who met the criteria for inclusion and would be able to offer valuable information based on the purpose of the study. I selected band directors from a large urban school district in the Southeastern part of the United States. The participants taught at different schools within the same school district and represented diverse educational backgrounds.

I detailed in rich descriptions the accounts of the participant stories, site selection, data collection and explication process. I also provided descriptions of my memos that helped during the final explication and reporting of data. Based on the descriptions provided, future researchers should be able to make informed decisions about the possibility of transferring the design and finding from my study to future studies.

### **Dependability**

In qualitative studies, dependability asks the question "will we obtain the same results if observed twice?" I enlisted the help of a doctoral colleague who was familiar with qualitative research analysis to help establish dependability of the interpretations of the data (Creswell, 2008). We met before I shared the transcripts and codebook to discuss the proper procedures to ensure we had a thorough understanding of the task and explication procedures. The explication of data was a concurrent process of data collection, data explication and memo writing. Multiple methods were used to collect data (phone interviews, in-person interviews, and researcher memos). The consistency of results through each method of data collection strengthened the dependability of my findings.

## 4 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of Black urban band directors during music teacher preparation and the perceived effects of their preparation on their teaching/learning practices in urban settings. The focus of this research was on the experiences of the directors, with the primary emphasis placed on the experiences gained from the university teacher preparation program that might have contributed to the directors' understanding of teaching in urban settings. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

1. How have experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs contributed to Black urban band director's capacities to teach in urban settings?
2. How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors?
3. How do in-service Black urban band directors who have been teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher?

### Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from my study. Seven overarching themes emerged (see Table 5). As the researcher, I examined the overall experiences of the directors and found there were overlaps between research questions 1 and 2, as well as questions 2 and 3. In response to the first two research questions, I have framed the findings around three concepts: 1) pedagogical training/techniques; 2) pre-service experiences; and 3) mentoring. These concepts were derived from the themes (see Table 5). Under the concept of pre-service experiences, the directors expressed how various aspects of their pre-service training were beneficial in preparing them to teach in urban settings. On the other hand, directors did indicate areas of their training



that they felt were insufficient. The directors also described the importance of mentoring during and after their pre-service training. As the directors offered their stories depicting their experiences as urban band directors, I found they did not use the term Black, instead they used terms such as our, us, and my people to racialize their experiences. Throughout this chapter, I use interview data from the participant's stories to support my findings.

Table 5

*Overarching Themes*

Themes	Frequency of representations
Teaching experiences needed	13
Managing the classroom	17
Overcoming challenges	19
Mentoring	29
Building relationships	29
Establishing sense of worth	27
Rewarding experiences	26

**Research Questions 1 & 2:** *How have experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs contributed to Black urban band director's ability to teach in the urban setting?*

*How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors?*

Table 6  
*Themes Related to Research Questions 1 & 2*

Themes	Frequency of representations
Teaching experiences needed	13
Managing the classroom	17
Mentoring	29

**Pedagogical training/techniques.** Pedagogical training/techniques were defined as the courses that the participants perceived to have an impact on shaping the ways in which they teach. Overall, results indicated that participants felt their pedagogical training was sufficient in preparing them to teach band in an urban school. Participants expressed how their pedagogical training in courses like woodwind, brass, and percussion methods courses were sufficient. However, the participants also explained how some aspects of their preparation was insufficient in areas such as classroom management, student engagement, and ways to mediate the managerial aspects of being a band director. This finding is aligned with previous studies (Anderson & Denson, 2015; Eros, 2009; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2008; Smith, 2006). Philip, a graduate of a PWI stated that his methods courses helped to shape his instrument specific pedagogy used to teach band. Philip stated:

Yes. I would say that when it comes to the training, I would get the training that everyone gets, which is the nuts and bolts training...Coming in freshman year, you take all of your ensemble things...and then you start taking your technique classes, which I believe are fundamentally important...Then going into the actual education classes we've got of course the general education classes. Those were somewhat helpful Then we did the teaching beginning winds and percussion, which is primarily geared towards middle school teaching. We did a lot of middle school observations then, observed some middle

school band programs and a couple of string programs...Then we went into teaching advanced winds and percussion. It was the high school version of the middle school class, which gets you into more detail. We're discussing alternate fingerings, pitch tendencies, all those things that you need to know... [Then] we went to observations [at] the really high-end programs. This was a huge component of the preparation program where we are lacking. In the sense that we saw a lot of unrealistic programs. These programs are at the top end of the spectrum. However, coming out of college you're very unlikely to get that as your first job. However, the training that I did not get was the classroom management training, the motivation training, the training of you being most likely the only band director and having to deal with all of these issues like myself...

Sharing similar experiences to Philip, Steven also a graduate of a PWI, felt that the secondary methods courses he took were most helpful. Steven stated that the methods courses were structured to afford the students the opportunity to learn how to play the specific instruments. However, he felt there should have been more time addressing how to teach the instruments from the perspective of a band director.

I did a couple practicums. The secondary classes, I thought the...of course, the learning the instruments, I thought that was most...Honestly, I...They were good, but I don't think it's been enough time from the podium. They isolate it. I don't know what anybody else's [methods] classes looked like, but I remember taking secondary saxophone and strings, and I remember never spending time on the podium for how to...How do you actually address this as a band director? A lot of it was just spent learning the instrument, which I found to be pretty easy. Once you learn an instrument or you go deep with your primary instrument it is not complicated to figure out another instrument, but the biggest thing

that I think we never really got to, even in a conducting class was, “okay, so how do you identify and isolate?” That was a part that in none of my methods classes we actually approached, because I...I always thought the point of the methods class was to understand the mechanics, understand how the instrument works, understand how to teach it, at least start it well, but the next part of that is how do you isolate the problems in the setting of so many different sounds. I know that comes with time on the podium. I examined Steven’s use of words like “isolate,” “identify,” and “how to” which led me to understand that he was describing a need for more spaces to apply the knowledge gained during pre-service training. The desire for pre-service teachers to have the opportunity to put into practice technique and pedagogy learned was also represented across other participants. As Philip stated earlier, he felt he received “nuts and bolts” training, but he used words like “discussed” and “observed” suggesting there was not a space for applying the skills learned during pre-service preparation prior to being in the field. Thus creating a disconnect between university coursework and practice.

The managerial aspect of being an urban band director is just as important as the pedagogical aspect. Andrew, a graduate of an HBCU, told the story of how his professors embedded managerial aspects of being a band director into his pre-service coursework.

There was no formal class that was specifically catered to or geared towards the urban setting. We had an instrumental methods class. And [in] the instrumental methods class, we had an opportunity to design our own music wing. Design our own band uniform, and write a proposal for instruments, and make our own band inventory lists and all that kind of stuff.

In Andrew's story, he depicted how during his instrumental methods course he had the opportunity to create resources that are part of the operations of a band director. In Andrew's story, he talked about designing uniforms, proposals for instruments, and creating inventory lists. I understood his story and recollection of these specific elements as important components that assisted him when he became a band director.

I found that participants in my study who graduated from PWI or HBCU shared similar feelings regarding their preparation in methods courses. University pre-service training programs methods courses are perceived as valuable in preparing pre-service teachers. General education courses were also deemed as impactful in preparing pre-service teachers. JoAnn, a graduate of an HBCU, expressed how a psychology course along with her methods classes was beneficial in shaping her pedagogy. JoAnn has taught in a number of school settings and expressed the importance of understanding the psychological mindset of not just urban students, but students in general. She believed a psychology course she took during pre-service training was extremely beneficial to her success in the classroom. JoAnn believed that the psychology course helped her to understand how children think. She stated:

I think that - what's that class...that psychology class I actually think was one of the classes that really helped me. I mean we took the basic - the music courses I think helped me because I had to take - you know I do notice a lot of kids now don't get, but I had to take woodwind, pedagogy, I had to take brass I had to take all of the brass instruments I had to do all the percussion instruments, and we actually had to play every instrument to get a grade for... and then do like little recitals or something on these instruments that were not the instruments that we played so that we were fully - so we could really know what we were doing... But it was a psychology course and in that psychology course we

got into like all of the - like the middle school kids are crazy - not the word crazy but you know what I mean...

JoAnn highlights the value added of general education courses to the pre-service development. In most undergraduate music education curriculum, the general education courses are often taught outside of the music education faculty. JoAnn provides an example of how her psychology course provided a foundation for her understanding of how children think, which can prove beneficial to pre-service teachers during student teaching.

**Pre-service experiences.** The participants recalled stories of their experiences during their pre-service training. The participants highlighted experiences from their student teaching experiences. The connectedness of university experiences and in-field teaching can be most readily observed during student teaching. Student teaching allows pre-service candidates the opportunity to display their understanding of skills and concepts learned during university coursework. Alicia a graduate of an HBCU recalled how crucial her student teaching experience was to her ability to teach in an urban setting. Alicia stated:

My student teaching experience, definitely. I should've used that as an example, but I thought, because I was in that particular state, that that was just for that state...But with Dr. Snow, he was over student teaching. So he was the one to assign us to the particular high schools that we would go to, and he was our supervising teacher. So he would pop in when we had student teaching going on, and we would have discussions, especially with the cooperating teacher, who I did not feel like was a great example to team up with, but it prepared me because I now see that this is what is out here. He's an example of what's out here now. So that's what he would always stress to me, you have to let go of this, of what you're used to. This is now the new norm. These

are the ones that are out here, so how do you work with these? You're going to have to work with them too.

Alicia's experiences during student teaching helped to provide a realistic understanding of what it means to teach in an urban setting. Alicia expressed how her university supervisor would have discussions with her during student teaching that she deemed were helpful. Alicia further spoke about how her university supervisor would recommend that she had to "let go of this, of what you're used to." Alicia mentioned how her middle and high school band experiences were very thorough. She expressed that her experiences were "well rounded from marching band to concert, symphonic, and jazz band" (Alicia). I found her story regarding the conversations with her university supervisor particularly interesting because Alicia was referencing how the band culture had changed since her being in middle and high school. Her university supervisor expressing that she should "let go" and "this is the new norm" suggests that he was working to provide her with a realistic picture of one urban band setting. Alicia mentioned how the discussions with her university supervisor and cooperating teacher were some of the most important moments of her pre-service experiences.

Another participant, Malik, who is also a graduate of a HBCU, recalled how his student teaching experience was empowering because it provided an exemplar of a Black urban middle school band program excelling. Malik recalled:

And then, the second semester was student teaching. I student taught at a middle school which is also a predominately Black middle school and this one was a little more under privileged. This was right smack in the middle of a struggling neighborhood. But he [the band director] was able to have a very comprehensive band program which was very enlightening for me because the kids did well. This was a middle school band who played

easily grade three [music] and grade four music with the top groups. They had a marching band which was really good. I was very surprised about that. They had chamber ensembles and the whole kit and kaboodle.

Malik's description of the band program as being "predominately Black," "underprivileged," and in a "struggling neighborhood" racialized the experience of his student teaching assignment. I interpreted Malik's student teaching experience as similar to his experiences in middle and high school band where the culture of excellence is the norm. In his narrative, I understood Malik's statement that it was "enlightening for me because the kids did well" as him expressing he was glad to see that there is the expectation of excellence in an urban band program elsewhere as well. Furthermore, Malik suggested that his student teaching experience provided him the opportunity to witness the infrastructure of a good band program. He stated, "I learned the framework of a good program and what it looked like." This experience provided Malik the opportunity to observe the rituals and routines, class structure, managerial and financial structure of a successful urban band program. While student teaching, Malik stated that he observed some very useful strategies as well as some things that he thought he would do differently with his own program. Across all of the participant's narratives, they expressed how the student teaching experience provided opportunities to witness a variety of urban band structures. Observing high quality instruction during student teaching is vitally important, nevertheless, the participants also voiced the importance of establishing mentor relationships.

**Mentoring.** The participants discussed the importance of having an individual who is able to share insight and understanding of how to teach in urban settings. The directors discussed individuals that they deemed as mentors such as their parents who were former urban music educators, college professors, supervising teachers during student teaching, and colleagues. The



role of the mentor is indispensable to the development of pre-service urban band directors. The participants in my study shared stories about their professors, cooperating teacher during pre-service training, and their parents who served in mentoring roles. Patrick described how he benefitted greatly from having a mentor who provided knowledge on how to navigate the urban school terrain. Patrick stated:

During the time in which I did my student teaching with him [cooperating teacher], he told me honestly, he laid out the format of the thing to do and what not to do because it's one thing to go through an urban educational experience [and] being a product of an urban school district...but it's a whole other thing to teach in it when you actually have to deal with some of the bureaucracy and the politics on the other end. So he taught me about diplomacy, meaning how to interact with different personnel in the school, whether or not it was the custodian or the cafeteria lady or the secretary, big one, the business manager of the school, really big one, how to interact with administrators because at the end of the day, it's all about the students. It's all about the kids. I would have to step out of my ego. I would have to step out of just myself and do what's best for the students.

Patrick's story of his mentor imparting knowledge of how to always do what is in the best interest of students helped him to sustain a career in an urban school. I believe his story also provides insight into the importance of properly pairing pre-service teachers with mentoring teachers during pre-service preparation. Patrick was able to develop a relationship with his cooperating teacher that developed into a mentoring role beyond the student teaching experience. Alicia and Stephanie were also able to share their stories about how their parents served as mentors and examples of Black urban music teachers excelling. Alicia shared the story of how

her mother, who is a retired urban choral director was her first example of Black excellence in the urban setting and mentored her when she became a teacher. Alicia stated:

It begins with my mommy. My mother's a retired, I gotta make sure I say that now. She's a retired urban music educator. She taught 36 years in music. Both in the states of Alabama and Georgia. She also did the church music, so she was the minister of music at our church all my life. I was seeing that example, and as well as what she was doing at school. Ironically, I remember going to festival with her and her students at Georgia State one year. Just getting those experiences, going to All State Chorus when her students would make it. We would go down to Savannah with her, my brother and me. That was an exposure to that.

As Alicia recalled seeing her mother's dedication to her students, along with the high level of excellence substantiated by her mother's student's participation in the All-State Chorus, she professed that provided her with a model of excellence. Alicia stated "Honestly, having a mother that has done it before has...kinda gave me an advantage, a super advantage."

Similar to Alicia, Stephanie's father served as her mentor when she began teaching. Stephanie, a graduate of a PWI, felt that she received some preparation however, it was not sufficient in preparing her to teach at her current school. She expressed how her greatest preparation came from her father who taught high school in the same school district and he served as her mentor. Stephanie stated:

But my dad was my biggest preparation for teaching in the city because he literally taught right next door to where I initially was teaching. That school doesn't exist anymore.

Then, he literally, my first-year teaching, was coming to the school daily to mentor me, whether he would watch me. He would watch me teach, or he would jump in when I was

teaching and do something different. He always did it in a way where the kids didn't think he was teaching me how to teach. He would always suggest stuff and kind of move in, kind of like he was my assistant.

In her personal narrative, Stephanie mentions that her father taught in the same community in which she is currently teaching. This speaks to the importance of having an understanding and knowledge of the community where the director is teaching. Stephanie was able to rely on her father's background of the community, to develop creative ways to build trust and relationships with her students. In her narrative, Stephanie tells the story of how she was having a hard time connecting with one of her sixth-grade classes, and her father (her mentor) demonstrated how he would approach teaching the class. Stephanie recalls:

[In my first year,] I was afraid of my sixth grade. They were so bad, like behavior, and he saw the dread coming over my face. [In] the five minutes in that little interim period between classes, he saw my face just change, like of dread, and he just...He took over my class, but I realized instantly it was a teaching moment that he was trying to give me, and I sat back and I watched. After that, I took what he did, and I did it the next day. It was very effective, and I was like, "Okay, I see what you're doing." I'm lucky. I think a lot of the teacher, if they end up teaching in an urban environment, they definitely need a mentor that has been there and done that to show them the ropes. Otherwise, you've got to figure it out.

Stephanie's narrative provided evidence of the importance of having a mentor, but more importantly a mentor who has been successful in the urban band room. Stephanie's father who served as her mentor, taught in the school district for over 30+ years. He was able to offer pedagogical strategies and techniques that proved successful for him and have now helped

Stephanie navigate her urban classroom. Stephanie also alluded to concerns of problem-solving classroom management. She stated she was “scared of her sixth-grade.” Mentors are able to impart knowledge based off of their experiences, and in this case, her father was able to supply her with techniques that helped establish rituals and routines for her classroom. Classroom management was also discussed by Matthew.

**Classroom management.** Classroom management was expressed by the participants as an area where they needed further preparation. Classroom management included organizing and structuring class, daily rituals and routines, as well as behavior management strategies. Matthew, a graduate of a PWI, shared his story of how he was not prepared to manage students in a classroom setting. He suggests:

I think that there needs to be a way for...instead of waiting towards the end of a program for pre-service teachers to get training, [where] they are able to go into these schools and spend a semester while they're taking their courses. Certain parts of their day, they need to be out doing field experience. I'm not talking about where they just observe and take notes. I'm talking about where they're really getting experience like when the teacher can tell them “hey, I like this part of your lesson. You might need to speed this pace up. You lost the students right here.” This will help with classroom management.

I found Matthew's story was similar to other participants in my study. The participants lacked a plan for how to manage classes when there is only one director present. In many urban school settings, there is only one band director. Having a consistent set of daily rituals and routines can help with efficiently managing the daily operations of teaching. Matthew further stated:

Maybe things about setting up your band room this way. Maybe having the students line up outside the door before they come in or having your kids quiet before they come in.

Don't just let the kids walk in. Things like that. They need really practical nuts and bolts tools that they can use as soon as they walk across the stage and walk into someone's school. You can only get that if you're out there in the trenches doing it. I just think towards the middle end of a program, it's too late. They need to start from day one. Then again...if you know you're not getting it, sometimes you just have to go find it for yourself.

Matthew and Malik also shared similar sentiments. Malik suggested observing high quality teaching in a variety of settings is a vitally important experience during the pre-service training. Malik further maintained:

Go to as many different types of schools as you can. Not just the urban ones. See what pieces are non-negotiable in order to be successful. Because, there are things that are non-negotiable in order to be successful. One of those things is classroom management. You have to have extremely good classroom management skills to be successful on any level. I would say go and see as many different types of classrooms as you can. I would say speak with as many directors as you can, especially in an urban setting. Because, it's a lot that you're not going to be prepared for until you're in that door, in that seat day to day. Do some clinics, do some sectional coaching or something like that. Do it free of charge because, a lot of these urban schools don't have the money to pay you.

Classroom management techniques are not universal. Meaning not all techniques work in all environments. Therefore, by observing high quality teachers in a variety of settings, pre-service teachers are able to observe a variety of teaching techniques and build a repertoire of techniques and adapt them to fit their personality and specific school culture. Directly related to teaching

Black and Brown students, observing Black band directors and how they relate to their students and witness the culture of their classrooms will also prove to be valuable for pre-service teachers.

**Culture.** Culture of classrooms environments entail how the participants established their expectations for their students and their classroom space. This was evidenced by the participants through stories discussing care and respect for the students. Establishing high expectations within the classroom is important to the overall mindset of the students. Philip, told the story of how establishing a culture of care and respect has been rewarding and has proved to make a difference in the lives of his students. Philip stated:

I feel like the kids need this. They need me. They need someone who cares about them and cares about their future and cares about them being successful. I feel like it's far too many teachers that teach in the setting just to get a pay check and just to do it when there's more at stake than that. One of the things about our kids is they don't have...A lot of them don't have a ton of people in their lives that truly care about them and their education outside of their families. When they find out that someone actually...truly cares, I feel like that's when I'm able to better serve than in maybe a different capacity.

I understood Philip's use of racialized phrases such as "the kids need this," "they need me," and "our kids" to speak about Black students at his school as needing the caring culture that he was creating within his band program. Philip expressed how he felt many teachers are only teaching in urban schools because they need employment, however he feels urban students deserve teachers who are invested beyond their compensation. In statements such as, "it's much more than that" and "I'm able to better serve" Philip was illustrating that by him establishing a culture of caring in his band program he was able to build relationships and connections with students that enabled him to go beyond just teaching band to his students.

Similarly, JoAnn shared the same sentiments regarding creating a caring culture. JoAnn tells the story of how someone cared for her; therefore she believes it is her responsibility to do the same for her students.

Because our children...they need somebody who cares about them. They need somebody to show them that they can, whatever they want to do, they can do it. They just got to believe in themselves, and I believe in educating children, I believe everybody needs an advocate. And I'm that person, I love children and I love helping them to grow and to become, because somebody did it for me.

JoAnn used the term "our" when discussing her students which I understood as her racializing her connection to her students. She goes further to state that "they need somebody who cares about them." Again, this refers to the educational inequities encountered by minoritized students in urban schools. JoAnn is establishing that she expects her students to achieve and has created a culture where they know that she cares for, will advocate for and believe in them and will help them to achieve. Conversely, Alicia told the story about how changing the culture in an urban school can be a challenge, but necessary.

Culture is one of the biggest challenges. Because of the high rate of turnover in the urban setting, trying to establish a culture of excellence, and trying to get them [students and administrators] to buy into what it takes to have a culture of excellence. I say that as a woman, that is a huge challenge. All of my band directors have been men. They meant what they said, and they said what they meant. But we had a standard of excellence. We produced excellence on the field, and then on the stage. So I'm trying to get them [students and administrators] to buy into that culture, because that culture is

really something that has not been seen at my school...So I feel like because I came from an urban setting, “why is it different now?”

Alicia deemed it to be important to establishing a culture of excellence within the band program. However, she found it to be a challenge to create because it required her students and administration to reconceptualize how they think about band and its function in the school and in the lives of her students. She advanced that because of the high turnover rate in some urban schools, establishing a culture of excellence can be difficult. This can be attributed to the change in philosophies from director to director. However, Alicia, understood the educational opportunities band could afford her students in terms of gaining scholarships to attend college. She expressed how her band directors created the expectation of excellence from the marching band to the symphonic band and that was what she was wanting for her band program and students. Alicia’s decision to not accept lower expectations for her students was critically important to understanding her philosophy and beliefs with regards to Black and Brown band students in urban schools.

**Research Question 3:** *How do Black in-service urban band directors describe their experiences as a teacher?*

Table 7  
*Themes Related To Research Question 3*

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Themes	Frequency of representations
Building relationships	29
Overcoming challenges	19
Establishing sense of worth	27
Rewarding experiences	26

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The third research question is framed around three concepts 1) affordability, 2) overcoming challenges and 3) the reasons for staying in urban settings (see Table 7).

**Building relationships.** Establishing relationships was described by the participants as ways in which they were able to garner support from students, parents, and administrators. The participants described building relationships with stakeholders; administrators, students, colleagues/teachers and parents as a necessary part of being an urban band director. Tariq reported that a positive relationship with an administrator helped him to support his students.

Early in my career, me being so excited about the job, and having a band job. [My] principal seemed to be very understanding and supportive of what I was trying to do and never really hindered my vision or my plans. Especially my first principal Dr. Williams. He basically gave me full reign to do whatever I needed to do. He said “as long as you’re making sure it’s legal, and you run it past the secretary if this is about money. I don’t mind whatever you’re trying to do.” He allowed me to run the program as I saw fit. Currently, I have a principal who isn’t a micromanager, but she wants to make sure that everything is detailed and is in the best interest of children. If it is, she’ll do whatever is necessary to make sure that whatever I’m trying to do is supported, or I have it, even to the point where she has to give her time to make sure I have it. That’s really helpful, especially in the urban setting.

Similar to Tariq, Patrick also recalled his administrators as being very supportive.

I can say that my administrative support was phenomenal, and it still is. I’ll be totally honest; I hear horror stories from other band directors whose administrators don’t have any earthly idea what they do or what the band directors do or what they need. But my

administration was pretty supportive from the beginning, even as supportive as they could have been. Some things are just out of their hands, dealing with students and the processes to how to process discipline. But as much as their superiors could allow, they were really supportive.

Both Tariq and Patrick offered how their administrators support their initiatives both financially and administratively. Tariq expressed how his principal did not micromanage him developing the band program, but he felt it necessary to keep her informed on what was going on in the band program. He further stated that his principal would make sure he had the resources he needed. Similarly, Patrick stated that his administration was as supportive as they could be within the confines of those outlined by the school district. I interpreted this statement from Patrick to suggest there may have been areas in which his administration wanted to support him, but because of district policies or procedures, they were not able to.

While Tariq and Patrick reported administrative support was given to them from the beginning, Steven stated he felt he had to prove himself first to his administration before they would fully support his efforts.

In regards to the administration, it took a long time to get them to realize...I felt they were skeptical from the beginning and anything that I fought for, it wasn't for my comfort, it was for the best interest for the kids. However, now the support has definitely gone up. I think when you go into an urban environment, they just kind of want to see if you have any grit. Not like a hazing type of thing, but they just...no one's here to make your life comfortable, and until they see that you're acting in the best interest of the kid, I found that despite the friction in the relationship with my administration, they know...I've texted [them] multiple times to get here on Sunday's and he'll say,

“regardless, I know you’re working hard, so I’m going to try to support your program [the] best [that] I can without us robbing Peter to pay Paul.” I feel as time passes, the support will continue to increase. I feel a lot more support now in regards to the money that he's willing to spend knowing that I’m here. I don’t take days off. When I’m here, I’m working. When nobody else is here, I’m working, and the parents are on my side...That’s a big thing with my boss.

Comparably, Matthew shared a similar story of having to prove to his principal why they should support his vision. Matthew stated:

I actually got a chance to go back and teach at the middle school that I went to as a student. Actually closed that school out. The administrative support, it wasn’t bad. But it wasn’t the best either. The principal had to see what I was trying to do. Once she saw that, she came on board. I’ve always had very supportive assistant principals.

Steven’s and Matthew’s stories offer a different perspective on the level of administrative support. Both actually stated that they felt it was a trial period, and they needed to prove to their administrators that they were there for the students. It was almost as if Steven and Matthew were expected to provide evidence to their administration as to why there should be support for the band program. Steven’s use of the words “skeptical” and “grit” and Matthew stating that the principal had to see what he was doing, led me to this conclusion. However, it was noted that neither Steven nor Matthew referred to their principal using negative language. They later suggested that they felt that the support has increased over time. This is a positive outcome of their approach to establishing a relationship with their respective administrations.

Building positive relationships with students was another area that the participants discussed. Malik suggested that establishing a positive rapport with students is particularly important in an urban setting:

I treat everybody the same. Everybody gets the same treatment. The parents, the kids, everybody. You have to be mindful of how a kid learns. That doesn't necessarily have anything to do with the haves or the have nots. But it has more to do with what they need in order to be successful. Some kids...now again, I'm pretty firm when it comes to discipline. I'm pretty even keel across the board with that type of stuff. Some kids need a different type of reinforcement. Some kids need a hug. Some kids need a high five, or something after you've gotten on them about something. Some kids can take it, and keep it pushing like nothing happened. Most of the kids...that's one of the things that comes with being a band director in an urban setting. You're a psychologist, you're a big brother, you're an uncle, you're a father. You're so many other different things to the kids, because the kids have so many different situations. Even the kids that have are still in a single parent home, or they have three or four different siblings. There are many conversations that are had more about just life, and how to maneuver through life, and how to be responsible young adults, versus just talking about music education. We try to relate how a music education can help them be more successful in all of their endeavors. Balancing a schedule, being committed, finding time to rehearse, finding time to study, and practice and different things like that. So, that's what I preach a lot in our program.

In this personal narrative, Malik discussed several elements of his relationship with his students. First, he revealed that he is equal and fair with students and parents alike. He further mentioned that he takes into consideration how students learn which dictates his approach with his students.

This led me to understand that Malik realized not all students process information the same way and differentiating his delivery of information will help him to be more successful in reaching his students. Malik also brought up that he is not just a band director to his students, but that he has many different roles and he must understand which role is necessary depending on the kid and the situation. Lastly, Malik also shared how he used band to teach many different life skills that he felt are important to cultivating well rounded students.

Relationships with other teachers and faculty members are also important. Matthew described how another colleague on the connections team helped him:

There were other teachers in the district who also were very nice. [They] would come over and help my kids. Help get the band room together. Give me tips so that was part of the experience. I also had a chorus teacher at that time at the school...she had been teaching for 40 years. So she had seen the decline of the program, and the highs and the lows of what music [education] was in that school district. She would just take her planning period and tell me not only what to do, but she would tell me what worked.

What I was doing that was good. She would say why don't you get your band to perform in a mall. Let that be their first performance to give them some exposure. So those are the types of steps that I took to revamp that program and things like that. She suggested that the kids did solo and ensemble...The kids did very well. They got superior ratings. They were happy. They brought joy to the program. The kids felt successful. They felt like they were part of something that was winning.

Matthew's story exposed how him building a relationship with the chorus teacher at his school helped his students feel successful. He stated that the chorus teacher made a recommendation that he prepare the students to participate in Solo and Ensemble. Solo and Ensemble is a

performance evaluation event held in his state where students may perform solos or chamber works and receive a rating and feedback. By participating in this event, Matthew grew as a director, the students experienced success through performance, and the students felt they were part of program that was successful.

Philip shared how building relationships with parents were a challenge for him initially. He had to learn how to become an effective communicator and learn how to navigate communicating with parents.

Communicating with parents...it was pretty rough. It was pretty rough coming...you know, just learning how to deal with people in general, learning that there is a very different mentality in the urban setting. Not necessarily wrong per se, it's just very different. Very different from what I was used to. I bumped a lot of heads with a lot of people, rubbed some people the wrong way, said a lot of the wrong things initially. I just feel like that could have been avoided had we had a little bit more insight going into it.

Of course, you can...you know experience sometimes can be the best teacher, but sometimes if you have a little heads up and know what you're getting into before it actually happens...but I would say it's definitely getting better.

Philip shares that when he started teaching, communicating with parents was very different from what he was used to. He reconciled that the way that the parents were accustomed to was not wrong, but he had to learn how to effectively communicate with them. Philip also stated that he feels that if he would have had exposure to how to effectively communicate with parents it would have helped him.

**Overcoming challenges.** Participants acknowledged challenges such as scheduling and lack of funding but discussed in detail the ways that they overcame obstacles. The challenges of

teaching music in urban settings have been well documented in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. However, there is a disparity in the literature detailing how teachers overcome those challenges. During data analysis there was the theme of how participants overcame their perceived challenges. Malik discussed the challenges of scheduling and how he worked to overcome this issue.

Also with that, you're having students who have to have two maths, two readings, two sciences. Which then takes away from an elective credit, so then we're fighting to have numbers in our elective classes. So, that's the biggest challenge on that side. The challenge with simply just having the kids in an urban setting is just the kids have so much to go through. Many of them are working jobs to help support their families. Many of them are again, struggling academically. A lot of their extra time is dedicated to tutorial. Early morning tutorial, after school tutorial, extra classes...On the flip side of that, the kids that do really well are also taking double math's and double sciences as their electives in order to compete with kids who are doing well, in the AP and in IB classes...

The language used by Malik represents his understanding of the challenges and how he decided to create a solution to overcome the issue of scheduling. Malik's band program serves a population of students who have a variety of educational needs. Some students need additional support, while others are taking additional courses in order to be satisfy magnet and IB requirements.

Patrick shared how having enough resources for all of his students was a challenge initially, but he worked with his school's administration to increase financial resources.

Being an urban educator, we face challenges every day. I've been with my school going on 12 years now and during certain times, I've had challenges. When I first began, I had resource challenges. We didn't have enough money; we didn't have enough...and we still don't have enough money now. But that was more so the biggest problem. Everybody wasn't able to have an instrument. Kids had to share instruments, share mouthpieces, had to have a lot of cleaning and Lysol materials to clean off and sanitize mouthpieces. So just the students not having enough instruments inevitably altered the amount of students I could have in my classes because my counselors and administration began to put a cap on the number of students I could have in my class based off the number of instruments or functional working instruments that we had at the time. So that was a huge, huge, huge problem. I worked and worked and worked and begged and pleaded to a lot of people in order for us to just get what other schools may consider to be the bare essentials. Reeds, mouthpieces, things of that sorts.

Patrick's story highlighted the inequity of resources many urban band programs face. He stated that having financial resources, instruments, and mouthpieces was initially detrimental to the growth of his band program. His band program lacked having enough instruments to support the number of students enrolled in his classes so his administration limited the number of students that could enroll. He explained how he "begged" individuals to donate to his program in order to meet their needs. Like other urban band directors, Patrick worked to ensure his students had the necessary resources that in other White suburban school districts would be considered, in Patrick's words, "the bare essentials."

The language used by the participant's in my study was enlightening and provided a narrative that positioned the participants' understanding of urban communities, students, and



teaching band in urban schools from a positive position. As evidenced in the participant's language when describing their challenges, the participants offered solutions to obstacles that they faced. Likewise, the participants maintained the interests of their students at the core of their decisions. Through analysis, I also found a connection between overcoming challenges and establishing a sense of worth in the participants' stories.

**Establishing sense of worth.** Establishing a sense of worth was described as creating a product that the students and school community could be proud of. The success of the participant's students was reported as the biggest reward to teaching in an urban setting. Malik stated that he established the band program as an invaluable component of the school and community by providing a quality band program for performances and other engagements.

What I've had to do as I've gotten older, and a little more mature, the directors have to work smarter, and not harder. As far as scheduling is concerned, the first thing I have to do is to show our worth as a program. So, we perform all the time, for any and everything they ask us to do. Whether it's an award ceremony or we're going up the street to play at Starbucks. Whatever it is...we're consistently performing, so the administration, the community, can see how vital we are to the make-up of the school. Then when I have conversations with counselors and administrators about classes, they're a little more receptive to what we need to be successful. Basically you want to be visible, and then produce a product so that you then have some type of leverage when you're in an administrative meeting.

Establishing a product that the school and community is proud of is central in Malik's story.

Alicia also shared how at her school the culture is changing. She expressed that the

administration and community are pleased with her leadership and are in support of her vision for the band program.

It's a growing situation. They are liking the direction that the program is going, and so even right now, we're trying to get ready for the season. If I need something, or whatever the case may be, parents are a phone call away and it happens. [The] principal's on board. He wants to see it grow. He wants to see it flourish. The community wants it as well because I think I'm band director number 10 in 20 or 30 years. In the past five years, I think I'm band director [number] five or six. They are ready, and it's like "We want it. We want this to happen. We want to see us do big things and great things."

Alicia's story offered how her administration wanted to see the band program prosper. She stated that the community and administration is ready for the band program to "do big things and great things." I interpreted this as the administration and community were suggesting that they have high expectations for Alicia and the students. I also understood Alicia's story to suggest that not only are there high expectations, but the school and community are willing to support her vision and efforts in order for the students and Alicia to be successful.

**Rewarding experiences.** Patrick reported that while he teaches middle school, his biggest reward was for his students to be able to go to college on a band scholarship, but also, he wanted them to succeed when they face obstacles.

Even though it's slightly delayed because I teach middle school, my ultimate goal honestly would be for my students to go to college, go to college on a band scholarship, or even once you graduate college or while you're in college, just continue music. That's my ultimate goal...One thing I really love about band, I guess a highlight would be, so to speak, is when my students succeed in a situation in which society may deem them to

fail. Whether or not it's LGPE, whether or not it's just performing period. If they're going against the odds, whatever it is, that's one of my well, not one, but that is the most rewarding experience...Just seeing my kids beat the proverbial odds and overcome any type of adversity...

Patrick offered insight into his understanding of the educational and social injustices Black students face. He mentioned that he wanted his students to be able to attend college on a band scholarship. He maintained that participation in band may provide financial resources for Black students to attend college. He stated this is his ultimate goal. I understood Patrick's use of language here to show his investment in his students beyond his class, middle school, and high school. He felt he had a responsibility to help provide his students with ways to further their education.

Similarly, Philip felt that the most rewarding aspect is feeling as if he is making a difference in the lives of his students.

Just hearing some of the students say little things. I had a student, he said they asked him what did he want to be in one of his classes and he said, "I want to do what Mr. Williams does." Of course he wanted to be a band director. I thought that was very eye-opening. It felt like I was doing something. [Then] hearing certain teachers say, "hey, that trombone has really changed that kid's life. He's very different now." It's the little wins here and there.

The feeling of making an impact in the lives of his students was a rewarding experience for Philip. The student expressing that he wanted to be like Philip when he grows up is a testament to the impact he was having on his students. This level of impact was also found in the comments from other teachers at Philip's school, stating that they could see the difference he was

making with other students as well. Building character within students was a rewarding element for Steven as well. Steven stated:

The character side. I think the thing I like most about teaching band, and it really comes out in the urban environment is your instrument does not care about your background at all. Sure...there are different qualities of instruments, but the more time you spend with it, the better you get. It's a pretty fair economic system in that regard and if a child wants to negate their past, as far as the disadvantages that they have, they just simply need to put in the work [on the] instrument. Take advantage of those tutorial times. To come in the morning and play along with the director or play along with somebody and develop that humility to play with people that are better than you and you just continue to grow. You see that in those kids. That might be the first time [that] they realized they have any kind of power outside of something happening to them.

Steven also alluded to the systemic injustices urban students face when he referenced the disadvantages in his narrative. However, he offered that the reward comes from seeing students who might otherwise not join band begin to experience success and flourish on their instrument. He mentioned how the student came to band tutorials to receive assistance from the director or to work with other students. Steven mentioned how the students displayed humility by attending and learning from others who are better than they are. Also intriguing was the concept of power that was introduced by Steven in his narrative. Steven suggested that in this type of situation the student has control of their learning. The concept of the student having power provides a counternarrative to the deficit laden mentality that urban students are not invested in their education.

Similarly, Stephanie provided insight into how she felt she was helping develop the whole child through band and how what her students do as a reflection of their school and has an impact on their community.

Well...I feel like I've [become] acclimated somewhat to the culture. I like the bonds that I make with my students. Every year, I get attached to a group of kids, and I'm sad to see them leave. I like that I play a part in exposing my kids to music and instrumental music, whether it's just playing their instrument or exposing them to different types of music, going on trips, seeing live performances, all those different things. I just try to give them my experiences and knowing that I was able to play a part in giving them that...that just has a positive effect on me. Then knowing that I could possibly affect their future in giving them a tool to get them a scholarship for college has a benefit. Some of the other positive aspects is training the students to become ambassadors, knowing what they do, how it reflects on the school and how they give back to their community when they perform and do those types of things. I just like feeling like I'm helping mold the whole child into becoming a good citizen.

Stephanie explained how she created bonds with her students, and how she felt she was exposing them to new opportunities through their participation in band. She expressed how she was giving her students the experiences that she had. I understood that statement to mean that she wanted to give her students similar experiences to those that she had when she was in middle and high school band. Stephanie also discussed how the experiences she afforded her students could lead to potential college band scholarships. Similarly, JoAnn found great reward in seeing her students go off to college as well.

Well seeing my kids going off to college...doing music, and just you know. I had a little girl who came to me in the sixth grade and she had a clarinet and she didn't even know how to put it together. But her parents had moved to Atlanta from Boston and she had a clarinet she didn't know how to put it together. That baby by the end of the first semester she was across the break on that clarinet. She just loved to play. And I taught her, so just seeing the kids once they [have] learned how to play something, and just seeing them learning and loving music. I mean that's...you can't beat that...that's why I do this.

**Reasons for staying.** Understanding the reasons that Black urban band directors stay in urban settings is missing from the extant literature. Through analyzing the participant's stories, most reasons are centered around the relationship established with their students and giving back to their community. Stephanie stated that she continues to teach in an urban school because she cares about her students and want the best for them.

I'm attached. I get attached to these kids. I didn't want to leave my first school, and I cried. Then, when I got here, I got attached to these kids, so I know it can happen pretty easily, but I don't want...I just feel like if I leave here, whoever comes behind me more than likely is not going to care as much as I care. So I feel like if I leave, I'm abandoning them. I love these kids. I'm about to cry. Let me stop.

When I examined Stephanie's story, it provided a deeper understanding for how much she cared about her students. She had a profound love for her students and cared about their well-being as well as her students' musical development. Steven also shared a similar feeling. Steven stated his reason for staying was rooted in his commitment and care for his students and the fact that it was important for Black students to see Black male teachers. Steven stated:

I don't like the idea that the location of where...I don't like the idea of somewhere a kid has no power and being...having that much of an impact to the quality of education that they get. We both know, frankly speaking, that everybody's not going to care about these kids the way that you would want them to, or the way that you would hope that your child's teacher cares. I think that it's important for Black students to see people that look like them, look like me. Frankly speaking, the first black male teacher I had was in grad school...he was my drum set teacher. I'm talking pre-k all the way through undergrad. That does make a difference. It makes a big difference when you see somebody that looks like you playing really, really well. I think that's the best investment I have in my community for this particular period. Continuing and showing them that if we have the right systems in place, and you have the right attitude and effort and I continue to adjust and make improvements, then we can do some pretty amazing things together.

Steven offered racialized reasons for why he remained teaching in an urban setting. This is supported by his expressing the need for Black students to have Black male teachers and seeing Black musicians performing at the highest level. Steven also spoke about power. To Steven, a student does not have the power to choose their school or their teachers. So he felt in that regards, students lack power and the teacher therefore has power over students. I understood Steven's use of power to highlight the injustice embedded within the lack of democratic choice afforded to students.

The participant's in my study provided a counter-narrative that they are highly invested in their students, beyond just teaching band. Malik described the reward for him was seeing his students benefit, and this was the reason why he continues to teach in an urban setting.

The biggest reward for me is seeing a kid that came in very, very rough around the edges develop and blossom into a very, very responsible young adult. Whether it be a scholarship to college, or just preparing them for a career in the technical field or going into the workforce. Just seeing them now, I've been teaching long enough now that a lot of the kids [that] I have taught are now adults. So seeing them raising their families and different things like that, starting their kids on instruments, that's the most rewarding thing for me. And then we have kids that are trying to be band directors, and they're calling for advice and different things like that. That's the most rewarding thing for me. Just seeing them be successful. Whether they continue with music or not. So many kids we've kept out of jail.

Malik's story offers insight into his philosophy of teaching. He believes that he can prepare his students for life beyond high school through the medium of band. He expressed whether that is going to college, technical school, or entering the workforce, there are skills that he is able to teach and cultivate. He also feels that for many of his students, band is an activity that keeps his students safe and out of trouble. Overall, he wanted the best for his students and for them to be successful in whatever they chose to do.

Alicia's commitment to the excellence of Black urban students was her reason for continuing to teach in urban schools. She stated:

I continue to teach in an urban setting, honestly, because I want us to win. I want us to be at GMEA. I want us to be at Midwest. I want everyone to see and understand that we are capable of doing this. Not just to say that "hey...look White people, Black people can do this too. But look Black people, we can do this." I want us to not be limited in what we do. I want us to get out of those limits and get out of that jar. The lid is off. It's been off.



But we continue to limit ourselves because sometimes the teacher is limited. You have some people that get out of music education. How? I don't know. White and Black...it doesn't matter. But they have a degree in it, and then they go into these classrooms and they bring their limitations with them. I want to see success amongst my people, and I want them to understand that you can be successful. Yes, we can do marching band very well, but we can also do concert band very well also. Don't limit yourself.

Alicia's story of why she continued to teach in an urban school is deeply rooted in Black excellence. She stated "I want us to win, I want us to be at GMEA. I want us to be at Midwest." Alicia is expressed how she believed Black urban band programs can achieve and perform at large invitational conferences. She further stated that she wanted everyone to understand that Black people can do this. In analyzing this statement, Alicia was exposing the perceived disparity of Black band programs that are showcased during invitational performances such as the GMEA In-Service Conference or the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic. She also stated that she wanted Black people to understand that there aren't any limits to the excellence that they can achieve. Unique to Alicia's story was how she addressed the idea of limitations. She stated that often Black directors limit themselves. I understood this statement as participant's felt ill-prepared, not welcomed and systemic oppression, served as excuses that limited Black urban band directors in achieving excellence. However, Alicia felt that there are no limits.

### **Summary**

Examining the experiences of Black urban band directors was key in understanding how their pre-service experiences helped prepare them to teach in urban settings. Presenting the findings in relationship to the research questions provided organization of the themes and helped

to highlight how the experiences of Black urban band directors impacted their capacity to teach in urban settings. Seven themes emerged: 1) teaching experiences needed; 2) managing the classroom; 3) overcoming challenges; 4) mentoring; 5) building relationships; 6) establishing sense of worth; and 7) rewarding experiences. I found that the participants believed that aspects of their preparation helped them to teach band in urban schools, while there were other areas that they considered needed more development. Likewise, the participants spoke in terms such as “our, us, Black, and we,” which racialized their experiences. Through the experiences and stories offered by the participant’s, counter-narratives were provided that challenges the dominant views of teaching band in urban settings. Likewise, this study provides the opportunity for the stories of Black urban band directors to be told. In Chapter 5, I discuss these findings relationship to existing literature, and implications for future research.

## 5 DISCUSSION

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the study and important interpretations drawn from the data presented in Chapter 4. I will provide a discussion of the themes and the implications for urban music teacher preparation, followed by recommendations for future research.

This study was an attempt to understand how pre-service preparation programs impacted the teaching/learning practices of Black urban band directors. I specifically sought to answer the following research questions: 1) How have experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs contributed to Black urban band directors' capacities to teach in urban settings? 2) How have the experiences from pre-service music teacher preparation programs impacted the teaching practices of Black urban band directors?; and 3) How do in-service Black urban band directors who have been teaching for five years or more describe their experiences as a teacher? These questions were examined based on the need for more research that explores the voices of Black urban band directors speaking about their pre-service training experiences. The following themes emerged 1) teaching experiences needed; 2) managing the classroom; 3) overcoming challenges; 4) mentoring; 5) building relationships; 6) establishing sense of worth; and 7) rewarding experiences. The findings will be discussed in relation to the literature in the following section.

The racial make-up of the teacher population in urban schools is largely White, while serving student populations that consist largely of Black and Latino students (Futrell, 1999). Similarly, much of the current research on teaching band in urban settings is positioned by White researchers (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Frierson-Campbell, 2006; Mawhinney, Mulero & Pérez, 2012;

Mixon, 2005). My study is an attempt to fill this void and provide the voices of Black urban band directors. In turn, my participants shared their experiences

**Racialized teaching experiences.** I found that all 10 of the participants in my study racialized their teaching experiences. I analyzed language that they used to describe their schools, students, and communities. They used words and phrases in their narratives such as “our, we, Black, our kids, our communities” when telling their stories. Therefore, this led me to believe that they understand their role as teachers in urban settings through the lens of Blackness. The participants connected their experiences from middle and high school band, along with their cultural understanding as urban school graduates and as Black people to the experiences they wanted to create for their students. For example, Patrick discussed how when he was in middle school, his band directors had high expectations for his students, and the students wanted to achieve them. He stated “A lot was required of us and a lot was expected of us, not only behavior-wise, but performance wise. As such, the students, we pretty much rose to the occasion, meaning we wanted to be good.” Patrick provided us with insight into his experiences and the bases for his philosophical paradigm. As a product of an urban school band program and now a middle school band director in the same school district, he has high academic and performance expectations for his students. Additionally, Patrick being a graduate of an urban school district, has first-hand knowledge of the setting, the backgrounds of his students, and a connection to the community he is serving. His contextual understanding supports the research that recommends that successful teachers of Black students also have contextual knowledge about their students, their culture, and communities (Fitzpatrick, 2012, Siddle-Walker, 1996). The participants in my study acknowledged the non-academic factors – economic, familial, psychological, and contextual that have an influence on urban students (Burchinal et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings,

2006; Matthews, 2011; Wasserberg, 2014) but did not allow those elements to cause them to lower their expectations of their students. I found that the participants used their contextual knowledge along with their background as graduates of urban schools to shape their expectations of their students (Balderrama, 2001; Conway, 2012; Doyle, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2011; Grossman, 1990; Languell, 2018). Instead, Patrick used his contextual knowledge to cultivate a culture of success for his students, therefore supporting the need for a context specific training.

The stories provided by the participants in my study challenges the dominant ideology of teaching band in urban schools by providing the voices of Black urban band directors. The stories provided by the participants also highlights the need to critically examine the role of race within the field of music education, more specifically urban teacher preparation. One of the central tenets of Critical Race Theory is to challenge traditional claims and argue the privilege of dominant groups in U.S. society and in the educational systems. This is imperative to my study. When discussing urban schools, the role of race must be addressed. Many urban schools consist of large populations of Black and Brown students, therefore addressing the opportunity gaps and inequities in the educational system are critical to having a holistic understanding of the students, teachers, and families being served. Critical Race Theory provided a framework that allowed me to explore race more critically.

Much of the extant literature rehashes the challenges associated with teaching in urban schools but does not adequately highlight the excellence that exists within urban school band programs. The stories of the participants in my study provide not only the experiential knowledge of the directors, but also creates a space for Black urban band directors to share stories their stories of Black excellence. The participants in my study provided their pre-service experiences and shared stories from their preparation experiences. Their stories can be used to

help create experiences that can be incorporated during pre-service training to help prepare future urban music educators.

**Historically Black Colleges and Universities.** I found that the participants who graduated from HBCUs had a stronger sense of preparation to teach in urban schools than those who graduated from Predominately White Institutions. This is evidenced in the narratives shared by the HBCU graduates. Six out of 10 participants in my study attended HBCUs. Based on their responses, their preparation to teach band in urban schools was fostered largely through their relationships and conversations with their professors. Alicia explained how her professor would have discussions about what they could expect when teaching in urban school settings. Malik and Matthew also explained how their professors created assignments centered around teaching in urban schools as well. This directly aligns with the literature that supports the nurturing and cultivation of culture that is inherent to the HBCU experiences. Toldson (2018) suggests that mentoring among HBCU faculty members and undergraduate students occurs naturally even while HBCU faculty members carry higher teaching loads. Likewise, the number of faculty members of color at HBCUs also foster a greater sense of cultural identity and student success (Gasman & Nguyen, 2016; Toldson, 2018).

**Student teaching.** The participants suggested that there are special skills and experiences needed to better prepare pre-service music educators for the urban context. Namely, the participants discussed classroom management pedagogy, greater understanding of child psychology and effective communication strategies as areas that they felt needed further development. Having an understanding of these concepts is imperative to the successful preparation of urban music teachers. Becoming an effective teacher of diverse students requires having an understanding of students in non-stereotypical ways while maintaining,

comprehending, and acknowledging how culture and context impacts their lives and learning (Darling-Hammond, 2002). Observations and student teaching experiences can provide avenues for pre-service teachers to obtain context specific knowledge of urban schools.

Groulx (2001) found that when pre-service teachers have positive urban field experiences, they have more positive attitudes about urban teaching. The participants in my study expressed the need for observations and student teaching in urban schools. While I agree student teaching and observations are inextricably valuable to pre-service teacher development, I believe that the experiences must be structured so the pre-service teacher is experiencing high quality teaching. The most important element of observations and student teaching in urban settings is for the pre-service student to connect the pedagogies and techniques learned during university coursework to practice. Malik shared how during his student teaching experience he was able to see an exemplary middle school band program in a low-socioeconomic community. He further discussed how those experiences provided him with a model of what a good middle school band program looks like. However, Malik did not discuss his ability to connect his university coursework to practice. Meaning, he did not detail how he applied his training to his teaching. I believe there is a need for pre-service teachers to have the ability to connect theory with practice. Steven discussed this in his interview with regard to learning how to teach the various instruments, but not enough focus on how to diagnose problems from the podium. This means these narratives support the goal of providing field experiences that focus on allowing pre-service teachers to create lessons and implement them within the classroom should be embedded during university coursework. I believe this will allow the pre-service teachers to connect their university coursework with practice and receive feedback from both the university

professor, in-service teacher, and the students. There is a need for more research in this area to investigate how to implement these types of experiences into the pre-service preparation.

**Pedagogical training.** The participants expressed that their pedagogical training was sufficient, however there were aspects of their training that they felt were insufficient. The methods courses were well structured and prepared the participants to teach the various instruments. This is corroborated by the findings of Fiese & DeCarbo (1995), Frierson-Campbell (2006b), Fitzpatrick (2008), and Day (2018) which supports that university preparation programs provide proficient pedagogical methods to their students. However, the participants expressed the need for additional training in the areas of classroom management, student engagement, and ways to manage the daily operations of being a band director. Philip explained that he felt an area he needed additional training was in classroom management and operational techniques for a band program. This is consistent with the literature (Day, 2018; Doyle, 2012; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2008; Ingersoll & Perda, 2009; Mixon, 2005; Robinson, 2018). Therefore, an emphasis should be placed on classroom management and how to organize and run a band program during pre-service training. Matthew and Malik spoke about how during their training they had to plan band trips, manage a budget, design and purchase marching band uniforms. These tasks are part of running a band program and would be beneficial to pre-service teachers during their training.

**Overcoming Challenges.** The participants mentioned challenges such as lack of resources, lack of funding, and scheduling which remains consistent with the literature on teaching in urban schools (Day, 2018; Doyle, 2012; Fiese & DeCarbo, 1995; Fitzpatrick, 2008; Frierson-Campbell, 2006a). However, I found the ways in which the participants offered how they overcame their challenges ubiquitous throughout their narratives. The participants expressed how they created



flexible rehearsal schedules, worked to provide resources, created a positive culture, and established relationships with stakeholders. This is of particular interest because the participants immediately began expressing how they overcame obstacles that they faced. For example, Malik described how he created a flexible rehearsal schedule to accommodate his students' busy schedules. Likewise, Stephanie expressed how she formed bonds with her students which allowed her to be able to deliver better instruction. The participants' standard of what urban band students can achieve and their desire to display Black excellence is the foundation for their philosophical paradigm. This has significant implications for the profession in terms of preparing future urban music educators. These implications include providing pre-service teachers with exposure to a variety of ways of teaching, and assortment of scheduling options and a multitude of ways to gain resources. The participants expressed that forming relationships was key to their ability to receive the resources needed to enable them to provide high quality experiences for their students.

The participants in my study placed an emphasis on building relationships with students, parents, colleagues, and administration. They deemed these relationships invaluable to their ability to effectively teach their students, engage parental support, operate within the school, and leverage flexibility with their administrators. Rapport was built through positive active involvement within the school and community as well as by forming individual relationships with the students. Administrative support also improves student success, promotes positive parent and teacher attitudes, and encourages support from the community (Day, 2018). These relationships provided avenues for positive feedback and created a caring and respectful culture between the director and stakeholders (Coffey & Farinde-Wu, 2016; Doyle, 2012, Ladson-Billing, 2006; Shaw, 2015).

**Reasons for staying.** I found the relationships formed with the students played an instrumental role in the reasons why the participants decided to stay in their urban setting. The participants experienced significant rewards, including seeing students benefit from their participation in band and the development of their students' character, which provided satisfaction and a sense of worth to the participants. This is similar to the findings of Bernard (2010). Bernard found three themes amongst her participants' stories: 1) urban students can do everything that students in other settings can do; 2) providing opportunities for urban students is important; and 3) building relationships with students is a critical part of teaching in urban settings (Bernard, 2010). The participants in my study indicated that the rewards they experienced while teaching in their schools is a reason why they continue to teach in urban schools. I was expecting for the participants to express that pay was the main reason that they chose to stay teaching in urban schools, however that was an added benefit, but not the sole reason. My participants differ from other participants in the literature in that regard.

### **Urban Teacher Identity**

It is important to note that although teacher identity did not emerge as a specific theme, it seemed to influence some of the participants' views and actions as Black band directors. Steven discussed how important it was for him to make sure his students were taken care of and the need for them to see someone who looks like them being successful. In other words, Steven felt his students needed to see a Black male musician and teacher performing at a high level. There was a resounding understanding that my participants believe it is important for their students to understand that Black excellence is a norm rather than the exception. There is a lack of research within music education that examines the excellence of Black and Latino students in urban school settings.

Patrick's, Steven's and Phillip's experiences are consistent with Fitzpatrick's (2008) findings that urban teachers believed they hold high expectations for their students and believed it was their responsibility to help their students develop in both musical and nonmusical ways. Additionally, it is important to recognize that participants in my study did not express feeling racism an issue within their pre-service preparation programs. Steven expressed the importance of his students seeing Black musicians performing at a high level and continually striving for excellence. Steven felt it was important for Black students to see more people that look like them performing at a high level. Steven highlights an expressed concern of equality in music education. DeLorenzo's (2012) article presented an analysis of current literature and implications for practice. She highlighted the issues of inequality that exists that marginalizes students in urban schools. She deems this to be a "social justice" issue within our educational systems (p. 40).

### **Urban Music Teacher Training**

The participants in this study consisted of graduates from Predominately White Institutions and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. While graduates from both PWIs and HBCUs expressed they were prepared in terms of their pedagogical training, those from HBCUs expressed how their professors created scenarios that resembled the urban context. The HBCUs that my participants attended did not have urban preparation focuses, however their professors embedded elements that prepared them for urban schools. HBCU music education faculty members along with the university band directors created teaching scenarios to assist future teachers in finding creative ways to be successful in urban environments. Rahman, Fox, Ikoma, & Gray (2017) report that teacher employment trends in the U.S. show that urban school districts hire a disproportionately high number of first year teachers, and they encounter a more

racially and economically diverse population of students than rural or suburban schools.

Research reports that the current trends highlight a lack of thorough infusion of diversity, urban education, and multicultural courses throughout teacher education programs, thus, leaving teachers inadequately prepared to serve their students (Milner, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

### **Implications and Suggestions for Music Teacher Educators**

#### **Real-World Experiences**

Participants in my study have recommended a need for more real-world experiences to be embedded during music teacher training at the university level. Smith & Smith (2009) recommended that university pre-service teacher preparation programs include “enhanced or expanded training in classroom management, discipline, and student interactions, specifically accompanied by ‘real world’ experiences and observations in urban schools” (p. 18). Researchers suggest that pre-service music teachers who attended urban schools are more likely to become urban music educators than those from other settings (Eros, 2018; Baker, 2012; Smith, 2006). Everyone majoring in music education will not be graduates of urban school settings, however universities that are located within urban cities can work with local public schools to create observation and student teaching opportunities for their students. Music teacher educators can create opportunities for pre-service teachers to observe a variety of urban settings that showcase high quality teaching, classroom management, and efficient organization and operation of the band program. The observations should include visiting band programs that operate traditional, block, modified block, and 4X4 schedules, as these schedules are common in urban schools. Also, pre-service teachers should see urban programs that function with a variety of staffing options such as multiple band directors, use of supplemental clinicians, and private lessons programs as well as programs that operate with only a single director. Likewise, pre-service

teachers should observe teachers displaying various classroom management techniques and varying ways that band programs can be organized and operated. By providing pre-service teachers the opportunities to observe high quality teaching and classroom management in a variety of settings along with multiple models for ways to organize and structure band programs, it may lead to a change in attitude and dispositions regarding teaching band in urban schools.

### **Music Teacher Preparation 2.0**

I believe now more than ever there is a need for an enhanced music teacher preparation program. As previously stated, schools in the United States are becoming more racially and linguistically diverse and the teacher workforce has not shifted to reflect the students being served. Therefore, I would create what I call Music Teacher Preparation 2.0. I would look to enhance the experiences within music teacher preparation to include more diverse observation and student teaching experiences and urban context specific trainings embedded within university coursework. As research suggests, many first-year teachers are receiving jobs in urban settings. Music teacher preparation programs could begin to create curriculum that prepares pre-service educators with the skills necessary to be successful in a variety of setting (urban, rural, and suburban, low-socio-economic, diverse demographics). This will require music teacher educators to think beyond the present, and plan for future student populations. Arizona State University's School of Music has made this shift. While the shift for Arizona State University's School of Music does not place emphasis on race, the model can be expanded to include race. The music education faculty at Arizona State University wanted to prepare their graduates to be successful in a variety of careers within music education. This includes a variety of school settings. They have reconceptualized and restructured their undergraduate music education program to meet the needs of music educators of the present and future. Their students engage in

traditional and contemporary classes which include art of teaching, digital music learning and teaching, and K-12 internships. The School of Music at ASU believes that their graduates should be prepared to work in many different settings.

In a presentation presented at the Society for Music Teacher Education Symposium, researchers Marg Schmidt, Jill Sullivan, Sandra Stauffer, and Evan Tobias presented the reimagined undergraduate music education program at ASU. The new program is built upon four core principles: flexible musicians, innovative practitioners, inquisitive thinkers, and community leaders, with a focus on synthesis, distributed practice, and inquiry learning in all courses. A shift is needed from the paradigm of a music specialist (such as band, orchestra, chorus director), to a music educator who is capable of successfully teaching in a multitude of settings. I conceptualize the Music Teacher Preparation 2.0 to also think critically about race and its role in teacher preparation. What does it mean to be a White teacher teaching in a predominately Black school and vice versa what does it mean to be Black teaching in a largely White setting? How do teachers take into consideration the culture of their students when programming music for concerts, communicating to parents, planning events? In Music Teacher Preparation 2.0, conversations during university training will require both music teacher educators and students alike to critically examine their beliefs, but also explore ways to be more inclusive. This can be achieved by setting aside the traditional ways in which we view music education and open our eyes to new possibilities by exploring music of other cultures and the ways in which these cultures interact with music.

The literature thoroughly highlights the perceived challenges of teaching in urban settings and the lack of adequate training to do so. I believe this deficit position perpetuates negative stereotypes about teaching in urban schools. By exploring critically and examining through a

lens of Blackness, I was able to provide their stories of Black urban band directors teacher preparation experiences, which provided a counter-narrative. They tell how their preparation experiences provided exemplars of Black excellence, how mentors helped prepare them, and provided ways in which they overcame obstacles. I believe through a reimagined model of pre-service music teacher preparation, we can begin to challenge the status quo, move towards a positive perception of teaching band in urban settings and begin to cultivate excellence urban music teaching. In order to achieve this goal, I recommend that we begin by forging relationships between university professors and high-quality urban music educators.

### **Implications for Urban Band Directors**

I believe there are high quality urban band directors within schools that are providing exemplary models of success. There is a need for urban band directors to form mentorships with pre-service music teachers and to engage in discussions regarding teaching in urban schools. One way to achieve this is through establishing partnerships with local colleges and universities music education faculty. This relationship would allow successful urban band directors to offer to be guest speakers during courses, open their classrooms to pre-service students for observations, and provide lab opportunities for university students to connect their coursework to practice. Pre-service students would be able to engage in open discussions with the directors who will also be able to provide additional support throughout their training. Also, urban band directors can also work with their state Music Educators Association to provide professional develop for university students that extends through their first five years of teaching. This program could provide professional development through an organized statewide mentorship program. New teachers and teachers within the first five years of teaching would be assigned a mentor in their area.

## **Implications for Future Research**

This study was limited to one geographical area and Black urban band directors. Future research studies could include different categories of urban music teachers such as choral, orchestra and general music teachers as well as explore the experiences of Latino urban band directors as well. This would provide information from a larger population of music educators, as well as include the voices of Latino band directors that could provide greater insight into the training needs and pre-service experiences of those populations.

The results of my study do not suggest that the current model of music teacher preparation is broken; however I believe Music Teacher Preparation 2.0 will provide opportunities to enhance and further develop the ways in which we prepare music teachers for diverse school settings. Music teacher preparation programs should be given credit for the components that they are doing well; and that is preparing students to be successful music teachers. However my study does highlight the need for a more critical approach to exploring ways to better prepare music educators, specifically band directors for the racially diverse populations and a variety of school settings. As stated previously by participants in my study, participants felt that their pre-service music teacher preparation programs prepared them well with regards to their instrumental methods courses. However, they felt they needed more training in the areas of classroom management, student motivation, and organization and daily operations of a band program. This is promising and provides a starting point to begin changing how music teachers are prepared. The aspects of the ASU music education program along with Music Teacher Preparation 2.0 provide a model to address these areas of concern. One element that seems to be missing is that of context specific preparation and the ways in which race fits into the preparation of music teachers. One way to begin to make this shift is to investigate the



experiences HBCU music education programs afford their students and how those experiences can be replicated at other institutions. Another way would be to investigate the attributes of successful urban band directors. This study should go beyond the characteristics found in Baker's (2012) study. By defining the qualities and characteristics of successful urban band directors, music teacher educators can then begin to cultivate those qualities in their pre-service students. Likewise, colleges and universities can begin to recruit music education majors who exemplify those qualities and nurture future urban band directors.

### **Partnerships Between Urban School Districts and Universities**

Another suggestion for future research would be to investigate creating partnerships between local universities and urban school districts. Carroll (2018) conducted a study based on the relationship established between the University of Central Florida Teacher Preparation Program and the Orange County Public School district in order to help address the need for producing high quality teachers prepared to teach in high poverty urban schools. Carroll details how the Teacher Preparation Programs faculty, administration, and staff have worked to transform the nature of their pre-service training program to align with what the university does best, the needs of the urban schools, and developing community engagement to establish a more positive impact. While this type of partnership is effective, it is centered around core-academic subjects, and does not fully serve music education students. Matthew from my study, suggested that local colleges and universities should partner with surrounding school districts to create partnerships that provide invaluable learning opportunities for pre-service educators.

Georgia State University's School of Music, located in downtown Atlanta, Georgia has created educational partnerships that can serve as a model for music specific partnerships within the urban public-school setting. At Georgia State University, there is a specific mission as part of

the university's strategic plan to focus on urban-relevant topics. The School of Music is helping to put this strategic plan into action across interdisciplinary content areas through its Sound Learning partnership. Sound Learning serves urban youth in grades K-5 in the city of Atlanta through an integrated residency program which integrates music through other core content areas. Sound Learning connects K-5 students with professional musicians from a variety of backgrounds, including members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra along with faculty members and students from the School of Music.

The Sound Learning program is organized and facilitated by graduate students at the university, which does not benefit pre-service educators. One way to extend this program to pre-service teachers would be to provide opportunities for pre-service teachers to lead model lessons prior to the musicians meeting with the students and their teachers. This would allow for real world experiences for pre-service educators to work with urban students and to build relationships with the students and teachers in the schools.

## **Conclusion**

The design of this study was qualitative in order to elicit descriptive details regarding the pre-service experiences of urban Black band directors. Both the limitations and delimitations of the study design impacted the results of this study. While completing this study, I also became aware of a broad range of topics that could be addressed by other researchers in the area of teaching band in an urban setting. These topics were not within the scope of this study. Training of pre-service music teachers should be examined critically to explore the ways in which the race of students and teachers impact preparation. Also, music education should examine the missing perspectives of minoritized populations such as people of color, LGBTQ, and women. Training of pre-service music teachers should be examined critically to explore the possibilities of a

reimagined music education and the ways that future generations of urban music educators are prepared.

It is my hope that the findings of my study will help provide pre-service teachers with ways to understand the challenges yet rewarding experiences of teaching in an urban setting. The current literature seems to all agree on the challenges of teaching in the urban setting. However, I am hoping that the implications and suggestions for future research from this study will help to change the narrative. The challenges are well documented, but now is the time to make a change. As mentioned earlier, the recommendations in the *Music Educators Journal* January 1970 issue, *Special Report: Facing the Music in Urban Education* are still being articulated as areas that need to be addressed 49 years later. The experiences of these ten participants in my study illustrate the need for context specific training and a greater understanding of the experiences of Black urban band directors and the ways in which they navigate the urban terrain. Additionally, just as the participants in my study felt they were needed in their particular school, I hope pre-service teachers will feel they have something unique and special to offer to the urban setting and will feel compelled to teach in an urban school.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A – Recruitment E-mail

Date:

Greetings,

I am writing to inform you of a study entitled, *A Phenomenological Exploration of Teaching Band in the Urban Setting from the Teachers' Perspective*, being conducted by Gregory Denson, a doctoral student at Georgia State University.

The primary purpose of this research is to explore the academic and professional experiences of urban band directors, with a secondary focus on the experiences gained from the university teacher training program. This study is designed with an initial phone interview of 22 Middle and High School band directors in the Atlanta Public Schools System, followed by phenomenological interviews with 7-10 directors based on their feedback during the initial phone interview.

You may be eligible for this study if you meet the following criteria:

- ❖ Teach in an Urban School District
- ❖ Have taught for no fewer than 5 years (currently completing the 5<sup>th</sup> year of teaching is permissible)

Should you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in the initial 10-15 minute phone interview, and if selected for the phenomenological interviews, you will be asked to participate in no more than 2 phenomenological interviews lasting no more than 60 minutes each. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please contact the student investigator at [gdenson2@student.gsu.edu](mailto:gdenson2@student.gsu.edu) or Dr. Patrick Freer, the principle investigator at [pfreer@gsu.edu](mailto:pfreer@gsu.edu). It is important to know that this letter is not to tell you to join the study. It is your decision, your participation in this study is voluntary and will not result in compensation. Benefits of your participation may include helping to provide insight into teaching band in an urban setting. Please do not feel obligated to respond to this email if you are not interested in the study.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

## **Appendix B – Phone Interview Protocol**

Tell me where did you attend undergraduate and or graduate school.

Tell me what motivated you to become a band director.

Tell me why you choose to teach in Atlanta Public Schools?

Did you receive any type of training to help you teach band in an urban setting?

Do you have anything else you would like to share with me based on your experiences of teaching band in an urban setting?

## **Appendix C – In-Person Interview Questions**

Tell me about your middle and high school band experiences.

Tell me your story of how you got into teaching instrumental music?

Tell me what motivated you to become a band director.

Tell me your story of what it is like being a Black urban band director.

Tell me why you choose to teach in Atlanta Public Schools.

As an urban teacher, what are the biggest challenges that you face?

As an urban teacher, what are the biggest rewards that you experience?

Tell me your story of why you continue to teach in an urban setting.

How were your initial experiences with the urban school environment, students, principals, colleagues, parents, etc?

Describe the administrative support that was available to you at the start of your career? Any changes/improvements in support over the years?

Did you receive any type of training to help you teach band in an urban setting?

Tell me about your undergraduate music teacher training experiences.

What specific courses or techniques did you learn during your undergraduate teacher training has helped prepare you to teach instrumental music in an urban setting.

If you look back over your past experiences as an urban band director, what types of experiences would you recommend for undergraduate music education students to prepare them to teach in an urban setting?

Do you have anything else you would like to share with me based on your experiences of teaching band in an urban setting?

## **APPENDIX D - Consent Form**

Georgia State University

Informed Consent

Title: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Impact of Undergraduate Music Teacher Preparation on Urban Band Directors Preparation to Teach in an Urban Setting

Principal Investigator: Dr. Patrick Freer

Student Principal Investigator: Gregory Denson

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences gained from the university teacher training program. More specifically we are interested in what might have contributed to the director's understanding of teaching in an urban setting. It is the goal of this study to understand the meaning of teaching music in an urban environment. You are invited to take part in this research study because you are a band director who has taught for 5 years (completing the 5<sup>th</sup> year is acceptable) or more in the urban setting. A total of 22 people will be invited to take part in this study.

### **Procedures**

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in up to three interviews.

The first round of interviews will consist of a 10-15-minute phone interview. The first round of interviews will help understand the experiences of the various participants and help determine who will be best suited for the purposes of this study.

The second round will include a 60 -90 minute' interview, and the third round may be necessary should more time be needed for clarification. These interviews will be more descriptive in order to describe the experiences of teaching band in an urban setting, as well as understand the potential impact of the undergraduate music training on teaching in an urban setting.

The student researcher will work with you to select a day and time for the interview. The interview will be audio recorded to help the student researcher remember the conversation. No data will be shared with anyone without permission. If you choose not to be audiotaped, you will not be allowed to participate in this study. After each interview, the recordings will be transcribed and a copy of the transcript from your interview will be provided to you for your review. At that time, you may edit or delete anything you do not wish to be included.

### **Future Research**

The student researcher will remove information that may identify you and may use your data for future research. If this is done, we will not ask for any additional consent from you.

### **Risks**

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you would in a normal day of life.

### **Benefits**

This study is not designed to benefit you personally. However, we hope to gain information about the potential impact of undergraduate music teacher preparation on band directors perception of teaching band in an urban setting.

### **Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal**

You do not have to participate in this study. If you decide to participate in the study and change your mind, you have the right to stop at any time. You may stop participating at any time. You may refuse to take part in the study or stop at any time.

### **Confidentiality**

We will keep your records private to the extent allowed by law. The following people and entities will have access to the information you provide:

Dr. Patrick Freer (faculty advisor) and Dr. Steven Armon Anderson (research colleague)  
Gregory Denson (student researcher)

GSU Institutional Review Board

Office for Human Research Protection (OHRP)

Participants may select a pseudonym rather than their name on study records. The information you provide will be stored on the researcher's password protected laptop and stored on an external hard drive. A code sheet will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the student researcher's home to protect the identity of the participants. All data will be destroyed one year after the completion of the study.

When we present or publish the results of this study, we will not use your name or other information that may identify you.

### **Contact Information**

Contact Dr. Patrick Freer at 404-413-5949 or at pfreer@gsu.edu or Gregory Denson at 229-834-7082 or at gdenson2@student.gsu.edu

If you have questions about the study or your part in it

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the study

Contact the GSU Office of Human Research Protections at 404-413-3500 or irb@gsu.edu  
if you have questions about your rights as a research participant  
if you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research

### **Consent**

If you agree to participate in this study, please proceed to the interview.

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## APPENDIX E – Consolidated Code Book

- Deleted – Friend majored in music
- Deleted – Did not want to teach at first
- Deleted – Frustrated
- Deleted – Smaller programs
- Deleted – Marched DCI
- Deleted – Band director played same instrument
- Deleted – Dropped out of band in HS
- Deleted – Re-enrolled in school band program
- Deleted – Sibling musician
- Deleted – Director retention rate
- Deleted Group – Discipline
- Deleted Group – Equity
- Deleted Group – Recruitment/Retention
- Deleted Group – Retention
- Regrouped – Director retention rate – Reasons for leaving
- Renamed Group – Classroom management – Classroom management techniques
- New Code – Leadership role as MS/HS student
- New Code – More to be done for students
- New Code – Create safe space
- New Code – Principal provides some funding
- Renamed – Acclimated to the culture – Getting acclimated to the culture

- Renamed – Disparity amongst the different schools – Disparity in resources between schools
- Renamed – Getting acclimated to the culture – Getting acclimated to the school/band culture
- Renamed – Collaboration with other fine arts teachers – Collaborations with other fine arts colleagues
- Renamed – Professors disconnected from public schools – Professors disconnected from public school teaching
- Renamed – Diverse demographics – Diverse demographics/socio-economics
- Renamed – Showing progress/growth – Band program showing progress/growth
- Renamed – Issues with parents – Conflicts with parents
- Renamed – Parents not active/involved – Inactive parent boosters
- Renamed – Female band director – Female band director/assistant director
- Renamed – Participated in marching band in high school – Participated in marching band
- Renamed – Practicum hours for certification – Practicum hours requirement
- Renamed – Take ownership of your professional growth – Take ownership of professional growth
- Renamed – Bored in concert ensembles – Participated in concert ensembles
- Renamed – Benefitted from student teaching – Student teaching
- Consolidated – Decisions without fine arts faculty input – Unsupportive administrators
- Consolidated – Hands-off administration – Non-micromanaging administrators
- Consolidated – Supportive principal – Supportive principal/AP
- Consolidated – Former band director moved to administration – administrator former music teacher
- Consolidated – Balance – Balance work and family life

- Consolidated – Understanding the school – Getting acclimated to the culture
- Consolidated – Developing of students – Development of the whole child
- Consolidated – School discipline issues – Understanding school-wide discipline
- Consolidated – Care about the students – Relating to and caring about students
- Consolidated – Fair/consistent treatment of kids – Classroom management strategies
- Consolidated – Collaboration with other band directors – Collaboration with other colleagues
- Consolidated – Band scholarships to college – Culture of excellence
- Consolidated – Create culture of excellence – Culture of excellence
- Consolidated – Providing fundamentals for student success – Know what kids needs to be successful
- Consolidated – Arts rich school – Arts magnet school
- Consolidated – Diverse demographic – Diverse demographics/socio-economics
- Consolidated – Colleague served as mentor – Seek advice from other urban directors
- Consolidated – Established worth to school/community – Establish worth to student/school/community
- Consolidated – Taking students home – Parent figure to students
- Consolidated – Make the best out of what you have – Create the program you want
- Consolidated – Felt administration heard fine arts teachers’ voices – Developed relationships with admin/counselors
- Consolidated – Parent altercation – Conflicts with parents
- Consolidated – Bored in HS concert ensembles – Bored in concert ensembles
- Consolidated – Female band director in middle school – Female band director
- Consolidated – Female assistant director in high school – Female band director

- Consolidated – Joined marching band in 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – Participated in marching band in high school
- Consolidated – Scholarship to major in music education – Scholarship to college
- Consolidated – Parent music educator – Parent music educator mentor
- Consolidated – Visit a variety of programs – Observations/conversations with band directors in a variety of settings
- Consolidated – In charge of class during student teaching – Benefitted from student teaching
- Consolidated – Practicum hours prior to student teaching – Practicum hours for certification
- Consolidated – Prepare for workforce – Preparing for success no matter where
- Consolidated – Student taught at underprivileged school – Student teaching
- Consolidated – Developed skills during summer prior to first job – Take ownership of professional growth
- Consolidated – Attached to students – Bond with students
- Consolidated – Connect to students – Bond with students
- Consolidated – Love the students – Bond with students
- Consolidated – Pay cut to leave – Pay
- Consolidated – Pour into students – Students need us
- Consolidated – Previous director left to become administrator – transition taking over urban program
- Consolidated – Large HS band program – Large MS/HS band program
- Consolidated – Developing the whole child – Developing the whole child/character development
- Consolidated – Camaraderie between fine arts colleagues – Build relationships with colleagues

- Consolidated – Sense of community – Sense of community/family