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Culturally Responsive Instrumental Music Instruction: Efforts by Middle Level Music Educators to Connect their Ensemble Programs to the Local Community

Culturally responsive pedagogy encourages teachers to connect the curriculum to students' cultural identities and foster their development of critical consciousness. However, there is limited empirical research into the culturally responsive practices of instrumental music educators in the United States, and the conventional repertoire of United States band and orchestra programs may hamper music teachers' efforts in this arena. In this study, we sought to understand how and in what ways middle level (5th–8th grade) instrumental music teachers have attempted to connect their band and orchestra programs to the musics of the local community. Using emergent qualitative content analysis of an open-ended survey question, we examined the responses of 727 music teachers from across the United States who taught band and/or orchestra during 2020–2021. We found that over half of the respondents were attempting to connect their programs to the local community, but that many of their efforts were not fully aligned with the tenets of culturally responsive pedagogy and were limited by numerous barriers. From these results, we suggest areas of

improvement within the field of music education, particularly concerning repertoire access and preservice and inservice professional development.[1]

Keywords: culturally responsive pedagogy, middle level, instrumental music, local community

Band and orchestra instrumental ensemble programs in United States public schools commonly focus on a conventional repertoire specific to the history and tradition of the ensemble, most commonly labeled "Western classical." While an important part of a student's musical development, this standard repertoire does not often reflect the cultural, community-based, or self-selected musics many students experience outside of school (Karlsen & Westerlund, 2015). This disconnect, perhaps associated with student demographics (Alegrado & Winsler, 2020; Elpus, 2022), may cause students to choose alternative elective options, and thus is particularly significant when considering fifth through eighth grade (middle level) instrumental ensembles, the grade levels at which many U.S. public schools start students on their journey as instrumental musicians. According to a 2009 national survey of U.S. middle schools, music ensembles are some of the most frequently offered electives at grades 5–8 (McEwin & Greene, 2011). Although course availability does not equate to student participation, instrumental ensembles may play a critical role in many middle level students' musical and identity development, and thus are an important site for considering how music educators' practices reflect the identities of a schools' students and local community.

The Intersection of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, Instrumental Music Education, and Middle Level Education

Initial research in culturally responsive pedagogy began with the intent to understand the practices of teachers who achieved success with students of color, particularly teachers who did not share their students' cultural background(s) (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). This cultural difference between the teachers and the students in a school (as well as the wider local community) can present a curricular and pedagogical challenge. In music education, over 80% of those seeking music teacher licensure in the U.S. identify as White (Elpus, 2015) and most preservice music education programs primarily prepare preservice educators with musical competence in Western classical styles. According to Ladson-Billings (1995a), culturally responsive teachers in any subject need to help students make connections between content taught in school and their outside-of-school lives, believe that they can succeed in any subject, and critically question why, for example, their culture and family history is not adequately represented in the school curriculum.

According to Lind and McKoy (2016), "culturally responsive teaching is comprehensive in that it focuses on teaching the whole child" (p. 18), an emphasis paralleled in the philosophy of middle level (grades 5–8) education. Middle level education has historically argued for learning environments that support a young adolescent's cognitive, physical, and social-emotional development (Bishop & Harrison, 2021; National Middle School Association, 2010). But in 2019, middle level scholars argued that this solely developmental focus had overlooked the importance of cultural competence and cultural identity (Harrison et al., 2019). According to Harrison et al. (2019), "to be developmentally responsive to young adolescents from marginalized backgrounds, one must be culturally responsive as well" (p. 8). The most recent edition of *This We Believe* (Bishop & Harrison, 2021), the leading document describing the principles of middle level education, argues that a diverse middle level curriculum "requires educators to design learning that builds on and sustains students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and experiences" (p. 31). *This We Believe* further argues that middle level curricular choices should be relevant to students' lives and thus students should be able to "see themselves and their multiple social identities reflected in the curriculum" (p. 32). This emphasis on students' diverse identities in the classroom raises questions about the choices made in middle level instrumental ensemble classrooms across the U.S.

Bond (2017) outlined the emerging body of literature in music education focused on culturally responsive pedagogy. Although numerous sources provide introductions, overviews, and applications of culturally responsive pedagogy to the music classroom (e.g. Darrow, 2013; Kelly-McHale, 2016, 2019; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Mixon, 2009; Walter, 2018), Bond notes limited empirical research in music education. Examples of this work include Shaw's (2015, 2016) studies in choral music and the growing body of literature focused on preservice or inservice education (e.g., Abril & Robinson, 2019; Bond & Russell, 2019; Kindall-Smith, 2012; McKoy et al., 2017; VanDeusen, 2019). Here, we limit our discussion to those studies which focus on culturally responsive pedagogy within the context of instrumental ensemble classrooms (e.g., Fitzpatrick, 2011; Hoffman & Carter, 2013; Neel, 2017; Schmidt & Smith, 2017).

Building on concerns expressed by many music educators (e.g. Davis, 2021; DeLorenzo, 2012) regarding the absence of African American and Latinx students in string orchestra programs, Boon (2014) investigated the experiences of fourth and fifth grade African American students participating in violin instruction. Boon's study focused on the student participants' out-of-school and in-school musical lives, particularly the students' perceptions of the differences between the rap music they listened to at home and the violin music they were learning at school. Boon concluded that "there was a need for careful acknowledgement and

integration of a student's daily performance and listening habits into the violin classroom because their musical lives outside the classroom are rich" (p. 144). This acknowledgement and integration of students' musical lives into the instrumental classroom is consistent with both culturally responsive pedagogy and, for the fifth grade students in Boon's study, their developing identities as young adolescents (see also Pearson-Bush, 2020).

Abril (2009) and Fitzpatrick (2022) both focused their case studies on instrumental music teacher-participants and their experiences integrating Mariachi and native Hawaiian musics, respectively. Abril (2009) investigated the experience of a music teacher starting a Mariachi program as a cultural outsider and discussed some of the tensions and challenges the music teacher faced working with her largely Hispanic student population. Fitzpatrick's (2022) case study of four music educators in Hawaii featured two participants teaching instrumental programs. Although three of the four teachers regularly used Hawaiian musical culture in their practice, the participant who taught concert and marching band admitted to integrating less Hawaiian music into their program. Like the teacher in Abril's (2009) study, all teacher participants in Fitzpatrick's (2022) study expressed concerns about presenting Hawaiian musical traditions authentically within the classroom but also added challenges related to time in already busy curricular schedules.

In the empirical studies above, scholars emphasize that positive student outcomes are a result of teacher-to-student connections and students seeing themselves and their community represented in the classroom. These studies all demonstrate that culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly the integration of the local community's musical identity into the music classroom, is possible, but not without challenges for the teacher, whether a cultural insider or outsider. However, based on our review of the literature, empirical studies into the culturally responsive practices of instrumental music teachers are limited, and these studies did not attempt to connect middle level philosophy and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Method

The purpose of this study was to examine one facet of the culturally responsive practices of 5th–8th grade band and orchestra teachers: efforts music teachers made to connect their instrumental programs to the traditional musical genres practiced in the school's local community. We present a content analysis of a single open-ended question featured on a 2020–2021 survey of schools serving grades 5–8 in the U.S. and its territories (Cronenberg & Williams, 2022). The open-ended question featured in this content analysis was: "What efforts have you made to connect your band or orchestra curriculum to traditional genres[2] practiced in

your school's local community?" Through our content analysis, we sought to better understand the challenges and opportunities of culturally responsive pedagogy in ensemble programs. For clarity, we separate these ideas into three independent research questions:

1. What approaches are music teachers attempting to make their band and orchestra ensembles more connected to their communities and culturally responsive to their students?
2. What barriers do music teachers identify that prevent them from making their band and orchestra programs more connected to their communities and culturally responsive to their students?
3. Are music teachers who teach band and orchestra making attempts to modify their curricular choices to represent the local musical traditions of their community?

Population and Data Collection

In Fall 2020, a stratified random sample of 10,727 public and public charter schools serving grades 5–8 were invited to participate in a survey about music learning at their school. Using the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2019) *Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey Data 2018–2019 Preliminary Directory* (the most recent directory available when research began), the 71,523 schools serving grades 5–8 were organized into a 16-cell stratification using a cross-tabulation of the 4 standard U.S. geographical regions (Midwest, Northeast, South, and West) and four researcher-determined grade level groupings (K–5, K–8, 6–8, and Other). A 15% stratified random sample of 10,727 schools was selected (Conroy, 2021). Following internet research, the survey was distributed electronically via Qualtrics to one randomly selected music teacher at each school; paper surveys were mailed to schools where no email address was obtained. The overall response rate of the larger survey was 25.63% (N = 2,749) (Cronenberg & Williams, 2022).

The present study focuses on an open-ended question given, based on survey logic, to 727 (26.46%) survey respondents who specified that their 2020–2021 teaching position included band or orchestra ensembles. Of the 727 music teachers who received the open-ended question, 614 (84.46%) reported teaching at least one grade level of band during 2020–2021 and 206 (28.34%) reported teaching at least one grade level of orchestra during the same academic year. Thirteen percent of the respondents (n = 92) reported teaching at least one grade of both band and orchestra. Of the respondents who received the open-ended question, 28.47% (n = 207) reported holding a bachelor's degree and 49.38% (n = 359) a master's degree.

Six hundred forty-eight (89.13%) respondents identified as White and 55.43% (*n* = 403) identified as women. Respondents to the open-ended question, whose perspectives are represented in the remainder of this paper, are, as a group, slightly younger in age, more likely to identify as White and male, more likely to hold a

Table 1

Comparison of All Survey Respondents and Respondents to Open-ended Question on Select Demographic Variables

Survey Item	All Respondents to Survey N = 1,754		Respondents who Received Open-ended Question N = 727	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Years of Teaching Experience	14.60	10.47	14.71	11.03
Age	41.22	12.52	40.40	12.67
Survey Item	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Gender				
Female	1,122	63.97	403	55.43
Male	527	30.05	295	40.72
Non-Binary	1	0.06	1	0.14
Trans*	4	0.23	1	0.14
Prefer Not to Answer	23	1.31	7	0.96
Missing	77	4.39	19	2.61
Total	*1,754*	*100.00*	*727*	*100.00*
Race (more than one race could be selected)				
American Indian or Alaskan Native	23	1.31	6	0.83
Asian	46	2.62	20	2.75
Black or African American	81	4.62	19	2.61
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	4	0.23	0	0.00
White	1,494	85.18	648	89.13
Prefer Not to Answer	78	4.45	27	3.71
Missing	81	4.62	21	2.89
Pathway to Music Education Certification				
Bachelor's degree program with music education certification	1,262	71.95	565	77.72
Master's degree program with music education certification	146	8.32	67	9.22
Alternate route certification in music education	184	10.49	64	8.80
Certification in a subject outside of music education	57	3.25	6	0.83
No certification or teaching license	30	1.71	7	0.96
Missing	75	4.28	18	2.48
Total	*1,754*	*100.00*	*727*	*100.00*
Highest Degree Earned				
Bachelor's Degree	502	28.62	207	28.47
Some Graduate Credits	289	16.48	121	16.64
Master's Degree	833	47.49	359	49.38
Doctoral Degree	44	2.51	19	2.61
Missing	86	4.90	21	2.89
Total	*1,754*	*100.00*	*727*	*100.00*

master's degree, and more likely to have received certification through traditional certificate routes associated with a bachelor's or master's degree than the overall survey population (see Table 1).

Analysis

Content analysis is "the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics," such as those contained in blog posts or commercials, whether in the form of audio, text, or video (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 1). Thus, it is a useful method of analysis for mining the meaning(s) contained within responses to an open-ended survey question as each open-ended response can be seen as a "message" from the respondent to the researcher. In our work, we used an emergent qualitative coding approach to content analysis rather than using a predetermined set of codes taken from a theoretical framework, as is sometimes done in content analysis (Drisko & Maschi, 2015; Neuendorf, 2017). We chose an emergent coding approach because of the lack of existent literature on culturally responsive pedagogy in the instrumental ensemble classroom to guide an a priori approach. Thus, we worked as a research team to develop and revise a codebook for use in analysis.

Collectively, we used recommended procedures for ensuring interrater reliability in content analysis (Burla et al., 2008; Gwet, 2014; Lombard et al., 2002; O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). First, all four research team members individually reviewed a random sample of 50 responses, took notes, and developed working codes and initial definitions prior to a group meeting where each researcher shared and a consensus was reached on initial codes and definitions (see Table 2). We then used a second sample of 90 responses to practice coding, discuss refinements to code definitions, and ensure intercoder agreement and understanding.

As a team, we refined 22 codes and definitions for use in the analysis of the 727 responses. Using Excel spreadsheets, responses were divided into three data sets, and three research team members were each assigned two sets of responses such that two independent team members coded each response. The lead investigator (who did not complete coding) reviewed all completed coding and identified disagreements. Except for the "Needs More Context" code, a code designed to flag responses for intercoder discussion, the percent agreement for all codes was >80%. Interrater reliability for each code was then calculated in STATA17 using Scott/Fleiss Kappa (Fleiss, 1971; Klein, 2018; Kottner et al., 2011). There were two ratings, three possible raters, and 727 responses for each code. For all codes, except for the "Needs More Context" and "Pedagogy" codes, $K > 0.53$ (see Table 3). The original coders were asked to discuss their disagreements and work to reach a consensus. The lead investigator served as a tie-breaker if consensus was not reached.

Table 2

Final 19 Codes and Code Definitions

Code	Definition
Administrative Restrictions	Responses refer to a teacher's hampered ability due to schedule, administration, staffing, materials, budget, etc.
Attending Performances	Responses refer to activities where students and/or teachers go to performances or are provided with resources to view performances, including virtual performances.
COVID	Responses refer to the COVID-19 pandemic, including references to the limitations of virtual learning.
Doesn't Answer Question	Responses provide information that is not relevant to the question and/or are too unclear to be considered "None". For example, some respondents wrote about classes that were not band or orchestra.
Exposure	Responses imply the desire to expose students to diverse genres.
Guest Artists	Responses refer to bringing in or involving guest artists, including community members, in the classroom or performances.
Needs More Context	Responses were brief and lacking in details. All responses coded for this code were also coded for at least one other code. Code used to identify responses for interrater discussion.
No Diversity	Responses claim that the community is not diverse or that there are no traditional genres present in the community.
None	Responses include: "None", "N/A", "I have not done this", etc.
Non-Standard Ensemble	Responses refer to specific ensembles, beyond athletic, standard, and chamber ensembles.
One or More Specific Traditional Cultural Genres	Responses list one or more genre/traditions; includes references to a religion, race or ethnic group, country, region, place, or genre of music.
Pedagogy	Responses refer to specific teaching practices and/or techniques.
Performing in the Local Area	Responses refer to ensemble performances in local events not including school events.
Repertoire & Programming	Responses refer to repertoire, composers and/or concert programming choices.
Student Choice/Voice	Responses refer to the ability of students to select repertoire or other aspects of the classroom and/or teacher consideration of student interests and opinions.
Student Developmental Stage	Responses mentions students' age, grade, or instrumental ability level.
Teacher Identified Weakness	Responses claim a lack of teacher knowledge, skills, or experience with cultural musics.
Teacher Intent	Responses refer to the desire to implement related practices in teaching or to improve practices. Response may or may not provide reasoning.
Unspecific Traditional Cultural Genre	Responses refer to efforts but do not list specific genres/traditions. Example: world music.

Table 3

Interrater Reliability Results and Final Coding for 19 codes

Code	Final Coding Results (N = 588)		Interrater Reliability** (N = 727)		
	N	%	K	SE	95% CI
Administrative Restrictions[4]	25	4.48	0.66	.07	0.53–0.79
Attending Performances[1]	7	1.25	0.80	.11	0.99–1.00
COVID[4]	46	8.24	0.89	.03	0.83–0.96
Doesn't Answer Question[*]	92	16.49	0.60	.03	0.54–0.66
Exposure[2]	41	7.35	0.54	.07	0.39–0.68
Guest Artists[1]	21	3.76	0.64	.09	0.46–0.82
Needs More Context	137	24.55	0.03	.04	-0.04–0.11
No Diversity[4]	44	7.89	0.82	.04	0.74–0.91
None[*]	195	34.95	0.65	.03	0.59–0.71
Non-Standard Ensembles[3]	30	5.38	0.62	.08	0.46–0.77
One or More Specific Traditional Cultural Genres[3]	136	24.37	0.68	.04	0.51–0.75
Pedagogy[2]	84	15.05	0.47	.06	0.35–0.58
Performing in the Local Area[1]	32	5.73	0.71	.07	0.58–0.85
Repertoire & Programming[2]	142	25.45	0.64	.04	0.57–0.71
Student Choice/Voice[2]	24	4.30	0.63	.07	0.49–0.77
Student Developmental Stage[4]	54	9.68	0.69	.06	0.57–0.80
Teacher Identified Weakness[4]	29	5.20	0.72	.07	0.58–0.86
Teacher Intent[4]	43	7.71	0.53	.07	0.40–0.66
Unspecific Traditional Cultural Genre[3]	153	27.42	0.56	.04	0.48–0.64

Note: Percentages do not add to 100 because individual responses may be coded for multiple codes

[1] *Codes combined to create variable "Beyond the Classroom Walls"*

[2] *Codes combined to create variable "Curricular & Pedagogical Choices"*

[3] *Codes combined create variable "Cultural Music Practices"*

[4] *Codes combined to create variable "Factors that Affected Efforts"*

[*] *None and Doesn't Answer the Question are mutually exclusive codes, but responses could be coded for additional codes.*

** *Scott/Fleiss' Kappa Calculated*

The finalized coding was uploaded to STATA17 for further analysis conducted by the lead investigator.

Initial descriptive statistics for the 22 codes were generated and reviewed. A single response could be coded for multiple codes. The number of codes for a given response ranged from 1 to 9 ($M = 1.97$, $SD = 1.31$). Fifty-one percent of responses were coded for only one of the 22 codes. The 22 codes included three codes that were eliminated during final analysis. The code identifying the 265 responses where the respondent wrote nothing (K not calculated) and the code for responses that were particularly relevant to the research questions ($K = 0.31$) were dropped

from further analysis. In addition, two codes were combined into the single code "None": a code that identified responses where the respondent wrote "none" ($K = 0.65$; SE = .03) and another where the respondent wrote "N/A" or "Not applicable" ($K = 0.82$; SE = .10).

Limitations

Given the nature of our study, it is important to specify its limitations at the outset. One major limitation of our study is the phrasing of the open-ended question on the survey and its interpretation by respondents. We intended the open-ended question to focus on local musics and the connection of these musics to the respondents' instrumental ensembles, but not all respondents interpreted the question in this way. While we anticipated that our phrasing of the open-ended question would elicit multiple interpretations by respondents, we acknowledge that clarity and definition of the question's language might have resulted in different, or perhaps more focused, responses. In particular, our use of the term "traditional genres" in the open-ended question left room for respondents to interpret the meaning of this phrase. While this is a limitation of our study, it also points to a larger issue in the field of music education. Too often, traditional genres are described using negating language, identifying these genres as what they are not (i.e. "non-Western," "non-Classical," etc.), which positions one group of musics as the "standard" by which all others are measured. We acknowledge that our specific refusal to do this in our survey may have caused confusion for some respondents.

Another limitation relates to the four variables discussed in the Results section. In keeping with content analysis procedures, we present our results in the form of four variables derived from specified codes. The language of codes and variables is in keeping with content analysis procedures. These variables are not statistically significant factors with acceptable Cronbach alpha scores as this is not how the term *variable* is used in content analysis. While not completely analogous, *variable*, as it is used in content analysis, more closely mirrors the term theme in qualitative research. Finally, our study examines a single time-point response to an open-ended question on a survey. Thus, while content analysis is an appropriate approach to analyzing the collected data, it is important to acknowledge that we did not follow-up with respondents to ask for clarity or to verify our interpretations of what they wrote. Our findings are not representative of all U.S. middle level instrumental music teachers.

Results

The open-ended survey question featured in this content analysis was: "What efforts have you made to connect your band or orchestra curriculum to traditional genres practiced in your school's local community?" As with most open-ended survey questions, some respondents chose not to answer the open-ended question. The results presented below focus on the 558 responses received, a 76.75% response rate to the question. In keeping with the method and vocabulary of content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017), we reviewed our initial analysis by code and then we combined codes into four variables: Beyond the Classroom Walls, Curricular and Pedagogical Choices, Cultural Music Practices, and Factors that Affected Efforts (see Table 4). In what follows, we present our results at the code and variable level, organized by research question.

Research Question 1: Approaches Attempted by Music Teachers

Research question 1 asked, "What approaches are music teachers attempting to make their band and orchestra ensembles more connected to their communities and culturally responsive to their students?" To answer this question, we examined three of the four variables: Cultural Music Practices, Curricular and Pedagogical Choices, and Beyond the Classroom Walls.

Table 4

Variable Details

Variable Name	Included Codes	N	M	SD	% of 558
Beyond the Classroom Walls	Attending Performances Guest Artists Performing in the Local Area	56	0.08	.27	10.04
Factors that Affected Efforts	Administrative Restrictions COVID No Diversity Student Developmental Stage Teacher Identified Weakness Teacher Intent	181	0.25	.43	32.44
Cultural Music Practices	Non-Standard Ensembles One or More Specific Traditional Genres Unspecific Traditional Genre	249	0.34	.47	44.62
Curricular & Pedagogical Choices	Exposure Pedagogy Repertoire & Programming Student Choice/Voice	212	0.29	.45	37.99

The Cultural Music Practices variable combined three codes: "non-standard ensembles," "one or more specific traditional cultural genres," and the "unspecific traditional cultural genre" code. Nearly half of all responses (44.62%) were coded for the Cultural Music Practices variable. A small number of respondents ($n = 30$) indicated that they had developed non-standard ensembles as part of their band or orchestra program. For example, responses such as "we created a Mariachi program back in 2011 and it has grown tremendously since" provide an example of one type of non-standard ensemble (Mariachi) that some music teachers have developed. While only 30 respondents mentioned developing a specific ensemble, 44.44% ($n = 248$) of respondents referenced the use of traditional genres as part of their band or orchestra curriculum. In fact, the two most frequently used codes in our analysis were unspecific cultural genres ($n = 153$, 27.42%) and specific cultural genres ($n = 136$, 24.37%). For example, one respondent coded for a specific genre shared, "our fiddle/accordion club practices Cajun music [which] keeps our culture alive and teaches the younger generation to appreciate it." Likewise, some respondents were less specific and did not name a particular genre, like this respondent who wrote, "I choose ensemble music that identifies with specific cultures represented at my school, and I volunteer my whole group or small groups to perform at Multicultural nights in our community." Only 41 responses were coded for both the "one or more specific cultural genres" and the "unspecific traditional cultural genre" codes. For example, the response below contains a specific reference to Mariachi and unspecific references to "world music." This particular respondent also uses some common, but imprecise terminology, such as "Spanish" and "Indigenous," which made coding of some responses challenging.

> Mariachi is a big genre in our community, as we have 90% Hispanic/Latino students. The tunes we learn include lots of Spanish and traditional mariachi music. Additionally, I include world music (Indigenous) in my curriculum and have a focus of the month about different cultures. We are currently expanding the mariachi programs in our elem./middle schools (already in HS).

Nearly half of the respondents discussed an approach to their ensemble curriculum represented in the Cultural Music Practices variable, suggesting that strategies related to integrating genres or new ensembles into an instrumental program may be a prominent approach currently employed by instrumental ensemble teachers.

The Curricular and Pedagogical Choices variable included the following codes: student choice/voice, exposure, and repertoire/programming.[3] Responses coded for this variable, such as the one below, contained language indicating that the respondents drew upon students' experiences, identities, and opinions when

making choices about providing culturally relevant experiences in the instrumental ensemble.

> *Many of my students are immigrants. . . . Each year, I conduct a survey of students about the types of music they enjoy. I help them learn to play music in those genres. How much traditional music this includes, and which traditions are represented, depends on their answers.*

Over 37% of responses were coded for the Curricular and Pedagogical Choices variable. The curricular and pedagogical choices made by the music teachers varied. Some teachers focused on exposing students to diverse musical genres and composers.

> *I work in a rural county school, I try to play as much spirituals and gospel music [as] I can arrange for my bands. I also try to expand their musical ear by playing different genres of music while the students enter the room.*

Other teachers described asking students to share their musical preferences or musical talents with the class in order to draw on student experience and musical expertise.

> *We have talent days in class once a month where students can perform. We often have students bring in other instruments to perform on. Mostly fiddle. I show video performances to the students, and make them aware of live performances when they occur. We discuss different styles of music, and occasionally will read through a variety of styles.*

The responses above are indicative of the Curricular and Pedagogical Choices variable because respondents placed the students' experience at the center of curricular decisions in alignment with both culturally responsive pedagogy and middle level philosophy.

The Beyond the Classroom Walls variable also provides another avenue for considering the approaches music teacher respondents have used to integrate traditional genres from their local community. This variable includes approaches such as taking students on field trips to see performances, bringing in guest artists to share in the classroom, and arranging for students to share their musical skills with the larger community. Thus, they are drawing upon more knowledgeable experts in the community to augment their curriculum, as these three teachers shared:

> *The predominant non-white culture in this community consists of members of the local Native American tribe. If I am able to continue teaching at this school, post-COVID, I plan to invite local guest performers and teachers, and attempt*

to incorporate their own songs and drumming styles into our music curriculum. I currently have one native high school flutist who is working with me to connect with local tribal members who play the native flute to see if we can at least begin this project, even during COVID.

If there are any cultural events that present these traditional genres, I investigate opportunities for the students and me to attend. I also look for online opportunities to share with them.

World music/genres are embedded in percussion repertoire, instruments and ensembles. We also bring in guest artists each year to do cultural and musical units on African and Afro-Cuban drumming as well as Jazz Drumming.

Only ten percent of respondents discussed efforts to enhance their students' experiences with field trips, guest artists, and other external sources of musical knowledge, which may be due to the timing of data collection during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Question 2: Barriers to Culturally Responsiveness in Instrumental Ensembles

Research question 2, "What barriers do music teachers identify that prevent them from making their band and orchestra programs more connected to their communities and culturally responsive to their students?," was addressed through the variable that we called Factors that Affected Efforts. Of the respondents to the question, 181 or 32.44% identified factors that made the integration of cultural musics difficult in their program. Although nearly a third of respondents identified factors that affected their efforts to integrate cultural musics, between 28.51% and 31.63% of these responses were also coded for the Beyond the Classroom Walls, Curricular and Pedagogical Choices, and Cultural Musics variables, indicating that they made attempts despite difficulties in doing so. Nearly half ($n = 84$, 43.08%) of the responses coded for the Factors that Affected Efforts variable were also coded for "None." One example of a response coded for both "None" and included in the Factors that Affected Efforts variable is this response: "None, I wouldn't know where to start. . . the school and church are the most musical places in the community." Thus, respondents who had made efforts and those who reported no efforts both identified barriers to their ability to connect their ensemble program to the local community. The factors that affected efforts can be grouped into categories based on the people involved: students, administrator, or the individual music teacher.

The first category of responses focused on a student-level barrier. As most fifth through eighth grade instrumentalists are beginning- or early intermediate-level musicians, the available repertoire is somewhat limited. This student developmental stage barrier is best explained by the following response from an orchestra teacher:

> *I teach 5th and 6th grade strings which means they are first year and second year players. This means that most of them have never really read music before, much less played an instrument. So, I teach songs mostly out of method books which do include a variety of different cultural songs, but not a lot in one particular style. I would love to do fiddling music with them or mariachi, but it's hard to find scores that are their level.*

This sentiment was echoed throughout our data, such as a teacher who identified their students as "primarily Indian, Middle Eastern, and East Asian" and who stated "there is very little rep available at their [level] that is based in these musical traditions and what does exist is not very good." While this barrier is directly linked to the middle level students' abilities as musicians, it also points out a limitation within the music education field related to existing graded repertoire, exercises in beginning method books, and the prominence of the Western classical paradigm.

The second barrier respondents acknowledged was related to challenges with administrative restrictions, whether specifically related to the COVID-19 pandemic or other expectations set by school or district administrators. Specifically, many administrative restrictions focused on the lack of adequate curricular time in the schedule and the pressure to prepare for mandated concerts or contests. One respondent shared that "we are very limited on the amount of time that we have to prepare for our Winter concert (mid-December) and then again for our spring concert (mid-April)[, and this] doesn't leave us a lot of time to venture beyond our standard music." This respondent continued by explaining that their program is "limited on funds for ordering new music[, and I] have to pull from our current library of music." In addition to these administrative barriers, many respondents shared responses detailing new administrative restrictions or complete cancellation of ensembles due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, one respondent shared, "I have been pursuing the possibility of incorporating a mariachi program in our school, but in part due to COVID-19, that plan is on the back burner." Another respondent said, "teaching on the [Tribal Nation], I have made an effort to reach out to local indigenous ensembles to collaborate with my music program[, and] I plan on reaching out again hopefully when the pandemic clears up."

While not specifically a barrier related to their school administrators, some respondents (n = 44, 8%) reported that their community lacked diversity upon

which to draw for their curriculum. For example, one respondent wrote: "Not at all. There is not much of that sort of thing in our rural community." We were unable to clarify what this respondent meant by "that sort of thing," although during analysis, we interpreted this as "lack of diversity." Of the respondents who indicated no diversity in their local communities, the vast majority (n = 43, 97.73%) identified their race as White. No statistically significant difference was found in the No Diversity code between White respondents (M = 0.07, SD = 0.25) and respondents identifying as a person of color (M = 0.02, SD = 0.15); t(1.77) = 61.8104, p = .0818.[4]

The third set of barriers were those that the respondents identified about themselves as teachers. Some teachers shared that they intended to integrate cultural musics into their instrumental ensemble programs, but had been unsuccessful or not yet able to do so. These respondents described plans that fell through, the uncertainty of their position within the school, or attempts to reach out to community musicians that did not succeed. For example, one respondent shared that they had "made many attempts, with varying degrees of success, to incorporate the music of the local indigenous music, [but found] the tribe reluctant at allowing access to information and the tribal members with the historical knowledge." Similarly, a beginning teacher shared that "although this is my fourth year teaching music, this is my second year teaching band, [and] I have not yet found a way to connect the curriculum to traditional genres practiced in the local community." Other teachers expressed lack of personal experience with cultural musics, concerns over their own cultural identity, and lack of musical knowledge as barriers to incorporating cultural musics. For example, one respondent wrote:

> *I'm in my first year teaching and am thus still familiarizing myself with the programs already available. Many schools in [my state] have strong mariachi programs, but I also don't feel I'd be comfortable teaching a mariachi class as I am white, did not grow up in that culture, and haven't been taught it by people of Mexican descent.*

Research Question 3: Connections to Local Community Musical Traditions

Our final research question asked, "Are music teachers who teach band and orchestra making attempts to modify their curricular choices to represent the local musical traditions of their community?" Overall, our results suggest that middle level ensemble teacher respondents are divided. Over half of all responses (n = 299, 53.58%) were coded for at least one of the three variables discussed in research question one: Cultural Music Practices, Curricular and Pedagogical Choices, and Beyond the Classroom Walls.[5] This suggests that at least half of the music teachers who answered the open-ended question are making attempts (and in many

cases, multiple attempts) to modify their ensemble learning environments based on their local community. An additional 193 respondents to the question (34.95%) reported no attempts to integrate the cultures of their local communities in the classroom, explicitly writing responses such as "None," "N/A" or "I have not done this," rather than leaving the question blank. Thus, our results suggest that some middle level band and orchestra teacher respondents are indeed attempting to integrate the local traditions into their programs, but that not all music educator respondents are doing so.

Finally, there were two statistically significant differences between those who reported teaching band only or band and orchestra in 2020–2021 and those who only taught orchestra (see Table 5). First, a statistically significant difference was found in the variable Cultural Music Practices between those who taught band ($M = 0.32$, $SD = 0.47$) and those who did not ($M = 0.48$, $SD = 0.50$); $t(149.68) = 3.1548$, $p = 0.0019$. Second, a statistically significant difference was found in the variable Curricular & Pedagogical Choices between those who taught band ($M = 0.26$, $SD = 0.44$) and those who did not ($M = 0.44$, $SD = 0.50$); $t(145.99) = 3.5589$, $p = 0.0005$.[6] In both cases, those who taught only orchestra were more likely to provide responses coded for the Cultural Music Practices and the Curricular & Pedagogical Choices variables.

Table 5

Independent Group T-tests for Variables Respondents who Taught Band or Orchestra

Variable Name	Teaches Band	N*	M	SD	t	df	Pr(|T|>|t|)
Beyond the Classroom Walls	No	113	0.04	0.21	-1.7326	193.996	0.0847
	Yes	614	0.08	0.28			
Factors that Affected Efforts	No	113	0.27	0.44	0.4326	153.456	0.6659
	Yes	614	0.25	0.43			
Cultural Music Practices	No	113	0.48	0.50	3.1548	149.681	0.0019
	Yes	614	0.32	0.47			
Curricular & Pedagogical Choices	No	113	0.44	0.50	3.5589	145.989	0.0005
	Yes	614	0.26	0.44			

Note: Unequal variances assumed, Satterthwaite's approximation calculated.
*93 respondents reported teaching both band and orchestra during 2020–2021. These respondents are grouped as band teachers for this analysis. N for all t-tests includes the blank responses for a total of 727. For orchestra this includes 24 (21.24%) respondents who left the question blank. For band, this includes 145 (23.62%) respondents who left the question blank: 128 band respondents and 17 respondents who taught both ensembles.

Discussion

In this study, we sought to understand if and how music educators were integrating local cultural musics into their band and orchestra programs and striving to be culturally responsive to their student population. Our original open-ended question addressed a specific aspect of culturally responsive pedagogy—the musical traditions of the local community—and thus contributes to a limited but growing body of research in music education related to culturally responsive pedagogy.

Moving Beyond Diversification

One challenge we faced in this analysis was how each respondent interpreted our open-ended question. Some respondents reported programming music by diverse composers as their primary approach to connecting their programs to the local community. While we acknowledge the importance of exposing students to diverse composers and repertoire through both listening and performing, we see a difference between diversifying and connecting within an instrumental program. Our project aimed to learn how instrumental music educators connected their programs to the traditional genres of the wider local community and the identities of their students. While important, only diversifying composers or genres does not specifically connect curricular choices to students and the community's musics in order to validate students' backgrounds, knowledge, experience, and identities, thus strengthening students' cultural competence (Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b). We acknowledge that the instrumental ensemble traditions labeled "band" and "orchestra" in the United States have historical traditions, repertoires, and instrumentations that are important forms of music learning. Thus, investigations into the decision-making processes of instrumental ensemble teachers who choose or choose not to modify or expand their program beyond common conventions are important future inquiries in music education. Perhaps the initial efforts described here will catalyze future studies or encourage music teachers to consider ways to move beyond diversification both within and beyond the conventions of U.S. band and orchestra. We hope that by connecting to the local community in both big and small ways, music teachers can subsequently become more responsive to their individual middle level students' multifaceted identities.

Challenges with Existing Repertoire

Undoubtedly, repertoire featured in method books and graded repertoire lists are central to the curricular and instructional decisions of many band and orchestra teachers. As respondents noted, beginning method books appropriate

for middle level learners provide a variety of folk melodies from across the globe. However, there is no existing method book that provides extensive exposure to one or more musical cultures beyond the conventional band or orchestra repertoire. In addition to providing listening examples, some respondents mentioned arranging music for their ensembles. While we applaud these individual efforts by teachers, we wonder if all instrumental music educators are prepared in preservice with the ability to arrange or compose context-specific and culturally responsive repertoire. Composers and arrangers might consider producing method book supplements in the future that focus on a few select musical genres or developing new arrangements explicitly designed for the skill limitations of beginning instrumentalists.

During analysis, we noticed that the musical cultures mentioned by respondents did not reflect all possible student identities across the United States. For instance, absent from many of the responses were ways in which music teachers connected to the cultural backgrounds of African American, East or South Asian students, among others, and the global popular culture identities of all students. One respondent suggested that South and East Asian musical traditions were inaccessible to beginning instrumentalists, which may be one consideration for the field. Likewise, another music teacher described a large Latinx and African American population at their school which led them to "program African American composers and arrangers, and [introduce] the ideas of different drum cadences from various African American and Hispanic backgrounds while understanding that neither one of those ethnicities are a monolith of a culture." This somewhat vague response leads us to ask if music educators are receiving adequate knowledge and skills regarding the diverse African and African American traditions that permeate American musics. We encourage scholars with knowledge and experience in these less-mentioned cultural and popular musics to develop appropriate and accessible resources. One way we suggest that the field do this is to examine state MEA graded repertoire lists and ensure that these lists adequately reflect a given state's demographics. Future researchers might also investigate if the field's advocacy for certain music cultures, such as Mariachi, has resulted in the neglect of other music cultures.

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Our results suggest that middle level instrumental music teachers identify their knowledge and experiences as a significant barrier to integrating local traditional music cultures into their program, a finding that parallels existing research (Abril, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2022). We were surprised that many respondents expressed self-doubt, provided excuses, or underestimated their efforts while simul-

taneously describing initial efforts that clearly connected with the local community. For example, this respondent embodies the contradiction we found in many responses: "That's simply not possible—there is too much pressure to prepare the students for traditional performances (parades, concerts, recitals), although I do make an effort to program music that relates to our community's dual Mexican/Portuguese heritages." Despite obvious efforts to connect, what is it that makes music teachers feel that their efforts are inadequate? How do instrumental music teachers understand and value their efforts at cultural responsiveness? How can preservice and inservice professional development provide music educators with the needed skills and confidence?

While many U.S. music education preservice degree plans include an introductory ethnomusicology course, preservice educators also need immersion in culturally responsive pedagogy, hands-on engagement in non-Western ensembles, instruction on how to integrate traditional cultural musics into the classroom, tools for learning about the local school community, and instruction on the intersection of culturally responsive pedagogy and middle level philosophy. Some preservice programs do this well, but the results of our study suggest that many practicing middle level instrumental music teachers feel that their skills are inadequate. For inservice music educators, turning to the middle level students in the classroom as knowledgeable experts is a powerful learning tool that enables young adolescents to see themselves reflected in the curriculum (Bishop & Harrison, 2021; Harrison et al., 2019). Thus, when a teacher asks their students about musical preferences (as one respondent shared) and then integrates these preferences into the curriculum, young adolescents begin to understand that their identity is valued within the school community and develop personal cultural competence.

Differences between Band and Orchestra

In our study, we found that music teachers who taught orchestra, while a smaller group of teachers, were statistically more likely to describe practices coded for the Curricular & Pedagogical Choices variable and the Cultural Music Practices variable (see Table 5). While it is beyond the scope of our study to speculate why this difference exists, future researchers might investigate this difference. For example, do orchestra programs have unique features that make them more conducive to integrating local community musics or integrating culturally responsive pedagogical practices? Does the instrumentation of the string ensemble lend itself better to local community musics, such as Appalachian or Cajun fiddle? Are Mariachi programs being developed primarily by band or orchestra teachers? These and other research questions may help illuminate any differences between the con-

ventional instrumental ensembles in U.S. schools and guide music teachers toward more culturally responsive practices.

The Instrumental Ensemble at the Middle Level

Middle level scholars argue that all teachers who work with young adolescents should be aware of the multiple identities (cognitive, social, physical, religious, ethnic, economic, gender, dis/ability, etc.) that comprise each individual student. According to Bishop and Harrison (2021), "middle grades educators who value young adolescents acknowledge these multiple and intersecting identities and seek to cultivate relationships, design curriculum, and establish learning environments that support, affirm, and honor youth holistically" (p. 11). While a middle level student's musical developmental stage presents some challenges to instrumental music educators, these students' holistic development cannot be set-aside as separate from their musical abilities. In many cases, young adolescents are cognitively and socially more mature than the repertoire they can play on their instrument, and acutely aware when the conventions of band and orchestra do not reflect their personal cultural or ethnic heritage(s). Finding the appropriate balance between musical ability level as beginning instrumentalists and other aspects of student identity is vital for music educators who strive to be culturally responsive middle level educators.

Considering Critical Consciousness

One important component of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) is the development of students' critical consciousness. Given the open-ended question, we could not expect that music teacher respondents would provide answers that addressed the development of a students' critical consciousness, and we found no response that did so. Although beyond the scope of this study, it is important for instrumental music teachers to consider how they might cultivate students' critical consciousness in the future. To move deeper into culturally responsive pedagogy, instrumental music teachers might ask their students to become critics of the ensemble repertoire being studied and investigate why the repertoire may not reflect their identities and the identity of their community. Alternatively, teachers might challenge students to consider what action they might take to help the teacher make curricular or pedagogical changes that better reflect the school and local community, such as polling their friends and family for repertoire preferences or looking to local musicians for expertise. Exercises such as these help to develop students' critical consciousness and ability to function as independent and active learners who are self-aware and strong critical thinkers, essential skills for young adolescents (Bishop & Harrison, 2021).

Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the efforts middle level instrumental ensemble teachers have made to integrate the musics of the local community into their curriculum. As educators committed to culturally responsive pedagogy, we are heartened to learn about the steps many instrumental music teachers are taking to better connect their programs to the identities of their students and the local community. However, our findings indicate that many legitimate barriers impede instrumental music teachers in their efforts to engage fully with culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly their lack of knowledge or confidence, an issue that music teacher educators might address. Thus, we look forward to a future in which more music educators can integrate their students' identities and local cultural musics into the classroom because the field of music education has endowed them with the knowledge, skills, and resources to do so effectively.

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Endnotes

[1]The research presented in this paper was conducted by undergraduate music education students in the Rutgers Aresty Research Assistant Program under the guidance of the first author. These students have since graduated from undergraduate and contributed to the drafting of this paper. The authors would like to thank Dr. Brandon Williams for his feedback on this paper.

[2]Throughout this paper, we use the phrase "traditional genres" to reflect the language of the open-ended question. Codes using the language "traditional cultural genres" are meant to reflect the same concept. While other phrases exist in the literature and each is somewhat imprecise, here we mean those musical genres outside of the conventional band and orchestra ensemble repertoire. Traditional genres might include,

but are not limited to, genres native to the U.S. such as Bluegrass or Hip-Hop as well as genres imported from around the globe such as Mariachi or Gamelan.

[3]We acknowledge an overlap between the specific and unspecific traditional genres codes and the codes focused on exposure and repertoire/programming. The exposure and repertoire/programming codes were used when respondents described curricular or pedagogical choices they were making whereas the specific and unspecific traditional genre codes were used when respondents named particular genres for any reason.

[4]Independent group t-tests, unequal variances assumed, Satterthwaite's approximation calculated. Due to low counts for individual races, all respondents identifying as a person of color were combined for analysis ($n = 45$); White respondents ($n = 661$). Similar independent group t-tests using race were also calculated for each of the four variables discussed in research question 1 and research question 2. There were no statistically significant findings on these four tests.

[5]Two hundred and eighteen (72.91%) of the 299 responses were coded for more than one of these variables.

[6]Unequal variances assumed, Satterthwaite's approximation calculated on all t-tests.