

The Asian American Musical Experience: Teacher Perceptions through the Lens of  
Critical Race Theory

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By

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## **Abstract**

### **THE ASIAN AMERICAN MUSICAL EXPERIENCE: TEACHER PERCEPTIONS THROUGH THE LENSE OF CRITICAL RACE THEORY**

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Asian American students have long been perceived as musically and academically gifted. However, recent studies have shown that stereotypes and discrimination impact the mental health, educational opportunities, and identities of these populations. Additionally, with music education's history of appropriation of Asian culture and exclusion of Asian American voices, it is imperative that the long held beliefs of Asian model minorities are dismantled. The purpose of this study was to identify whether music teachers undergo anti-racism training through their employment or education, and whether or not this training includes Asian American experiences. A survey was distributed to music educators ( $N=134$ ) containing dichotomous questions and Likert-type statements on the topics of anti-racism training, general beliefs about racial issues, and beliefs on Asian American issues. Results indicated that while a majority of participants experience some level of anti-racism training, many continue to hold beliefs



in line with colorblind discourse and model minority stereotypes towards the Asian American population.

## **Chapter 1: Background**

### **Introduction**

In the past 20 years, the Asian American population in America has grown rapidly. Between 2000 and 2015, Asians had the fastest population growth of any racial or ethnic group in America, with a 72% increase for a total of 20.4 million people (Lopez & Pattern, 2017). This population represents 48 different countries, which are recognized by the United Nations (U.S. Census, 2019). In turn, these changes are reflected in the demographics of the United States education system. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, Asian-American students make up approximately 5% of the total population of school aged children (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019).

These realities add to the increased diversity in our public school populations, and advocates have pushed for a less Eurocentric curriculum that better represents minority students. Music classrooms are no exception, as more and more educators are finding ways to (a) incorporate repertoire by Asian composers, (b) incorporate repertoire with Asian themes, and (c) teach elements of Asian music and culture (Volk, 1993). Despite increased efforts to represent the Asian population in the education curriculum, racial bias, stereotypes, and bullying still continue to exist in schools, as well as the silencing and neglect of social justice issues relating to the Asian-American experience (Patel,

2014). Additionally, while many educators embrace the needed for representation and social justice education, few are provided the training or tools they need in order to reverse educational systems that were built on white supremacy<sup>1</sup>. Understanding the structures that contribute to bias against Asian-Americans is imperative to reverse racial injustice faced by these populations, and to educate the next generation to continue the fight for social justice and acceptance.

A number of issues arise when educators attempt to teach music related to Asian culture. Diversity training for educators often promote the teaching of diverse content, but such training often excludes instruction on how to teach this content in a way that (a) is culturally sensitive and (b) recognizes the types of systematic injustices that minority groups experience. Many problems arise: *essentialism*, which involves the attribution of simple characteristics to a diverse group; *exoticism*, which treats a racial/ethnic group as an oddity; *Othering*, which labels non-white groups as an out-group in society (Hess, 2017); and *educational/musical tourism*, the practice of exposing students to non-white cultures purely for entertainment, rather than critical reflection and deeper understanding (Wasiak, 2009); to name a few of the issues. While some educators mean well when introducing non-Western musics and composers, many fall into one of these two traps, thus adding to systematic racism instead of rejecting it.

It should also be noted that the materials and repertoire employed by educators can often perpetuate essentialized and exoticized stereotypes, as opposed to promoting

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<sup>1</sup> For the purpose of this manuscript, the Critical Race Theory definition of white supremacy will be used, which is the systematic and historically situated oppression of black, indigenous, and people of color through the normalization of practices that privilege the interests of White people.

diversity (J.W. Pepper, 2020). Repertoire that introduces the musics of other cultures may employ offensive and stereotypical language, imagery, and/or themes. Well-intentioned educators hoping to include more diverse content in their classrooms may then unintentionally echo and promote these stereotypes. Lack of education for music teachers on terminology and offensive stereotypes relegated to different racial groups may cause them to have certain harmful perceptions of their students based on their race, or to even say hurtful remarks without necessarily the intention to cause harm. Understanding the difficulties that Asian-Americans face due to their racial/ethnic grouping, as well as knowing how to avoid perpetuating the same racist beliefs is necessary to provide a positive educational experience for Asian-American students. Doing so can help to promote inclusivity and acceptance for all students. Music's role as a cultural artifact and a conduit for identity development indicates how imperative it is for music educators to consider their curriculum, teaching strategies, and their own words and actions.

## **Background**

### ***Multiculturalism in Music Education***

The Civil Rights movement in the 1960s spurred the push for increased representation in the realm of education for black and other minority populations (Gorski, 1999). These efforts led to the establishment of the multiculturalist movement, which was characterized by efforts to include BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and their experiences in the curriculum as a means to abandon the Eurocentric foundations of the public education system. Multiculturalism made its way into the field of music education with the 1967 Tanglewood Symposium, that featured discussions on diversifying the

curriculum through the incorporation of musics outside the Western Classical canon (Volk, 1993). These ideas continued to permeate in music education research. For example, the *Journal for Research in Music Education* published three Special Focus Issues on multiculturalism in 1972, 1983, and 1992, and the Music Educators' National Conference continues to host workshops showcasing the music of non-Western cultures, and how to teach these musics to students (Volk, 1993).

Despite long-standing multiculturalist views in music education as well as abundance of resources, a lack of representation and misrepresentation continue to prevail in music classrooms, as well as racist practices and perceptions (Elpus & Abril, 2019). The belief that students should be exposed to cultures and perspectives different from their own has been around for over 60 years, and yet oppression and discriminatory practices still continue to exist for marginalized populations in education. Critics of the multiculturalist perspective point out that many multiculturalist research and texts uses language that treats these non-white cultures as exotic others while including them in the curriculum. One only needs to look through the “international” tab of popular music distributor J.W. Pepper’s website to understand the prevalence of language that others and essentializes non-White cultures in multiculturalist literature (J.W. Pepper, 2020). In addition, the idea that music educators should be required to teach the musics of cultures with which they have little experience creates the same issue. Teachers wielding similar exoticizing and essentializing rhetoric as the resources they employ allows them to fall into the pitfalls of oversimplification compared to their knowledge and teaching of European classical musics. Even teaching tactics utilize Western ideologies, as most

instrumental music classrooms prioritize the voice of the conductor/teacher over the players/students (Hess, 2017). These critiques have led to a shift away from multiculturalism in order to find a better way to represent marginalized populations, as well as address inequalities in education and society as a whole.

While multiculturalists work to expand school content that represents marginalized groups, they avoid directly addressing issues of inequality and injustice with students in by using broad neutral terms like “diversity” and “social justice”. While done with good intent, the attempt to be politically correct by using coded language and avoiding divisive topics further silences the issues surrounding race, gender, neurodiversity, LGBT+, etc.; issues that many students from marginalized populations already experience on a daily basis (Hess,2017). These ideas promote *colormuteness*, which is the perception that race is not a topic that teachers can discuss with students, often due to fear of being controversial, retaliation by administrators, parents, and students, fear of uncomfortable discussions, and social mannerisms dictating that ignoring race is seen as a liberal virtue (Bradley, 2012, p. 191). This perpetuates the myth of meritocracy; the idea that all people can succeed with hard work disregarding systemic inequalities.

### ***Critical Race Theory***

*Critical Race Theory (CRT)* is a movement that originated around the 1980s by scholars of color to criticize mainstream Civil Rights discourse in the field of law. These theories center around two main goals; to understand how white supremacy has been maintained in America through social and structural institutions, and to understand and

change the relationship between racial power and law (Crenshaw et al., 2000). CRT scholars seek to dismantle the institutionalized and normalized structures of white supremacy found in American institutions.

In education, CRT emerged as a critique to the ideas fueling multiculturalism. Depouw (2018, p.3) outlines some of the key tenets to CRT in education which we can then apply to music education:

1. “Recognition that race is endemic to American life, including its institutions”

From the discussion about multiculturalism, we can conclude that issues surrounding race permeate in the music classroom. The “intolerable whiteness” of the music curriculum in repertoire and practice, the lack of diverse representation of teachers, students, performers, and composers, and the overall damage that schooling has on marginalized populations are some of the racial issues students and teachers will face in music education (Hess, 2017). In addition, students and teachers have race related experiences on a daily basis, and it’s important for educators and students to be aware of these experiences outside of school, and how it affects learning in school.

2. “Skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness, and meritocracy, which is often articulated as a critique of liberalism”

Hess (2017) elaborates on the second point in regards to music education.

Educators often avoid discussing controversial topics, such as race in the classroom in favor of vague support of equality and diversity. However, Hess states that, “when educators prioritize ‘meaning well’ or good intentions over the

effect of erasing race from discourse in these instances, we miss opportunities to consider what such erasure does both in our own language and in the language practices of the students we teach” (Hess, 2017, p. 18). In other words, when we chose to avoid controversial subjects in order to avoid offending populations or starting conflict in the classroom, we erase the importance of these issues. As such, students don’t gain the skills and tools they need to fight injustices they face, and the oppression of their peers. While the point mentions legal claims, music educators have direct influence over these terms through their use of language and connection of music to issues in society. Directly addressing issues of neutrality (not taking sides, and therefore ignoring systematic oppression), objectivity (treating others as they treat you, ignoring the impact of implicit bias), colorblindness (“I don’t see color”, ignoring both the struggles and cultural differences of others) and the myth of meritocracy (value based on ability only, which ignores white and male privilege), is necessary for students to conceptualize their own experiences and the experiences of others, within the realm of music making (Hess, 2017).

3. “Challenges to ahistoricism and insists on contextual and historical analyses of the law”

All music comes with historical, social, and political contexts. These elements add to a deeper, more holistic understanding of a piece of music. Ahistoricism rejects these elements, as is found in music classrooms in which educators focus solely on technical and aesthetic properties of music (Elliot & Silverman, 2014).



Incorporating historical, social, and political contexts of music allows for students to not only have a greater understanding of the music, but to gain a deeper understanding of music's role in society, and teach important skills and knowledge required to expunge the inequalities found in all aspects of American society (Hess, 2017).

4. "Recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and communities of origin in analyzing law and society"

In the realm of music, there are many organizations that focus on uplifting the voices of marginalized populations, who have long been silenced. In music education, teachers need to be given training at the collegiate and professional level that reflects the voices of those silenced populations. Recognizing the experiential knowledge of communities of color and ensuring their voices are heard above all others is necessary to validate the experiences of those directly affected by institutional inequality. In the music classroom, teachers must ensure that students of marginalized populations are heard equally to their non-marginalized peers, and that their voices are heard when they bring to light issues they may be facing. This is especially true when discussing issues related to oppression. The experiential knowledge of the oppressed need to be heard above all others.

5. “The need for interdisciplinary scholarship”

The field of social justice does not only affect a single discipline. The fight against ableism, racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. needs to be present in all disciplines. Music does not exist in an insular world, but interacts with and is affected by a number of different disciplines. For example, this paper incorporates music, education, music education, history, politics, race studies, Asian American studies, feminist theory, and linguistics. Teacher education must reflect the interconnectedness of music education to other fields of study, and teachers must then incorporate this into their classroom to demonstrate how music connects to other disciplines (Elliot & Silverman, 2014). Interdisciplinary scholarship is also necessary to study intersectionality of student experiences.

6. “Activist work toward the elimination of racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression.”

Music serves an important purpose. As a form of cultural transmission, music can have an impact on the ideologies and actions of its consumers (Elliot & Silverman, 2014). Teachers in music classrooms need to not only be actively anti-racist/sexist/ableist/homophobic/etc. in their classrooms, but they need to equip students with the tools to fight racial injustice in their lives outside of the classroom. The same way we teach students how to actively combat bullying, drug use, and deal with emergency situations, we need to teach students how to stand up to everyday injustice against themselves, others, and for their

communities. These topics can no longer be treated as controversial issues in education unless we want these issues to endure (Hess, 2017).

### ***The Model Minority Myth***

Asian-Americans are often described as being *Model Minorities* due to their apparent successes economically and socially. Sullivan (2017) describes Asian-Americans as the “most prosperous, well-educated, and successful ethnic group in America” due to their “two-parent family structures, social networks that look after each other...(and) emphasis on education and hard work” (Sullivan, 2017, para. 9). This *Model Minority Myth* is a commonly held belief in America, especially by educators who sing praises of the successes of their Asian students.

While the model minority myth seems like it would benefit Asian-Americans in their fight for political, economic, and social equality in the U.S., it actually presents an *essentialized* view of the incredibly diverse Asian-American population as a whole, forms racial hierarchies and rifts between Asian-Americans and other racial minority groups, and continues to present Asian-Americans as the exoticized, perpetual foreigner towards which racism can be justified. (Blackburn, 2019).

The model minority myth perpetuates a variety of stereotypes, repackaged from former negative stereotypes from pre-World War II to appear as a positive narrative representative of the American Dream. Asian American children are described as “whiz kids” that excel in math, science, and classical music. Mothers of these children are described as being “Tiger Moms” who “force children to work harder and be better than everyone else,” coupled with “nerdy, effeminate dads (who) hold prestigious-but not

leadership-positions in STEM industries” (Blackburn, 2019, para.4). Asian-Americans are presented through the myth as submissive, law-abiding citizens who have found success through hard work, assimilation, and strong family dynamics. This view, promoted by the American government following World War II, has reduced the over 22.2 million people identifying as Asian-American from 48 countries down to a few characteristics (U.S. Census, 2019). In addition, this view overlooks the problems Asian-Americans experience, such as Bhutanese-Americans and other Southeast Asians suffering from higher rates of poverty (Chow, 2017), pay disparities, high suicide rates (Blackburn, 2019), and the sexism inherent in the model minority myth (Ninh, 2014).

Chow (2017) responds to the offensive claims in Sullivan’s (2017) article by exposing the model minority myth as a tactic used by white America to “avoid any responsibility for addressing racism or the damage it continues to inflict” by “ignoring the role that selective recruitment of highly educated Asian immigrants” following WWII, and “racial resentment” that arises from anti-black beliefs (Chow, 2017, para.4). This myth continues to justify the belief that ethnic minorities that don’t see successes as lazy and “self destructive,” rather than attributing the difference in rates of success as a result of structural racism. The successes of Asian-Americans in American society ignore the racist policies such as Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, Japanese internment, and more recently the Patriot Act to promote the idea that America is a place in which people have always been able to succeed with hard work, which disregards the structural racism that continues to prevent these ideals (Chow, 2017). Comparisons of Asian-Americans to African-Americans, Latinxs, and indigenous people disregard the American roots in

slavery and oppression that continues to this day (Darity, 2008). Darity summarizes the impact of this perspective.

“Three ideological streams work together to absolve U.S. society from the perpetuation of inequality: multiculturalism (which promotes bureaucratic diversity and claims to value all “cultures” equally), colorblindness (which promotes individual advancement through merit), and the notion of the “model minority” (which demonstrates that some cultures are superior after all, and it is for this reason that certain “races” succeed in a colorblind merit system). Together these enable the reproduction of inequality and the perpetuation of the American ideology of “fairness” and “justice.” The “model minority” myth, therefore, plays a crucial role in post-civil rights racism.” (Darity, 2008, p. 222)

The model minority myth continues to exoticize Asian-Americans with a stark contrast between the “positive” stereotypes of the model minority compared to the anti-Asian political rhetoric. In a recent example, Anti-China/anti-Asian rhetoric present in the economic rivalry between China and the U.S. became increasingly evident during the COVID-19 crisis, with the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council reporting 1,500 reports of race-based harassment and assaults in one month (Choi, 2020). Over 100 years after the Chinese exclusion act, the idea that the “Chinese are stealing all of our jobs” is still dominant in the discourse of many white American groups (Patel, 2014). Despite the model minority myth claiming Asian-American assimilation into American culture, anti-

Asian rhetoric in political and economic discourse continues to treat Asian-Americans as an out group to be simultaneously feared and ridiculed, preventing them from attaining positions of leadership in political and economic arenas against putative successes (Chow,2017).

### ***Model Minority Myth and Education***

The stereotypes associated with the model minority myth affect how educators and educational policies treat Asian-American children. Asian-American students are perceived to be hardworking and academically gifted students. However, numerous studies have found that while some ethnic groups of Asian-Americans did score above their white peers, many other groups within the umbrella of Asian-American scored far below. A study in California compared scores of different Asian-American/Pacific Islander ethnic groups to the average score for white students in a reading and math standardized test, and found that there were significant gaps between the two groups (Pang, 2011). The perspectives resulting from the model minority myth perpetuates an idea that all Asian students are gifted in academic study, and in turn these students tend to receive less academic assistance from educators than non-Asian students, and are held to higher expectations without adequate support. The pressure of the model minority myth on families also constructed and continues to promote the tiger-parenting style, with Asian students suffering from increased pressures to perform academically and pursue STEM-based careers (Ninh, 2014). The results of this pressure are palpable in mental health reports, where Asian-American college students have exhibited a higher rate of suicide attempts than other ethnic groups (Blackburn, 2019). An article by the American

Psychological Association found similar reports, in which Asian-American students listed sources negatively impacting their mental health, including “parental pressure to succeed in academics,” “pressure to live up to the ‘model minority’ stereotype”, and “discrimination due to racial or cultural background”. As a result, Asian American students were three times less likely to seek mental health support resources (Nishi, 2012, para.2-3). The pressure from educators and parents to perform well academically, in addition to the lack of representation in curriculum and media, negatively affect the development and success of Asian-American students in American public school systems.

### ***Representation of Asians in Media***

Asian-Americans have a long history of racist portrayal in popular media and contemporary pop culture. Media representation of Asians impacts the development of individual identities and shapes how other groups treat and interact with Asian-Americans (Besana, 2020). A study by Besana (2020) analyzed the portrayal of Asian-Americans in films in the last 25 years, and found that while they were obtaining more lead roles in recent years, the prevalence of stereotype-confirming roles remained. Many popular children’s TV shows like *Jesse* and *Phineas and Ferb* and shows like *The Simpsons* and *The Big Bang Theory* features characters that portray racist caricatures of Asians. These caricatures demonstrate a slew of negative stereotypes, depicting male characters of Asian descent that are academically gifted but socially awkward, cowardly, and submissive who have thick accents and are often physically weak and/or deemed unattractive.

The portrayal and fetishization of Asian women exists alongside these stereotypes, as East and Southeast Asian women in media are depicted as “mindless, simpering dolls...eager to please their white master” perpetuating the neocolonial idea that “good elements of a native society, like a good woman, desire submission to the masculine West” (Rajgopal, 2010, para. 20). Asian women from the Middle East see similar stereotypes with the added “half-naked, belly-dancing” and “burqa-covered victims of the Taliban” characters. Rajgopal’s (2010) analysis of Asian characters in movies identifies these caricatures, noting that the portrayal of these women as “traditional, veiled, and inhabiting a separate sphere adds to this representation of Asian cultures as pre-modern and irrevocably opposed to the West” (Rajgopal, 2010, para.1). For students, exposure to these negative essentialized and exoticized portrayals of Asian-Americans can lead to issues with self identity, sexual harassment, and bullying.

The recent trend in popular media featuring or created by Asian-Americans has garnered controversy and exposed the long held practices of racist caricature of Asians in American pop culture. Recently popular American movies like *Crazy Rich Asians* and *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before* challenge stereotypes associated with Asian-Americans by featuring characters with diverse personalities, careers, and abilities, as opposed to the caricature of Asians as sushi chef, kung fu warriors, sex slaves, IT techs and bookish nerds with thick accents and submissive, fragile personalities (Lee, 2018).

### ***Representation of Asians in Music***

Similar themes are found in both contemporary and historical musics. Western classical literature is rife with Asian exoticism, with operatic works like *The Mikado*,



*Madame Butterfly*, *Das Land Des Lächelns*, and *Turandot* depicting caricatures of Asian culture. These works employ yellow-face through the cultural appropriation of music and dress, not to mention the fetishization of Asian women. All four of these works continue to be performed by major opera companies in America. Contemporary pop music also employs these themes, with recent controversy over “Chun-Li” by Nicki Minaj, and other songs like “Get Right Witcha” and “Stir Fry” by Migos, “Im In It” by Kanye West (Chow, 2018), and Katy Perry’s performance of “Unconditionally” at the AMAs in 2013 (Derr, 2013) Minaj and Perry’s use of yellow-face, and Migos and West’s blatant use of Asian stereotypes in their lyrics, exemplifies that the racist commentary against Asians in America continues to permeate American popular culture.

Wind band literature is no exception in these problematic trends. A quick search of the term “Asia” into popular sheet music retailer site J. W. Pepper brings up a number of Asian themed pieces with descriptions including the terms “oriental,” “exotic,” “mysterious,” “simple and pure,” “flower,” and ironically “expanding the cultural horizons” (J. W. Pepper, 2020). Unsurprisingly, the works that employed these terms were in fact not written by Asian composers. Similar results were found with searches for specific countries, with (a) Japan resulting in “beauty,” “sun,” and “delicate”; (b) China as “pentatonic,” “ancient,” “dragon,” and “empire”; and (c) India as “movie,” “ethnic,” “spirit,” “Bollywood,” etc. (J. W. Pepper, 2020). These essentialized and exoticized descriptions of Asian music and culture demonstrate that these stereotypes exist beyond politics and history, and how easily they can infiltrate the music classroom.

## ***Representation in Music Education***

Music education in America has a long history of underrepresentation. Educational curricula that focus solely on white male musicians in the Western European Classical idiom exclude students in classrooms that are becoming increasingly more diverse. While the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) includes the teaching of multicultural music in their national standards, there is little instruction or specificity beyond teaching repertoire from a variety of cultures (NAfME, 2014). However, recent efforts by educators and researchers have allowed students to have more access to composers and musics from a variety of cultures, races, languages, abilities, sexualities, and gender identities.

In the realm of instrumental music education, pieces by underrepresented composers (e.g., people of color, women, LGBT+) are rarely studied and performed. Out of the 468 compositions featured on the UK's National Concert Band Festival's repertoire list, only six pieces were written by white women composers, thirteen were written by people of color, none of whom were women. Out of these thirteen composers, only one was of Asian descent (NCBF, n.d.). The Music for All National Concert Band Festival Repertoire List in the United States had a similar breakdown. Of the 132 pieces listed, no women or people of color were represented (Music for All, 2017). A repertoire list compiled by Allen (2001), included no women, and only one person of color.

Similar issues are found in the demographics of music educators themselves. A study conducted from 2007 to 2012 found that candidates for music education licensure in the US who identified as white (86.02%) were grossly overrepresented compared to

people of color. 1.79% of the candidates identified as Asian-American (Elpus, 2015).

While no previous research has addressed the demographics of employed music teachers, similar trends are found in the demographics of public school educators as a whole. The National Center for Educational Statistics reported that about 80% of teachers identify as white. Only 2% identified as Asian-American (NCES, 2018).

Trends in an overwhelmingly white and male dominated music education profession are in turn reflected in participation in music program by students. A longitudinal study by Elpus and Abril (2011) found that racial/ethnic groups in high school music programs across the U.S. are not representative of the population, with white students participating at a higher rate than other groups. While white students made up of about 65.7% of the population of students in music programs, Asians only accounted for 3.8% (Elpus & Abril 2011) despite perceptions of Asian students as musically gifted (Blackburn, 2019).

However, adoption of multiculturalist ideals in general education has engendered a movement to diversify the patriarchal and Eurocentric realm of music education. Over the past eight years, NAFME's National Honor Ensembles has featured 30 guest conductors and clinicians, of which 11 were people of color and 8 were women. Among the people of color, one was of Asian descent. This program also features at least one women conductor each year in its ensembles (NAfME, 2020). Other programs are following suit, with efforts like the "Wind Repertory Project," a website that seeks to list and categorize underrepresented composers and their compositions by race, gender, LGBT+, age, etc. (Pilato, 2020). Elpus and Abril (2019) found the racial demographics of

students in high school music programs to more closely match national population trends, with 58% of students identifying as white and 4% identifying as Asian or Pacific Islander.

### **Need for the Study**

As the demographics of the U.S. continue to become more diverse, it is necessary to educate students to recognize and combat racially oppressive structures. Music class, along with the rest of their education, should prepare students to become socially aware citizens in order to enact positive change within their communities. In addition, educators should seek to reverse the dominant ideology of white supremacy that continues to define music education without falling into the traps of essentialism and exoticism present in multiculturalist perspectives. Asian-American populations are often neglected in conversations about racism due to the model minority myth, and in turn their issues are ignored and silenced. It is imperative that educators understand the racial issues faced by Asian-identifying students in order to avoid perpetrating the stereotypes associated with them. Asian students need the support and representation, as harmful stereotypes affect their conception and development of identity and social relationships outside the classroom. It is absolutely necessary for students to become aware of racism in all aspects of their education, and to teach them to advocate against it in order for the United States and other countries to move forward as true democratic societies.

### **Purpose**

This study will investigate the perceptions that students and educators have towards Asian-inspired literature, Asian music/culture, and Asian music students, and

identify how the literature is being taught. The study will seek to recommend actions and strategies in order to limit the negative consequences that arise from teaching music through the lens of the model minority myth and stereotypes of Asian peoples.

### ***Research Questions***

1. Have music teachers received training on racial issues in professional or collegiate settings?
2. Are music teachers aware of racial issues, and discussing them with their students?
3. Are music teachers aware of racial issues faced by Asian American students?

### **Terms**

Asian-Americans: People who self-identify their (or one of their) racial group(s) as being from one of the 48 countries defined by the United Nations to be a part of Asia.

Colorblind difference: Recognizing forms of difference such as wealth, gender, sexuality, etc. but denying racial difference, which lead to an erasure of issues surrounding racial inequity.

Colormuteness: Treating critical discussions about race as taboo in educational settings.

Critical Race Theory: Scholarship that focuses on identifying and dismantling institutionalized and social structures of white supremacy that have become normalized in American society.

Cross-Cultural collaboration: a collaboration by two or more people of different cultures to produce something that neither could achieve alone.

Culture-bearers: Those that are members of a culture and are primary sources of cultural knowledge

Cultural translators: Those who come to understand a culture as an outsider and bring that knowledge to an audience.

Differend: Lyotard's theory that two parties cannot resolve an argument when the rules or language of the argument only apply to one party, thereby creating a power imbalance.

Essentialism: Reducing a culture or race down to a few oversimplified characteristics. Oftentimes this results in the treatment of one member as a representative of a group.

Exoticism: The treatment of a non-white culture/race as being an unusual oddity, othering them from what is considered the norm.

Inferior Minority Myth: A type of bias in which a racial minority is seen as inferior due to the perceived poverty or cultural deficiencies of their country of association. Often experienced by Southeast Asian Americans.

Institutional habitus: the perceptions of one's social world and their place in it.

Meritocracy: A component of the American dream which perpetuates the idea that all people have equal chance at success, and that this chance is determined by hard work, dedication, sacrifice, and grit. This idea disregards institutional barriers faced by those that are not white, cis, straight, and male.

Model Minority Myth: The designation of a minority group as being up to the standards of the white population in the U.S. due to perceived success, oftentimes because their issues are not heard. It is usually associated with Jews and Asians, and is a tool for anti-blackness.

Musical tourism: A practice in multiculturalist music in which the music of non-white cultures is experienced purely for entertainment, without an attempt for deeper understanding or critical reflection.

Neoliberalism: The capitalistic pressure to run schools like businesses by increasing standardized testing, promoting capitalistic values, and privatization that perpetuates inequity and individualism in education.

Otherring: Treating a group as an out-group in society, or outside the expected norm.

Perpetual foreigner myth: A form of bias in which a minority is treated like a foreigner despite spending years living in a country or being born in the country. This can range from assumed lack of knowledge on language or local culture, to being told to return to their “home” country.

Powerblind sameness: Denying power imbalances due to racial inequity in society, and therefore denying racism.

Race: The categorization of people based on factors such as country of origin, skin color, ethnicity, biology, etc. that is rooted in the historical need for people to create social hierarchies and other.

Racism: Systematic oppression, bias, or discrimination of a group of people based on their race.

School-to-prison pipeline: The failure of the American public education system to support black and brown children that perpetuates their high incarceration rates.

Terminal naivety: The intent to be unaware of racism and/or current events in society, which demonstrate a privileged stance.

Vicarious racism: Climate of fear created when people of color see other people of color experience acts of racism

White Fright: White teachers' fear of discussing racial issues with students in the classroom, effectively silencing these issues and the experiences of students of color.

Whiteness: Beliefs, values, and cultural assumptions that treats white culture as the norm in American society.

Whitestreaming: Where white history, values, customs, language, etc. are considered and taught as mainstream culture.

White Supremacy: The systematic and historically situated oppression of people of color through the normalization of practices that privilege the interests of White people. This is the definition employed by Critical Race Theory, as opposed to the popular use of White Supremacy to imply extremist groups.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The purpose of this study is to examine diversity curriculums in teacher training programs, and to understand how these programs have impacted the perceptions that teachers may have on Asian American students. This chapter will cover the review of current literature on the topic, with focuses on the Asian American experience in education, teacher perspectives on social justice, teacher training and resources, and educational policy.

### **Asian Americans in Education**

Issues faced by Asian Americans in the realm of our society are often overlooked due to the Model Minority Myth and other stereotypes. Additionally, most research related to race in education focuses on black and Latinx populations. This can be attributed to noble pursuits of equity from centuries of subjugation and structural oppression, but it is also a result of colonialist perceptions of “problem” races. Studies centering on the Asian American experience in schools have largely focused on students’ experiences at the collegiate level.

DePouw (2018) analyzed the Hmong American experience on a predominantly white college campus through the lens of Critical Race Theory. Through interviews with participants ( $N=15$ ), DePouw identified three major themes:

- Cultural invisibility through devaluation of Hmong language and culture
- Racial hypervisibility
- Objectification as an exotic Other

These themes presented themselves through overtly racist acts, racial microaggressions, types of representation (or lack thereof), victim blaming, and lack of understanding by other students and faculty. Examples of some of these acts/experiences include exclusion and avoidance by white students and faculty, mimicking of Asian accents, lack of courses related to Hmong history/culture, adherence to White normativity, alienation, racially offensive flyers posted in a Hmong living community, expectation to be native informants, and general hostility. This caused students to experience feelings of shame, which resulted in an avoidance of Hmong language and culture in order to avoid racial attacks and expectations. Through these interviews, DePouw also identified that students often lacked the vocabulary to name their experiences and describe their feelings. Beyond identifying the university's culture of white hegemony, students gained critical race consciousness through their discussions with the researcher, which then allowed them to verbalize their experiences and resist institutionalized racism. While the scope of this research was limited, this study exemplifies how anti-racism education not only benefits institutions by educating white majorities on their privilege and power structures, but also allows for marginalized populations to understand and resist racial subjugation.

Museus and Park (2015) conducted a similar study with a wider scope, with Asian American students (N=46) from six different institutions. Interviews with participants revealed nine themes which were attributed to racism on college campuses:

- Racial harassment
- Vicarious racism
- Racial isolation
- Pressure to racially segregate
- Pressure to racially assimilate
- Racial silencing
- The perpetual foreigner myth
- The model minority myth
- The inferior minority myth

Racial harassment included racial bullying, slurs, property damage, and racial profiling by campus police. *Vicarious racism* was the climate of fear induced when seeing other people of color experiencing racist acts, and the lack of university response when these acts happen. Similar to the results of the DePouw study, racial isolation was reflected in feelings by isolation from the majority. Results indicated that participants felt racial isolation when they were one of the only members identifying from specific ethnic or racial groups, even when there were other Asian students on campus. The pressure to racially segregate involved internalized negative perception of ethnic organizations, avoiding tokenization from predominantly white groups, and the expectation to initiate crossing racial lines in creating social relationships. The pressure to racially assimilate

demonstrated the opposite due to similar pressures; the pressure to fit in and “act white,” reject their cultural difference, and to act differently around white people than they would around their Asian peers. Racial silencing involved the university’s exclusion of Asian studies into the mainstream curriculum, and/or the rejection of the creation of Asian studies courses or programs. The *perpetual foreigner myth* involved the perception that even Asian students who were born and raised in the U.S. face questions about citizenship and origin (e.g., “Where are you from?”) and assumptions about their ability to speak English. The model minority myth involves the perception that Asian Americans are “nerds” who are inherently academically gifted and pressured into math and science fields, leading to difficulties getting academic assistance and devaluation of their work. Finally, the *inferior minority myth* entails the perception faced predominantly by Southeast Asians, in which they are seen as “ghetto”<sup>2</sup> or that they come from poor countries with cultural deficiencies. This study illuminated many of the issues faced by Asians on college campuses, and in broader society. Museus and Park also identified that the Asian experience is not universal, and students of different regions of Asia and even individual countries faced different biases and obstacles throughout their college experience. The authors demonstrated that the racial issues faced by the Hmong students at one Midwestern university faced are endemic to Asian American students in universities across the U.S.

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<sup>2</sup> The term “ghetto” is a slang that is often used to describe black, Latinx, and southeast Asian people as poor and uneducated with a tendency to engage in risky or illegal behaviors.

Kiang, Witkow, and Thompson (2016) conducted a similar study at the high school level, comparing experiences of model minority themed stereotyping to negative discrimination. Stereotypes were defined as basic assumptions and attitudes resulting from the model minority myth, while negative discrimination was defined as biased actions based on negative assumptions about race. The data from their survey indicated that while experiences of stereotyping increased over high school years, negative discrimination decreased. The authors also discovered that students who experienced less discrimination and more stereotyping had higher self-esteem related to academic pursuits. They concluded the “positive” associations brought by the model minority myth cancel out the negative impacts on students’ discrimination. There are a number of issues with the authors’ arguments. First, the idea that the model minority myth is portrayed as a positive force from the beginning, and the focus on academic ability demonstrate that the researchers are perceiving Asian American through model minority lens throughout the study. This approach demonstrates a bias, that ignores the emotional and social effects of the model minority myth, and the impacts of essentializing an incredibly diverse population. Evidence of the negative impacts were present in the Museus and Park (2015) study, where college students suffered the social and psychological repercussions of these stereotypes. Kiang, Witkow, and Thompson also ignore the historical use of the term model minority as a form of anti-blackness. Praising the effects of the model minority myth, even with positive associations for academics, ignores the harm it causes for both Asian American and other students of color. Second, DePouw’s (2018) study on Hmong students illustrates that students often lack the vocabulary to describe their experiences of

racism and discrimination. Students at the high school level may not be able to name their experiences as discrimination, and may not be aware of how stereotypes and discrimination impact their daily lives and the lives of others. While the survey given to high school students included some specificity regarding discriminatory actions, the authors admit they lack direct and specific vocabulary when addressing student experiences. Finally, the idea that so-called positive over-generalizations about a diverse group of people could somehow cancel out negative discrimination is naïve at best. Actions and stereotypes don't cancel each other out, and it's important to understand students' experiences holistically, rather than treating two forms of racism like a balancing act. While Kiang, Witkow, and Thompson identified that 99% of students have experienced model minority related stereotypes, their short-sighted conclusions unveil biases and stereotypes all too common in the field of education.

Pang, Han, and Pang (2011) conducted a study analyzing the test scores of students who identified as Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) ethnic groups to those of their white peers. They compared scores between AAPI and white students on California state standardized reading and math assessments. Results indicated that the AAPI group as a whole had significantly higher average scores than their white peers in the math assessments. However, when the authors then divided the AAPI group into 13 subgroups based on ethnic and racial identifications they found that there was a high level of variance in assessment scores among the AAPI ethnic group. Among the 13 subgroups within AAPI students, 9 groups scored significantly lower than white students in math, and 7 groups scored lower in reading. From these results, the authors revealed that studies

on AAPI student success in schools often treat these groups as a homogenous, monolithic group, which erases the issues that specific ethnic groups face in academics. The perceptions created by the model minority myth that all Asian students are academically successful disregards the incredible diversity of this broad group. In addition, the authors took into account the socio-economic status, gender, and parent education levels and found that ethnicity is a major factor in student achievement levels. The perceptions arising from the model minority myth prevent students from racial minorities from having access to the same opportunities and academic assistance that their white peers benefit from, and their experiences with racism and white supremacy in their schools directly impacts their ability to succeed. The authors acknowledged that standardized testing inherently favors white students' experiences, and therefore may not be representative of minority student academic achievement. However, they emphasize that research on AAPI student success needs to reconsider its methods and identify the diversity within the population in order to portray a more accurate picture of academic achievement within marginalized populations.

Outside of the classroom, Asian American students face the effects of the model minority myth inside their homes through internalized forms of these racist structures. Crossing intersectional boundaries, Ninh (2014) provides a narrative of the Asian experience in America, and how children of Asian American immigrants navigate the double duty of protecting their ethnic family outside the house, and then protect themselves from the ethnic family inside the house. Ninh discusses the challenges faced by Asian Americans in society in the lack of social equality and exclusion from politics.

The need to resist these forms of injustice then affect family and social culture within Asian circles in the United States, leading to the resistance of one form of racism to actually perpetuate and internalize the model minority myth. The author focuses on the “fantasy of the child” and “sacrificial parent,” which involves the perception that Asian American immigrant parents must sacrifice and work hard so that the Asian American child can achieve economic prosperity through STEM field jobs, and lead a heteronormative American Dream. This idea puts pressure on both parents and children to assimilate into, and adhere to, mainstream American culture through suppression of their own desires, while trying to fight a system that actively oppresses their ability to succeed. Ninh’s analyses of the systemic social structures that have infiltrated the Asian family highlight the difficulties many students face navigating different forms of racism in and outside of their home. The tiger parents and immigrant parent narratives are derived from white, hegemonic structures in society, and these social pressures then perpetuate the model minority myth. While Ninh’s article may appear to be victim-blaming, it is important that educators understand the struggles students face both in and outside of school regarding racial issues, and how educational policy perpetuates the struggles students and families face at home and in society.

## **Teacher Perspectives**

### ***Critical Race Theory and Teacher Training Programs***

As previously discussed, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is scholarship that focuses on highlighting and actively dismantling normalized structures of white supremacy endemic to American institutions. Understanding the basic tenets of CRT allow for



teachers and teacher educators to critically reflect on curricula and their own practices and perspectives.

Hess (2017) provides practical implications for music teachers in teaching anti-racism in their classroom through the lens of CRT. They identify coded language used by educators that perpetuates whiteness and colorblind ideology through the use of politically correct terminology and omission of terms and topics. A number of issues and ideologies arise from the use of this coded language. These include *terminal naivety* (teachers' intent to stay unaware of world events and systemic racism in society), colormuteness, colorblindness, the myth of meritocracy, white supremacy, *powerblind sameness* (denying differences and erasing power hierarchies), and *colorblind differences* (recognizing other forms of difference but denying racial difference). Additional issues arise from whiteness in the Western ensemble paradigm that focuses on replication over creation, authoritarian dynamics between teacher and students, privilege of Western notation over aural transmission, devaluation of improvisation and movement, and the depiction of non-white musics either as primitive or through the lens of western perspectives. Hess also provides direct recommendations for teachers, administrators, and teacher educators. For teachers, Hess recommends direct discussions about race, privilege, politics, and other equity issues with students using explicit vocabulary, and recognizing differences and similarities between individuals and cultures. Outside of the classrooms, Hess recommends that teachers need to continue to use explicit language and recognize the systems that perpetuate oppression without limiting the fault to individuals. In music teacher education, teachers need to be exposed to models of how to

contextualize musical content, understand their impact as educators in regards to social justice, and have active discussions on systemic racism in the classroom. The author recommends similar actions for postsecondary administration, who must hire faculty who understand the systems of oppression in the classroom, dismantle systems that privilege western music styles, expose students to uncomfortable topics and conversations, and avoid the use of coded language in favor of explicit naming systems for inequality. Hess's direct approach to providing actionable steps for teachers, teacher educators, and administration demonstrate the amount of work that needs to be done in order for systems of white privilege to be dismantled at the primary, secondary, and postsecondary levels of education. However, the descriptions of music educators who have implemented culturally responsive curriculum that directly addresses racism using explicit vocabulary establishes that these changes are possible and absolutely necessary in order to subvert systems of white hegemony in American music classrooms.

### ***Limitations and "White Fright"***

Through the lens of critical race theory, it is evident that educators must be able to discuss racial issues with their students. However, many teachers fear discussing these issues in depth with their students. Bradley (2012) narrates some of the perceived limitations and fears that music educators have towards teaching racial and cultural contexts in the classroom. The main theme that Bradley discovered in discussions with music educators was the concept of *White Fright*, the fear of discussing controversial topics within the classroom, especially relating to race and politics. In turn, these educators had a perceived fear of disciplinary action by administrators or negative

reactions by parents and students. White fright was used as an agent for silencing within the music education curriculum about contextual issues surrounding music, and the issues that students of color face in the classroom. The author also defines *Whiteness* as “a cultural attitude that defines normality both by and for White people,” and is the underlying ideology that funds White privilege and White fright. Educators’ fear of retaliation for discussing race topics further perpetuates white supremacy in the classroom, and it is imperative that future educational policy, administrators, as well as teacher training programs address and resolve these fears. If educators cannot discuss race in the classroom due to fear of retaliation from administrators, parents, and students, it cannot be expected that students of color will feel safe or comfortable discussing the issues they face daily due to their race. Educators must learn to face their White fright, while administrators must work to protect teachers from possible retaliation, and teacher training programs must emphasize the importance of discussing these issues with students.

### ***Music Teacher Resources***

Music teacher biases and fears benefit the systems of white supremacy in the music classroom. However, even teachers who seek to counteract these harmful ideals are bound by the resources they employ, and this can perpetuate bias against Asian people. Remnants of multicultural education as well as the inherent focus on white composers and musicians are often ubiquitous in the classroom.

One of the results of the multicultural education movement in music is the teaching of diversity through musical tourism. Wasiak (2009) defines musical tourism as

a multiculturalist perspective that treats non-European musics as exotic and simple, doesn't engage with culture-bearers, promotes ideas about the universality of music, and uses Western values to dictate good music from bad. Overall, the practice of musical tourism presents non-Western music in a simplified and colonialist way that treats these cultures art forms as purely for entertainment. Wasiak identifies these issues and proposes one solution, cross-cultural collaboration with culture-bearers. Through this solution, while keeping in mind issues of cultural misrepresentation, Wasiak follows the process of creating a production around a modern portrayal of the indigenous Blackfoot tribe's legends. Wasiak defines cross-cultural collaboration as a project that involves two or more people over a length of time to produce something neither could achieve alone. This process involves four key components: (a) sustained engagement, (b) significant contributions, (c) reciprocity, and (d) a unique product. They then defined the role of culture-bearers (i.e., those that are primary sources of cultural knowledge) and cultural translators (i.e., those who come to understand a culture as an outsider and transmit cultural knowledge to an audience). Those representing the two roles must be conscious of power imbalances and equality during their collaboration in order to counteract historical and social inequities. Wasiak identifies the symbol system that is representative of a culture in a performance and how these symbols must be navigated in order to create a performance that appropriately portrays a culture.

1. Language: Understanding how language should be used in a production. In this case the author considered when and how to use English and the Blackfoot language.

2. Space: space includes where different collaborators meet, where the performance is performed, and the staging of the performance. Performance context is an element of the music, and the way the performance is staged impacts the representation of the culture.
3. The body: who is involved in the performance, and who is involved in the collaboration is important to providing respectful cultural representation. In the case of Wasiak's production, they used two Blackfoot dancers, and two non-Blackfoot dancers. Gender was also split evenly.
4. Dress: The way actors and musicians are dressed impact the way culture is portrayed. Wasiak states "any form of cultural cross dressing, mimicry, or masquerade in the pursuit of spectacle or visual effect is misappropriation and further perpetuates stereotypes, clichés, and misrepresentation" (p. 222).

Approaching cross-cultural collaboration, or any cultural representation with this kind of scrutiny, provides an opportunity for deeper cultural understanding and conversation. While historical and social inequalities continue to have a role in musical production, critically evaluating methods of representation while engaging with culture-bearers on more equitable ground can pave the way for culturally respectful forms of representation for marginalized populations. While Wasiak's recommendations may be difficult to carry out at the primary and secondary levels of public education, cultural representation must be approached with a level of respect for culture-bearers.

Netto (2015) illustrates similar issues of cultural misrepresentation in music through the discussion of exoticism. Netto compares the discourse surrounding exoticism

and diversity by mapping a historical timeline of the two terms. It identified that the perception of difference, as in difference between cultures, only exists as a social construction intended to separate in-groups from out-groups. Difference needs signifiers to create separation and boundaries, and throughout history the discourse surrounding those differences and the signifiers have changed. Netto identified two structural conditions required in order to exoticize a culture:

1. Clear, recognizable, and stable separation of the internal and external spheres. These separations become exotic when something from the external is brought to the internal, while maintaining its characteristics as external. For example, in Orientalist art, elements of Asian music and art are incorporated into Western aesthetics, but still retain their status as “Oriental.”
2. Internal and external spheres are defined by white Europeans. These populations defined the exotic from the non-exotic. In art, Netto explains that because Oriental style was not initiated by the culture of the Other, as well as excluded these people from participation, exoticism and Orientalism serve as a form of cultural colonialism.

These ideas also permeate economic and political spheres, in which Eurocentric ideas of capitalism, reasoning, and family disseminated globally through imperialism and colonization. The concept of *Universal History* evolved from these ideas, in that the idea that all civilizations are moving from less complex to more complex, and each civilization sits on a universal timeline in which Europe is the farthest ahead, while other

countries are progressing at slower rates. Nowadays, we witness this idea now through the labels of first, second, and third world countries. Netto goes on to discuss the history of globalization, and how rapid immigration and the internet have contributed to the devaluation of the exoticism discourse in favor of the diversity discourse. They conclude by identifying modern forms of exoticism, and calling for critical perspectives on the diversity discourse, as diversity is often presented in vague and exoticizing terms. With a clear definition of exoticism and its negative impacts, it's evident how musical tourism and other forms of exoticization can take place in the music classroom, especially with the continued performances of Orientalist works and operas.

### **Teacher Education**

While it is imperative for teachers to teach and preach anti-racism in their classroom, they cannot be expected to implement these topics and tactics without proper training. A study by Salvador and Kelly-McHale (2017) sought to understand the perspectives of music teacher education programs when preparing teachers to address social justice issues in their classrooms. The authors administered a survey to a sample ( $N=356$ ) of music teacher educators from institutions accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). These surveys addressed a number of topics, including demographics of these faculty members, definition of social justice, limitations on teaching social justice in universities and for music teachers, tactics for teaching social justice, and desires for additional experiences/resources regarding diversity training. The results identified a variety of different perspectives when defining social justice, from an in-depth understanding to dismissing or rejecting the notion of social justice. Even with

an overwhelmingly positive view of social justice, 10% to 20% of the respondents claimed that it was irrelevant in the classroom, and that music education should be content focused. Additionally, most respondents used colorblind terms revolving around meritocracy and equal treatment in regards to social justice in the classroom. The educators who did include social justice topics in pre-service teacher education revealed a number of limitations that they faced, including lack of time, lack of knowledge, concerns about tenure, lack of good sites for fieldwork, and increased testing demands. Participants also shared some of the tactics they used to teach the concept of social justice, including field work, student journaling, discussion of current events and research, bringing in guest speakers, and making decisions in hypothetical situations. The large sample size allowed for a strong understanding of the different ideologies held by music teacher educators in the United States. With similar perspectives to Bradley's (2012) study with in-service teachers, it is important to note that teacher education programs bear much of the responsibility when ensuring that students of color in American public school systems are taught in anti-racist classrooms.

Ragoonaden, Sivia, and Baxan (2015) conducted a study on similar topics. Their research focused on reflective inquiry and self-study in relation to their own experiences as teacher educators in Canada. It should be noted that two of the three researchers are teacher educators, who incorporate social justice topics into their teacher training programs, while the third is a doctoral student. They identified similar issues restricting teachers from incorporating a culturally relevant curriculum, including timed classes, grade specific grouping, national standards, assessment, neo-conservative agendas, non-



controversial curriculum, and lack of discussion in the classroom. They also noted that many of their students held problematic beliefs on what they believed were appropriate views of cultural difference. The researchers provided suggestions for teachers and teacher educators when tackling white hegemony in their classrooms: interrogating texts and curriculum, education on theoretical and practical frameworks regarding anti-racist pedagogy, autobiographical curriculum and personal connections in the classroom, contextualization of content, and active reflection on teaching practices. These conclusions reflect similar ideas stated by Salvador and Kelly-McHale (2017) and Bradley (2012) by demonstrating that widespread white hegemony in teacher education curriculums and public school classrooms is not limited to American public school systems. However, the scope of the study, and the absence of CRT perspectives, result in limitations of the outcome and actionable items by each author. It is important to note the authors did not consider intersectional perspectives, or diverse perspectives that are held within cultural and racial groups, thus promoting the teaching of broad values held by each community.

A number of the previously mentioned studies recommended the use of field experience in diverse schools<sup>3</sup> as a way to teach anti-racism and diversity education to prospective teachers. Cornbleth (2010) conducted a qualitative study on the experiences of 12 student teachers at a high school in upstate New York, with a majority population

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<sup>3</sup> “Diverse schools” and “Urban schools” almost always refer to schools with a high population of black and Latinx students regardless of actual diversity. CRT scholars consider the use of these terms to be “coded language,” which is a tool of educational policymakers and teachers to avoid the topic of race

of middle class and poor African American and Hispanic students (with mostly white, Christian teachers). Observations, interviews, and interviews with other faculty in the school were conducted to develop a construction of the *institutional habitus* in this high school. The author defined habitus as “an orientation or network of predispositions toward the social world and one’s place in it, including a sense of one’s resources and how they might be used” (p. 281). Cornbleth identified two different perspectives within the school regarding how the teachers and their student teachers viewed the students. The first was labeled negative, and consisted of teachers who had low expectations for the students, resented poor and working class students, were uncomfortable talking about race, insisted on colorblindness, and blamed the students for their low academic achievement and/or behavioral problems. These teachers often passed on these beliefs to their student teachers, who either (a) internalized these beliefs or (b) didn’t resist these beliefs for fear of retaliation. Results indicated only one student teacher actively resisted these beliefs. The other teacher group was labeled positive or hopeful teachers, and included teachers who understood institutional issues and perceived them as a challenge to be overcome, connected with students on an individual level, created engaging lesson plans, and didn’t victim blame students. These teachers were aware of the institutional issues that students face in a racist society, and understood their role as an educator was to create relevant and engaging lessons along with getting to know students as individuals in order to promote student success. The differences in these perspectives create a number of issues for student teachers who are navigating the institutional habitus of their student teaching experience. Student teachers are directly affected by these different

perspectives, and often lack the education, tools, or authority to identify and challenge racist rhetoric. The author concluded that prospective teachers participating in fieldwork need to be prepared beforehand for these perspectives, and learn how to navigate future teachers throughout their placements. Field work is an important aspect of teacher education, and Cornbleth notes that “neither university nor school site ought to be privileged or uncritically celebrated,” (p.295) when it comes to teaching diverse/non-white populations.

### **Educational Policy**

While teachers and teacher educators have the most direct influence on day-to-day anti-racism efforts in the classroom, educational policy and administrators dictate the ability to engage directly with anti-racism action through educational policy. As evident in articles published by Bradley (2012) and Hess (2017), teachers often avoid social justice topics in the classroom out of fear of retaliation from administration. Identifying white supremacy in educational policy is imperative to understanding how this impacts classroom and culture in schooling.

When examining educational policy, a number of issues exist in the realm of equity in educational policy. Since the introduction of *No Child Left Behind*, standardized testing has become a consistent topic in educational policy. While most research for and against standardized testing focuses on the issues of over testing and neoliberal policy, the drastic difference in test scores between different racial and ethnic groups has begun to raise questions. Standardized test results have often been used to label schools with

large populations of students of color as problem schools. As such, researchers have begun to question whether these tests favor white experiences and values.

Au (2016) connected racial issues in education to neoliberal, meritocratic discourse through the spread of standardized testing. Au argues that current racial equality narratives centered around neoliberal education reform actually perpetuate racial inequality. Current narratives praise standardized testing for being objective, and therefore providing more opportunities for marginalized students to achieve success without implicit human biases. Standardized testing for schools also provides data for teachers and schools in regards to their successful teaching, while also punishing those that don't meet certain standards. Punishment for the latter groups is promoted under the guise that they aren't providing a high quality education to students. While these might seem like objective and apolitical perceptions, objectivity in the assessment of students, teachers, and schools promotes colorblind practices that disregard the systemic forms of inequality these students face. Au first defines neoliberalism as a political and economic ideology that is built on capitalistic ideas that human well-being is derived from economic success, individual liberty, private property rights, and free market. Individual educational attainment is the central focus of neoliberal educational reform, and it falls under the guise that successful and educated individuals will enter the workforce with skills that will benefit political and economic institutions, thereby progressing society forward. While the putative objectivity of standardized testing appears as if it might counteract racial inequities, they present a number of issues that not only damage

academic success for marginalized populations, but for schooling as a whole in the United States.

- The ideology of individual meritocracy and simplistic designations of success and failure disregards inherent racial inequalities present in schools. Issues such as individual and school resources, economic inequality, location, school discipline policies, racism, sexism, etc. negatively impact students' scores on single-opportunity standardized tests.
- Neoliberalism's attack on public sphere while deregulating the private sphere increases the privatization of schools, shifting away from democratic and community governance.
- Standardized testing largely serves to increase profits of companies that provide the tests, and diminishes the legitimacy of the teaching profession. Standards based education and testing take away from student-teacher and school-community relationships that provide holistic and context driven education.
- Historically, standardized tests such as IQ tests that supposedly provided objective measurements of success and intelligence were used by people of power to uphold their own superiority. This is evident in the disproportionate difference in success and failure between white and non-white populations.

- The alleged objectivity of standardized testing scoring overlooks the fact that standardized tests are created by people who hold implicit biases. Standardized tests often situate and assume white culture as the norm.
- A focus on passing standardized tests to avoid failure penalties have forced schools to focus largely on reading and math, while excluding arts, language, and multicultural curriculum that provide a holistic, culturally relevant, and democratic education.
- Increased standardized testing and individual school policies resulting from these standards have increased disciplinary action against non-white populations who fail the tests, namely black and brown students. In turn, this increases high school dropout rates and perpetuates the school to prison pipeline effect.

Through these issues, Au recognized the harmful effects of increased standardized testing in public school systems throughout America. These effects directly escalate racial inequality in schooling, rather than supporting anti-racism efforts as the neoliberal reform movement claims. Au recommends alternatives forms of assessment, such as portfolio defenses, and advocates for “opt-out” movements of students and teachers who refuse to take/administer standardized testing. Au’s research indicates that standardized testing not only adds to racial inequality in schools, but perpetuates harmful ideologies that render racial oppressions as invisible in society, and negatively impacts all students in American public schools.

A number of studies have been conducted in the areas of race, teacher certification licensure, and assessment. Goldhaber and Hansen (2010) analyzed teacher performance on the Praxis, GRE, and National Teacher Exams, in relation to teacher effectiveness. The focus was placed on two functions of standardized testing; screening (i.e., how well each test prevents incompetent candidates from becoming teachers) and signaling (i.e. whether teacher test scores can predict student learning). Test scores were collected from a large sample ( $N=4051$ ) of teachers. Results indicated the tests did not function well as a screening process. Furthermore, students of teachers who passed the certification exam did not perform significantly better than those who didn't. The one exception was in the area of math where students benefitted slightly. For signaling, it was discovered that Praxis test scores reflected predictive validity for white teachers, but not for black teachers. Additionally, a connection was found between the success of students on standardized tests and the race of their teacher. Specifically, black students scored higher on tests when they were taught by black teachers, a phenomenon usually referred to as *race-matching*. There was no significant correlation between scores exhibited by student scores and teacher race. In relation to this, Goldhaber and Hansen discovered that teachers of color disproportionately scored worse on teacher licensure exams than their white counterparts, and some were held back from receiving licensure. Noting these two implications, the researchers suggested that hiring a low-scoring black teacher would likely be more valuable than hiring a high scoring white teacher. Therefore, the screening function of licensure tests are limited and biased to favor white applicants. A number of possible reasons for this un-equity arose, including lack of opportunities and higher

education for black teachers, cost and requirements of tests, and biased test factors. A limitation from these results involve the use of standardized test scores to determine student understanding and skill. As stated by Au (2016), standardized testing favors white experience, and using test scores as a measurement of students' progress limits the study to prioritize white progress.

Bradley (2011) focused solely on teacher licensure in music by conducting an in depth analysis of the ways in which teacher certification and state music standards can exclude non-white candidates and students. Bradley discussed these ideas through Lyotard's concept of the *Differend*, in which an argument between two parties cannot be resolved due to the fact that the rules of the argument and/or language only apply to one party. In the area of music education policy, there are many assumptions made that adhere to the rules created within frameworks of white supremacy, but these are not necessarily the reality of what is considered valuable in the classroom. Bradley described the Eurocentricity of music education by identifying the idiom of the offensive (i.e., those that create policy and standards) and how it impacts the victims (i.e., students and teachers of color) through an analysis of the state teacher standards for Wisconsin music teachers. This includes (a) the treatment of socio-cultural aspects as extra-musical; (b) omission of some forms of music making in the curriculum, analysis of music through Eurocentric language; (c) describing non-white musics as "primitive" or "simple;" (d) limitation to Eurocentric instruments and repertoire; (e) the perpetuation of a predominantly white, middle-class, and female teaching force; (f) prioritization of European aesthetic principals through the focus on pieces and analysis over musical



experiences; (g) normalization of whiteness; (h) Othering; and (i) the use of language that promotes Orientalism and musical colonialism. It was concluded the analyses demonstrates a disconnect between those that created the music education standards and non-white populations through Othering and white superiority, despite putative diversity topics. The use of these standards to determine and guide licensure forces teachers in the field to adhere to the standards that promote white supremacy and aesthetics education, which in turn imparts these ideas on students. Bradley emphasized the importance of teaching social justice education within the classroom in order to counteract Eurocentric and phallogocentric forms of music education.

Research in the area of teacher evaluation identified similar issues. Salazar (2018) criticized current teacher evaluation rubrics, which only contain vague references to diversity education using white, normative language. They also provide a list of school structures that perpetuate white supremacy, including (a) standards based instruction, (b) school discipline, (c) school reform, (d) finance, (e) language acquisition programming, (f) curriculum, (g) assessment, (h) tracking, (i) segregation, (j) educator preparation, and (k) educational policy. In response to all of these issues, Salazar proposed the development of an alternative framework for assessing teaching ability, which is called the Framework for Equitable and Excellent Teaching (FEET). This framework shifts the focus to directly address diversity, citizenship, and culturally relevant pedagogy as the centerpiece of teacher evaluation. Salazar employs critical race theory to provide a counternarrative to current systems of *Whitestreaming*, in which white history, morals, language, customs, culture capital, values, and individualism are dictated the norm in

schools. Previous frameworks defined academic success in terms of independence, positivism, objectivity, neutrality, and the written word, while the FEET seeks to redefine success in less Eurocentric terms, by promoting literacy, technological, social, political, and democratic skills. More specifically, FEET aims to assess teachers on how they use content to teach students to navigate the dominant culture, sustain educational resources through community connection, and developing students' critical consciousness. The FEET rubric was tested in three different phases. After identifying various weaknesses, revisions were made following each phase. Salazar claimed that the FEET allows for teaching practices that dismantle the hegemony of white culture in schools, and is inclusive of the resources of communities of color.

### **Summary**

From reviewing the literature, it is apparent that bias and discrimination against Asian Americans in society has infiltrated the education system, with students negatively impacted academically, socially, and psychologically. It is also evident that racism exists at every level, from teachers' perceptions to neoliberal educational policy. Even with recent societal movements to eradicate racism in the classroom, many teachers and teacher educators demonstrate unwillingness and inability to work beyond the norm of whiteness and actively resist oppressive systems. With a teaching force that is overwhelmingly white and female, and a curriculum that largely focuses on white European musical values, it is imperative that we understand teacher perspectives on racial issues and critically analyze diversity/anti-racism teacher training programs in

order to begin to combat the inherent foundations of white supremacy found in America's music classrooms.

## **Chapter 3: Method**

The purpose of this study was to identify teachers' perceptions regarding Asian American students in the classroom, and their perceptions surrounding the incorporation of anti-racism topics into their music curriculum.

### **Participants**

Once the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at George Mason University (see Appendix C), the survey was distributed to music educators via social media. The survey was posted on various social media sites and on music educator group pages. The survey was also shared between individual music educators. The survey was also distributed by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) to their membership. Participation was completely anonymous, and prior to participation, respondents were required to confirm that they were a current public school music educator.

### **Measurement Instruments**

The researcher created survey addressed teacher perspectives from a diverse set of topics, from personal beliefs about racial issues to personal responsibility to teach these topics in the classroom. Demographic information was collected on the following variables: (a) number of years taught, (b) state residence, (c) specific subject(s) taught,

and (d) race/ethnicity. Survey items were designed to measure participants' perceptions towards (a) general beliefs surrounding racial issues in education, (b) diversity and anti-racism training, and (c) the effectiveness of these trainings. Finally, the survey addressed whether teachers (a) were aware of Asian American students' issues and (b) make changes to their curriculum as a result of these issues. This survey includes dichotomous as well as Likert-Type response statements. The survey also includes open-ended questions to gather information on ethnic identification, as well as a space to provide questions and comments about the research.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using an online survey, which was designed through Google Forms. All survey information fell into categories of perception of racial issues, perceptions of Asian American students, and teacher training. Participation was completely voluntary, and participants could drop out of the study at any time. The survey items were organized using Bloom's Affective Domain categories as well as by topic (see appendix A).

### **Data Analysis**

In order to determine issues of ambiguity and language in the questions/statements, the survey was first piloted with a small group of local educators. This allowed for the researcher to limit threats to validity. The survey statements were then categorized by topic in a spreadsheet in order to maintain connection to the research questions. Results were then categorized according to the same categories in the spreadsheet. As this survey was designed to measure perception, threats to internal

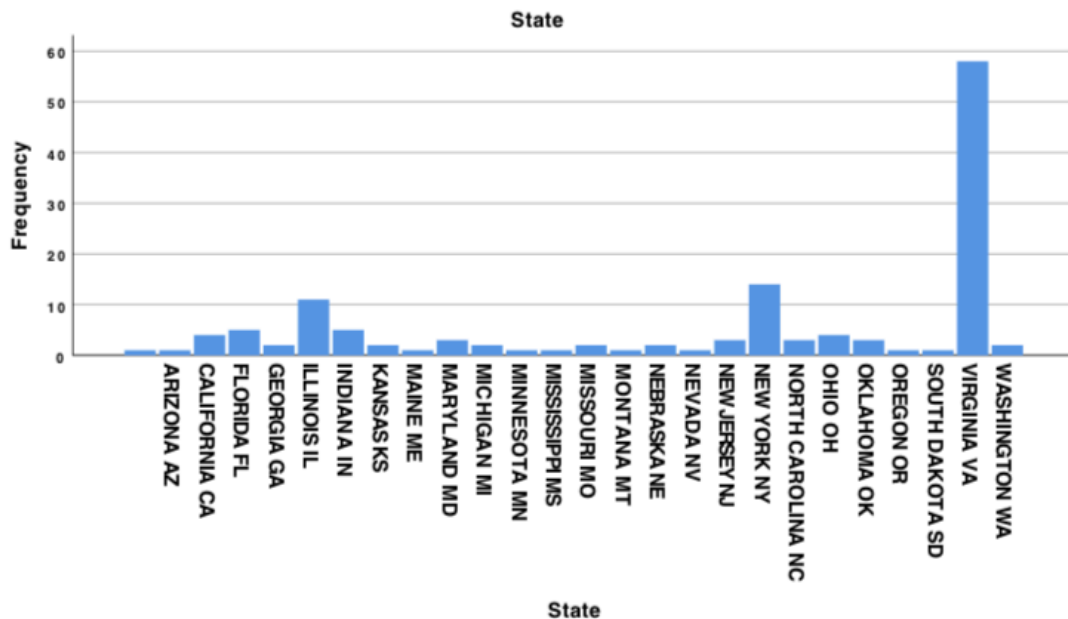
validity revolve around the implementation and method of questioning on the survey. Surveys may use confusing language or imply a specific answer, and feedback from the pilot study helped to combat some of these issues.

Some issues exist with the external validity. As a completely voluntary survey with no incentive, distribution was limited to participants who demonstrated interest in the topic. Since this survey delves into a relatively controversial topic, the external validity may also be impacted by the Hawthorne effect, and participants may choose answers that are more moderate, or don't truly reflect their own beliefs. Survey items were aligned with Likert-type response scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (4). Survey responses were analyzed using frequency procedures and descriptive statistics. Open-ended responses were analyzed for common themes.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Demographics

For the purpose of this study, demographic information was collected from participants in the areas of (a) number of years taught, (b) state residence, (c) specific subject(s) taught, and (d) race/ethnicity. Results indicated 134 respondents chose to participate in the study. The category indicating years of teaching experience was distributed as follows: (a) 45 participants (33.6%) taught 0-5 years, (b) 22 participants (16.4%) taught 6-10 years, (c) 18 participants (13.4%) taught 11-15 years, (d) 14 (10.4%) participants taught 16-20 years, (e) 14 participants (10.4%) taught 21-25 years, (f) 13 participants (9.7%) taught 26-30 years, and (g) 8 participants (6.0%) taught over 30 years. Participants were represented by 25 different states, with 43.3% of the sample (n=58) living in the state of Virginia (see Figure 1).



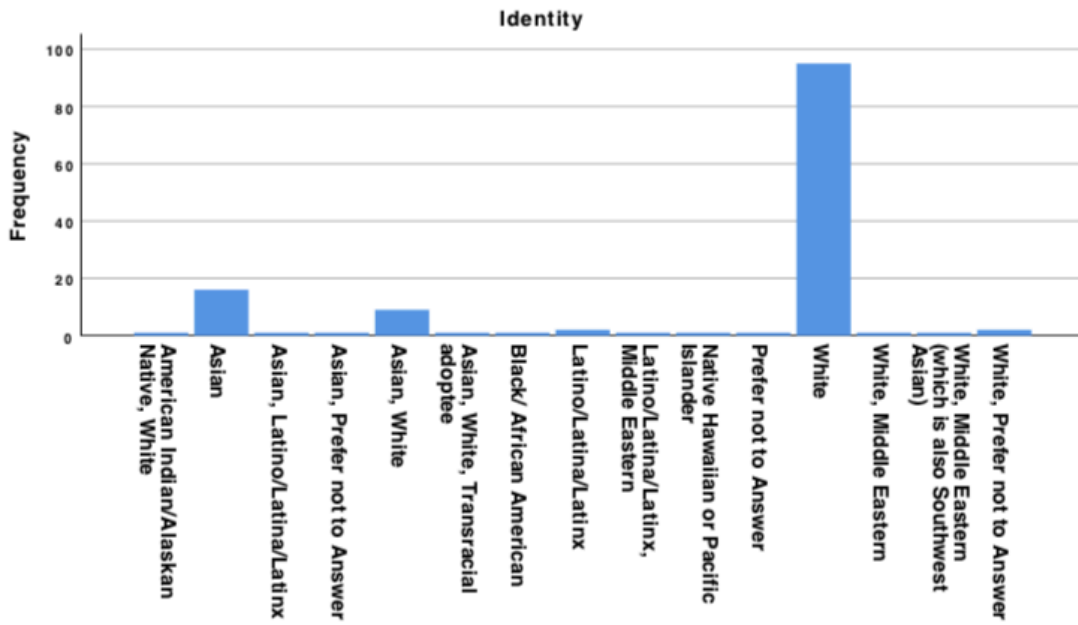
**Figure 1**

*Participants' Representation by State*

In terms of subject(s) taught (a) 59 participants (44%) reported to teach in the area of band, (b) 27 participants (20.1%) reported to teach in the area of choir, (c) 24 participants (17.9%) reported to teach in the area of general music, and (d) 23 participants (16.8%) reported to teach in the area of strings. Results indicated that participants identified their racial categorizations as follows (see Figure 2): (a) 110 participants (82.1%) identified as white, (b) 28 participants (20.9%) identified as Asian, (c) 4 participants (3%) identified as Latino/Latina/Latinx, (d) 3 participants (2.2%) identified as Middle Eastern, (e) 1 participant (0.7%) identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, (f) 1 participant (0.7%) identified as Black/African American, (g) 1 participant (0.7%) identified as Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and (h) 1 participant (0.7%) identified



as a transracial adoptee. It is important to note that a number of participants identified as mixed race.



**Figure 2**  
*Participants' Racial Identity*

An open-ended question was included to determine participants' ethnic identification. Table 3 represents a breakdown of self-reported ethnic identification.

**Table 3***Participants' Ethnic Identification*

Ethnic Identification	Frequency
?	1
American (German/Irish)	1
American but with roots in Mexico and Europe	1
American Indian, German, English, and Irish	3
American, White	1
As white as they come	1
British Irish French German North American according to 23&me	1
British/German/Scotch-Irish/Native American	1
Caucasian	4
Chinese	3
Chinese and German	1
Chinese, Scottish, Dutch	1
Croatian/Polish	1
Danish, Cuban, German	1
Dutch and Welsh, but like, REAL white (:	1
Eastern European	2
English	1
English (UK)	1
English and Irish	1
English and Scottish (Caucasian)	1
English, German, Dutch, Irish	1
English, German, Scottish	1
English, Scottish, Irish, Swedish	2
English/German	1
European ancestry, many countries	1
Filipino	2
Filipino-American	1
Filipino, Chinese	1
Finnish Swedish Portuguese Italian	1
German	8
German/American	1
German and Czech	1
German and Italian	1
German and Polish	2
German, British, Irish, Dutch	1

Ethnic Identification	Frequency
German, Polish, Irish, Austrian	1
German, Russian	1
German/Nordic	1
Half Japanese Half White	2
I struggle with this question. White?	1
Indian and white	1
Irish American	1
Irish Italian	1
Irish, German	2
Irish, Italian, German, Norwegian, Scottish, English	1
Italian	2
Italian American	2
Italian British	1
Italian, Chech, Yugoslav, German, Irish	1
Italian, German	1
Jamaican	1
Jewish American	1
Korean	4
Korean American	2
Korean, German, Dutch	1
Korean, Mexican (I look Korean)	1
Korean/Italian	1
Lebanese, English, Canadian, Irish, Norwegian	1
Middle Eastern/Mizrachi Jewish and Puerto Rican	1
Mix so I'd say American	1
Mongolian	1
My family is from Europe-but they immigrated many many generations ago so it doesn't affect me (other than my skin color)	1
Northwestern European	1
Persian, mix of Western European (German and British mainly)	1
Peruvian	1
Polish	1
Polish-Lithuanian-Irish	1
Polish/Czech	1
Prefer not to answer	7
Russian, Italian, Yugoslavian	1

Ethnic Identification	Frequency
Scandinavian/German, but mainly just American	1
Scotch Irish, French	1
Scots-Irish American	1
Scottish, Irish, English, Polish	1
Scottish/Irish/English	1
Slovak, Polish	1
Spanish, German, Austrian, English, Welsh, French	1
Swedish/German/English	1
Swiss/Scottish	1
Taiwanese and Japanese	1
Thai/Chinese (50%) & Irish/German (50%)	
Unknown	1
Vietnamese	3
Welsh, English, German, Slovak, Croatian	1
Welsh, Irish, German	1
White	2

### **First Research Question: Diversity Training**

Table 4 provides a breakdown for the survey items involving diversity training. Frequencies, means, and standard deviations were calculated for each item. The highest mean scores were attributed to the following items: (a) I feel diversity training in music education is important ( $M = 3.78$ ) and (b) I wish I had more access to resources and training about diversity and anti-racism ( $M = 3.55$ ). The lowest mean score was attributed to the following item: I don't feel as though specific diversity training topic regarding Asian American issues is necessary ( $M = 1.54$ ). Respondents were more divided on statements regarding their feelings towards the effectiveness of their anti-racism training: (a) I feel the diversity/anti-racism training I have received/pursued has adequately

prepared me to teach non-white students ( $M = 2.51$ ) and (b) I feel the diversity/anti-racism training I received through my education/work is effective ( $M = 2.45$ ).

**Table 4**

*Participants' Perceptions Towards Diversity Training*

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
17. I feel the diversity/anti-racism training I have received/pursued has adequately prepared me to teach non-white students.	11	52	58	10	2.51	0.76
18. I don't feel as though specific diversity training topic regarding Asian American issues is necessary.	81	38	8	6	1.54	0.80
19. I feel the diversity/anti-racism training I received through my education/work is effective.	17	49	54	11	2.45	0.83
20. I feel diversity training in music education is important.	2	3	17	111	3.78	0.56
21. I wish I had more access to resources and training about diversity and anti-racism.	2	7	40	85	3.55	0.67

It was reported that 52.2% of the participants had received anti-racism training in their teacher education programs. However, 72.4% stated they had received this training through their employer. Additionally, 70.1% had made efforts to educate themselves on the topic, and 80.5% have adjusted their teaching practices as a result of any of their training. While a relatively high number of participants reported to have received some anti-racism training, few had experience with racial issues regarding Asian American populations.

### **Second Research Question: General Beliefs on Racial Issues**

Table 5 presents data for participants' general beliefs on racial issues. The highest mean scores were attributed to the the following items: (a) I feel racism is a major issue in the United States ( $M = 3.86$ ), (b) I feel schools have a responsibility to promote anti-racism ( $M = 3.81$ ), and (c) I feel historical, political, and racial contexts of musical pieces studied should be considered and discussed with students ( $M = 3.76$ ). The lowest mean scores were attributed to items representing the discussion towards racism in the classroom: (a) I feel racial issues should not be discussed in the classroom ( $M = 1.39$ ), and (b) I feel music educators should not have to discuss racism with their students ( $M = 1.50$ ). Respondents were divided on the topic of colorblindness: (a) I feel students have an equal opportunity to achieve success regardless of their race ( $M = 2.66$ ), and (b) I feel state and county standards and assessments makes it difficult to make time for discussions about contexts of musical pieces studied in the classroom ( $M = 2.74$ ).

**Table 5***Participants' General Beliefs on Racial Issues*

Survey Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
22. I feel racism is an issue in the music classroom.	7	22	50	55	3.14	0.88
23. I feel racism is a major issue in the United States.	1	2	12	119	3.86	0.45
24. I feel racial issues should not be discussed in the classroom.	90	39	2	3	1.39	0.64
25. I feel uncomfortable discussing racial issues with students, faculty, and/or administration due to their responses.	30	61	37	6	2.14	0.82
26. I feel schools have a responsibility to promote anti-racism.	1	2	19	112	3.81	0.48
27. I feel students have an equal opportunity to achieve success regardless of their race.	29	37	16	50	2.66	1.20
28. I feel music educators should not have to discuss racism with their students.	81	41	7	4	1.50	0.74
29. I feel historical, political, and racial contexts of musical pieces studied should be considered and discussed with students.	1	2	25	106	3.76	0.51

Survey Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
30. I feel state and county standards and assessments makes it difficult to make time for discussions about contexts of musical pieces studied in the classroom.	20	31	46	36	2.74	1.02
31. I feel I have a responsibility to discuss racial issues in the classroom.	3	12	47	72	3.40	0.75

While only 70.7% of respondents had discussed racial issues with students in the past, 80.6% indicated that they plan to discuss these issues with students in the future. In terms of witnessing racism, 66.4% indicated that they have witnessed racism in their schools. It is important to note, that the level of understanding of racial issues impacts whether teachers will identify racist acts in their environment. While most teachers might be aware of overtly racist attacks, many may not be aware of microaggressions, racist curriculum, exoticizing language, etc. Finally, 91.8% of respondents reported that they had performed pieces by composer of color.

### **Third Research Question: Asian American Issues**

Table 6 presents participant's beliefs on Asian American Issues. The highest mean score was attributed to the statement: I believe Asian Americans experience racism ( $M = 3.71$ ). The statement with the lowest mean score, as well as highest variability was:



I feel my school administration does enough to tackle racism against Asian American students in their schools ( $M = 2.32$ ).

**Table 6**

*Participants' Perceptions Towards Asian American Racial Issues*

Survey Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Mean	Std. Dev
32. I feel Asian American students in my classes are more successful than other minority students.	14	45	62	12	2.54	0.80
33. I believe Asian Americans experience racism.	1	4	28	100	3.71	0.56
34. I feel Asian Americans have strong academic success due to inherent cultural values.	6	34	75	18	2.79	0.73
35. I feel I can identify musical pieces that use negative language/stereotypes towards Asian populations.	8	39	53	34	2.84	0.87
36. I feel I can identify media (pop culture, video, art, memes, etc.) that uses racist language towards Asian populations.	6	26	55	47	3.07	0.85
37. I feel my school administration does enough to tackle racism against Asian American students in their schools.	26	56	34	17	2.32	0.93

Participants were also asked to indicate their level of agreement towards Asian American issues. Participants generally agreed that Asian Americans do experience racism ( $M = 3.71$ ), although they exhibited less agreement in regards to the support provided by their administration when addressing racism in the classroom ( $M = 2.32$ ).

### **Open-ended Comments**

At the culmination of the survey, participants ( $n = 32$ ) were given the option to provide questions or comments regarding the topic of the research. A number of themes emerged from these comments, that is reflected in the survey statements. The first theme was established by the Asian American participants themselves. As reported in the demographics section, there was a fairly large number of Asian American participants, and several ( $n = 6$ ) choose to share their experiences as teachers and as former students. One commented that they were “told (they) played the wrong instrument (flute) by a teacher because all the Asian kids take violin.” Another mentioned they had often been a victim of racial slurs, and these slurs were disregarded by the administration. One Asian American teacher discussed the prevalence of microaggressions against the south Asian students in their school, and another teacher mentioned how they felt that their voice was not heard in discussions about race.

Six respondents acknowledged they lacked understanding on the topic of Asian American racial issues, and/or their schools have not discussed these issues in anti-racism trainings. A couple noted that their schools provided little to no anti-racism training, and they relied on their own personal research regarding these topics. Several participants mentioned that they have little to no Asian American students, while some had many. If

they did receive anti-racist training, it did not cover Asian American racial issues. On the other hand, a couple participants mentioned that anti-racism training was becoming more of a focus in their schools, which is likely due to the recent surge in the Black Lives Matter movement.

Four respondents presented colorblind perceptions of their students of Asian American backgrounds and other racial minorities. One respondent reported that “pointing out that there could be racism creates more opportunity for it to become a problem.” It was mentioned that the Asian American families in their area “value music as an educational goal,” and “value education more than other groups on average.” One respondent included a long colorblind, anti-black narrative, concluding with “stop assigning privilege to color.”

Three participants expressed they were not comfortable with the lack of a neutral response item in the survey. This will be considered in recommendations for further research. Some respondents also pointed out the broad use of the term Asian-American, which will also be further discussed in the next chapter.

## **Summary**

The data collected from this surveys demonstrated a variety of beliefs and experiences regarding participant’s feelings toward anti-racism training and Asian American racial issues. Most results were consistent with previous research regarding these issues, such as lack of anti-racism training on these topics, lack of understanding by the general public on these topics, and issues such as colorblindness and meritocracy that

continues to permeate our schools. In the next section, the results will be analyzed and recommendations will be provided for further action and research.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Summary of Results**

The sample data indicated that a representative population was accessed in terms of years teaching and subjects taught. Virginia teachers were overwhelmingly represented by state. This was likely due to access of that group by the researcher. From a racial perspective, white (and white mixed) teachers represented 82.1% of the sample, which is in line with previous research that reported the overrepresentation of white teachers in schools (Elpus, 2015; NCES, 2018). However, there was also a large response from teachers who identified as Asian. This is likely due to the interest in the subject matter. Overall, the data fairly represents the population, with the exception of participant location by state.

In order to answer the first research question, a portion of the survey was designed to measure teachers' perceptions towards professional and collegiate training on the topic of racial issues. Results indicated that approximately half the sample had received this training through their education, and three quarters had received training through their employer. Participants also provided feedback regarding these trainings. Some indicated dissatisfaction, although most respondents wished they had access to more resources regarding anti-racism topics.

Survey statements for the second research question targeted the topic of general racial issues in the music classroom. Most participants indicated they were aware of overt racial issues in their schools, and many were willing to discuss them with their students. These teachers understood that racism is an issue and sought to increase representation in their classrooms. However, many were unaware of more nuanced and everyday forms of racism in the form of stereotyping, colorblindness, and microaggressions.

The third research question addressed racial issues among Asian American in the classroom. Teachers were aware that Asian American students experienced racism, and many made efforts to increase Asian American representation in their repertoire whether or not they had any Asian American students in their program. Others asserted that they could identify racist language towards Asian Americans in media and musical pieces. However, these teachers also reported that very few of their anti-racism trainings included topics on Asian American racial issues. Many felt their school administrators have not done enough to tackle these issues. Additionally, many teachers held colorblind and model minority type beliefs about Asian American culture and experiences. The comments also reflected these beliefs, with themes around the cultural value of education by white teachers juxtaposing the stories of bias and racism provided by Asian American teachers.

## **Discussion**

The results of this research have demonstrated that anti-racism trainings given at both the collegiate and professional level may be lacking. For example, participants felt they are often not given the resources they need to teach critical race consciousness to

students, let alone teach students who are not white. While most participants display an understanding that this is an issue that needs to be discussed, they felt they are not given the training and modeling necessary to tackle this issue in their classrooms. With the recent prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, many teachers may be becoming more aware of gaps in their understanding of racial issues. This becomes even more of an issue when it comes to Asian Americans, as their issues are rarely included in diversity/anti-racism trainings. Racism against Asian Americans is not often discussed, while model minority stereotypes and anti-Asia sentiment are still mainstream (Patel, 2014; Museus and Park, 2015). Teachers who continue to hold these ideas due to a lack of training, continue to perpetuate harmful ideologies against their Asian students and co-workers, which in turn creates a society that continues to use anti-Asian rhetoric in media, music, policies, news, and day-to-day interactions.

Results also demonstrated that despite the prominence of liberalism and multiculturalism in public education, some participants still hold perspectives rooted in white supremacy. As racial tensions continue to build with the recent resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, some white educators might feel resentment towards the discussion of racial issues and Critical Race Theory perspectives. While most participants expressed a desire to enact change in their classrooms to dismantle racial hierarchies, a few still held on to feelings of denial and aggression towards these issues. Some shifted the blame of racial inequities on racial minorities themselves, while others displayed “White Fright,” and avoidance of responsibility when it came to their role in anti-racist work. It is imperative that teacher education programs and schools are aware that these

ideologies are not just politics. Rather, they can impact whether or not students feel safe, supported, and heard in their educational environment. Teachers play a vital role in raising the citizens of the next generation, and it is imperative they instill values that promote critical democratic thinking.

A number of participants continued to hold beliefs in line with multiculturalist thought. Many had included musical pieces by non-white composers in their curriculum, and they expressed an understanding that racism is an issue in society and their classrooms. They understood the role they played in promoting anti-racism in their schools. This optimistic perspective indicates that most participants want to engage in the work it takes to promote justice and dismantle systems of white supremacy. While a small portion of teachers hold what could be interpreted as racist beliefs, the majority of participants expressed they have made an effort to promote anti-racism in their classrooms. However, these teachers also expressed a lack of resources, administrative support, and training. In turn, they continued to hold colorblind and stereotypical beliefs, especially when it comes to Asian American students. Many participants continued to hold beliefs in line with model minority stereotypes, despite claims of being able to recognize Asian American stereotypes in music and media. Perhaps, the trainings they received on these topics continue to press for multiculturalist thinking rather than a directly anti-racist and anti-colonialist approach. With the continued prominence of multiculturalist repertoire that uses exoticized, musical tourist language (J.W. Pepper, 2020), its no surprise that educators also hold similar beliefs. While focus on representation is important, having curriculum directly infused with topics tackling



systemic racism, as well as other historical, political, and social contexts is imperative to a holistic music education. Music does not exist outside of social issues, and its necessary to teach students to think critically about the society they inhabit.

Finally, this study provides some insight into the experiences that Asian American participants have with racism in their profession. Many reported they had not received any kind of training on their own issues, and some chose to report their own experiences with racism in their schools. It is evident that the lack of training on Asian American issues for music educators, as well as other educators in their school impact both students and teachers of Asian American descent. Participants reported they have experienced racial slurs, a silencing of their voices and perspectives, and harassment, as well as watching similar behaviors in the way Asian American students were treated. With the recent surge in anti-Asian rhetoric and race-based attacks from the COVID-19 pandemic (Choi, 2020), the model minority stereotype might be interpreted as a thinly veiled front for racist beliefs against Asian Americans. The initial response to the pandemic demonstrated how quickly American society was willing to forget model minority stereotypes in order to turn Asian Americans into a scapegoat for failures in America's leadership.

Overall, results indicated that knowledge towards Asian American racial issues is lacking among those who participated in the study. It is imperative that teachers are given training in both their undergraduate programs and through their employers to be able to not only identify and counteract anti-Asian racism in their classrooms, but to teach curriculum that incorporates these topics in music. This is necessary in order to create

classrooms in which Asian American students can feel safe and be proud of their identities, and create a society that works to dismantle systems of discrimination and oppression for all non-white populations.

### **Limitations**

A number of limitations existed in the process of this research. Given the relatively small sample size, these results are not generalizable to the entire population. Replication with large sample sizes are needed to combat this limitation. Additionally, as a master's thesis, the entirety of the research process occurred over the span of about six months. Due to the limited time frame, certain topics and considerations were not able to be explored. One of these considerations is the overgeneralization of the term "Asian American." Asian Americans as a whole are a heterogeneous group, with drastically different experiences and perspectives, and the use of the term "Asian American" in the survey did not reflect this fact. Not all Asian Americans experience the model minority myth, and different types of microaggressions and racial issues exist for different ethnic subgroups of Asian Americans. This study also failed to address intersectional perspectives within the data collection.

While the survey specified currently employed public school educators, a number of participants indicated they were private school teachers, former teachers, and university professors. While these perspectives are also imperative and were considered in the research, it is important to note that dissemination of the survey gave access to populations outside of the intended sample group. The research could have also focused on a sample of teachers who actually received some sort of anti-racism training, whether

in their education or employment. This would have allowed for a better understanding of the needs of teacher education programs or counties in terms of providing anti-racism training that goes beyond the common black and white or colorblind rhetoric.

A number of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the wording of the survey statements and the lack of a neutral response item. While this was done intentionally, the complexity of this topic breeds more nuanced opinions on these topics that could not be captured in a simple survey. Allowing for more open-ended responses, or even using an interview format would have benefitted this research. Additionally, some of the survey statements and open-ended questions were not written as clearly as they could have been.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the limitations of sample size and time constraints, it is recommended the survey be reviewed and redistributed in future research. A longitudinal study could also be conducted to identify whether Asian American topics become more often incorporated into diversity curriculum for teachers. A similar survey could be administered at the collegiate level in regards to diversity training in undergraduate education.

While there is a body of research on race in music education, and Asian Americans in general education, there is little research on the impact of various Asian American racial issues in music education. Additional research can be conducted in the areas of curriculum evaluations/development, Asian American student perceptions, values, and affectations, content analysis of repertoire, and analysis of policy. In general,

there is much to be done in music education on the topic of racial issues and prevalence of white supremacist values and ideals.

The current results, as well as what was found in previous research, present a number of implications for consideration for current educators and programs. The lack of anti-racism training in teacher education programs and professional development reported by teachers indicates that changes that need to happen in these areas. These trainings need to be conducted by professional knowledgeable on the subject of anti-racism, who don't promote colorblind and powerblind ideas. These trainings also need to be conducted beyond the common black and white perspectives to include brown, Asian, and indigenous issues, regardless of whether or not these populations exist within a school system. It is recommended these trainings incorporate intersectional issues in connection to race such as gender, sexuality, religion, language, disability, etc. With the amount of both overt and underlying racism present in the data, it is imperative that administrators and educators have uncomfortable and direct conversations with prospective and current music teachers on the role race plays in the classroom. They also need to be able to replicate the types of conversations and topics that can be addressed with students. Students of color experience racism and white supremacy on a daily basis, and educators need to be able to have direct and open conversations about the topic with students, both to prevent racial issues in the classroom and to educate students to become critically conscious and enact change for themselves.

Administrators also need to be conscious of the issues that Asian American teachers may be facing. An analysis of open-ended responses suggest that Asian

American teachers did not feel like their voices were being heard in their educational setting, whether it was about students or their own experiences. As a group that is expected to uphold the model minority image, the voices of Asian American teachers are often overlooked and/or ignored.

### **Conclusion**

The racial experiences of Asian Americans are complex issues. Media and music continue to portray yellow-face stereotypes and exoticized caricatures. Educational policy continues to use model minority stereotypes to define a heterogeneous population. Furthermore, students continue to be exposed to pressures to conform to an unattainable standard. Southeast Asian Americans are treated as culturally deficient or inferior due to the color of their skin. Asian American teachers feel like their voices aren't heard when it comes to their experiences with racism. The lack of common knowledge on the subject of Asian American racial issues in music education stems from the exclusion of these topics in teacher training.

In order to reverse and dismantle societal inequities against Asian Americans, teachers must be prepared to practice anti-racism in their classrooms and teach critical race consciousness to their students, regardless of subject. In addition, this knowledge is necessary to stop the perpetuation of caricature, exoticization, appropriation, and fetishization of Asian culture in American music. Music education serves as an important outlet for teaching democratic values, and the inclusion of Asian American racial perspectives is necessary to dismantle the system of American racial hierarchy.

## Appendix A: Affective Categorization Table

**Table 1**

*Survey Statements Categorization Table: Criteria vs Level of Bloom's Affective Domain*

Criteria/ Affective Domain	Receiving	Responding	Valuing	Organization	Characterization by Value	Total/ Percent
Racism in Education	1	2	2	7	2	14/ 0.38
Asian American experiences	2	1	2	1	1	7/ 0.19
Diversity/ anti- racism training	4	2	3	1	1	11/ 0.30
Demographics	5	0	0	0	0	5/ 0.14
Total/Percentage	12/ 0.32	5/ 0.14	7/ 0.19	9/ 0.24	4/ 0.11	37

## Appendix B: Survey Item Categorization

**Table 2**

*Survey Item Categorization*

Research Question	Question Numbers
Demographics	1,2,3,4,5
1. Diversity Training	11,12,13,14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21,
2. Racial Issues in Music Education	6, 7, 8, 9, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31
3. Asian American Issues	10, 15,16, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37

## **Appendix C: Research Survey**

### **Race in the Music Classroom: The Asian American Experience**

This survey is intended to identify information provided to music teachers through diversity trainings they may have received, and how these trainings have impacted their perceptions on racial issues. These racial issues will focus on Asian American experiences. The term "Asian American" can be defined as someone who identifies with one or more of the 48 countries listed by the United Nations as being part of the Asian Continent. This does not include Pacific Islanders.

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. If you do not wish to answer any question, you may skip it, or exit out of the test at any time.

1. How many years have you been a teacher?

0-5 years      6-10 years      11-15 years      16-20 years  
21-25 years      26-30 years      30+ years

2. In what state do you teach?

Alabama AL	Alaska AK	Arizona AZ	Arkansas AR
California CA	Colorado CO	Connecticut CT	Delaware DE



Florida FL	Georgia GA	Hawaii HI	Idaho ID
Illinois IL	Indiana IN	Iowa IA	Kansas KS
Kentucky KY	Louisiana LA	Maine ME	Maryland MD
Massachusetts MA	Michigan MI	Minnesota MN	Mississippi MS
Missouri MO	Montana MT	Nebraska NE	Nevada NV
New Hampshire NH	New Jersey NJ	New Mexico NM	New York NY
North Carolina NC	North Dakota ND	Ohio OH	Oklahoma OK
Oregon OR	Pennsylvania PA	Rhode Island RI	South Carolina SC
South Dakota SD	Tennessee TN	Texas TX	Utah UT
Vermont VT	Virginia VA	Washington WA	West Virginia WV
Wisconsin WI	Wyoming WY	Other	

3. What subject(s) do you currently teach? (You may select multiple) Check all that apply.

Band          Choir          General Music Guitar          Strings          Other:\_\_\_

4. With which categories do you identify (you may choose multiple)? Check all that apply.

American Indian/Alaskan Native Asian

Black/ African American Latino/Latina/Latinx

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander White

Prefer not to Answer

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5. What is your ethnic identification? (Chinese, German, Indian, etc.) (Put "Prefer not to answer" if you do not feel comfortable disclosing this information.)

\_\_\_\_\_

### Experiences

This section deals with topics regarding racial issues or experiences you may have had.

6. Have you discussed racial issues with your students?

Yes No

7. Do you plan to discuss racial issues with your students?

Yes No

8. Have you witnessed racism among students or staff in your school(s)?

Yes No

9. Have you included pieces by composers of color (non-white) in performances with your student ensembles?

Yes No

10. Have you performed/studied pieces by Asians and/or Asian American composers with your students?

Yes No

## Diversity Training

Diversity/anti-racism training refers to any training you have received that discusses topics related to race and racial issues, and teaching non-white populations. Training can be in the form of professional development, workshops, collegiate courses, etc.

11. Have you received diversity/ anti-racism training through your education?

Yes No

12. Have you received diversity/anti-racism training through your work?

Yes No

13. Have you personally studied teaching diversity/anti-racism in the classroom?  
(including web searches, reading books, watched videos, etc.)

Yes No

14. Have you adjusted your teaching practices/curriculum as a result of diversity/anti-racism training?

Yes No

15. Have any of the trainings you have received discussed issues faced by Asian American students?

Yes No

16. Have any of these trainings discussed the "model minority myth"? (The model minority myth is the idea that racial minorities such as Asian and Jewish people that are "model" minorities due to their apparent economic success despite racial barriers)

Yes No Don't remember

Beliefs

Answer the following statements with the number that most matches your personal views.

1: Strongly Disagree 2: Disagree 3: Agree 4: Strongly Agree

The first section will deal with topics related to diversity/anti-racism training

17. I feel the diversity/anti-racism training I have received/pursued has adequately prepared me to teach non-white students.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

18. I don't feel as though specific diversity training topics regarding Asian American issues is necessary.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

19. I feel that the diversity/ anti-racism training I received through my education/work is effective.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

20. I feel that diversity training in music education is important.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

21. I wish I had more access to resources and training about diversity and anti-racism.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

General beliefs

This sections will describe topics related to your general beliefs about racial issues.

22. I feel that racism is an issue in the music classroom.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

23. I feel that racism is a major issue in the United States.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

24. I feel that racial issues should not be discussed in the classroom.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

25. I feel uncomfortable discussing racial issues with students, faculty, and/or administration due to their responses.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

26. I feel schools have a responsibility to promote anti-racism.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

27. I feel that students have an equal opportunity to achieve success regardless of their race.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

28. I feel music educators should not have to discuss racism with their students.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

29. I feel historical, political, and racial contexts of musical pieces studied should be considered and discussed with students.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

30. I feel state and county standards and assessments makes it difficult to make time for discussions about contexts of musical pieces studied in the classroom.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

31. I feel I have a responsibility to discuss racial issues in the classroom.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

### Asian American Issues

This section will deal specifically with the topic of Asian American issues.

32. I feel that Asian American students in my classes are more successful than other minority students.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

33. I believe that Asian Americans experience racism.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

34. I feel that Asian Americans have strong academic success due to inherent cultural values.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

35. I feel I can identify musical pieces that use negative language/ stereotypes towards Asian populations.

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

36. I feel I can identify media (pop culture, video, art, memes, etc.) that uses racist language

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

37. I feel my school administration does enough to tackle racism against Asian American students in their schools.

Strongly Disagree    Disagree    Agree    Strongly Agree

38. Do you have any comments, suggestions, or questions regarding this survey? If so, include them here.

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## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Form**

### **The Asian American Musical Experience: Teacher Perceptions through the Lens of Critical Race Theory**

#### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

##### **RESEARCH PROCEDURES**

This research is being conducted to identify music teacher perceptions regarding racial issues surrounding Asian Americans, and how racial diversity trainings in schools have impacted this. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to fill out a short survey. This survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

##### **RISKS**

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research.

##### **BENEFITS**

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in the field of racial issues in music education.

##### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The data in this study will be confidential. Names, emails, and other identifiers will not be collected through the survey. However, information about your employment and race will be collected if you choose to disclose this information. Data will be collected through the Google forms survey program, and will be stored on the computer of the student researcher. Data will be deleted in five years. No identifiable links between the data and participant will be collected. Names and emails will not be collected. The de-identified data could be used for future research without additional consent from participants. While it is understood that no computer transmission can be perfectly secure, reasonable efforts will be made to protect the confidentiality of your transmission

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee that monitors research on human subjects may inspect study records during internal auditing procedures and are required to keep all information confidential.



## **PARTICIPATION**

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party. You do not have to answer survey questions you do not feel comfortable answering. You must be 18 years of age or older and a music educator in order to participate in this study.

## **CONTACT**

This research is being conducted by Seika Van Keuren in the School of Music at George Mason University. She may be reached at [seikavank@gmail.com](mailto:seikavank@gmail.com) or (703)-261-3738 for questions or to report a research-related problem. You may also contact the Director of Music Education, Dr. Charles R. Ciorba at [cciorba@gmu.edu](mailto:cciorba@gmu.edu). You may contact the George Mason University Institutional Review Board office at 703-993-4121 or [IRB@gmu.edu](mailto:IRB@gmu.edu) if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research. IRB number for this study is 1648764-1.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

## **CONSENT**

By clicking continue, I confirm that I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study.

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## **Biography**

Seika Van Keuren is a current student of George Mason University, pursuing her Master's of Music in music education. She graduated with her bachelors at the same institution in 2019. Seika has worked as a music educator for many years teaching band, piano, woodwinds, and guitar both privately and publicly. She spent this past year working as an English as a Second Language instructor in Noto, Japan, and after returning in August, has worked in childcare while finishing up her Master's degree. In the future, she plans to continue her career in music education, and hopes to pursue research opportunities that would allow her to continue the work of dismantling white supremacist practices in the music classroom.