Elephant in the Music Room: A Content Analysis of Ten Years of Publications Related to Urban Music Education

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Abstract

As suggested by the metaphor of the elephant in the (music) room, our field cannot challenge a problem that we do not acknowledge. The 10th anniversary of Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom provided a milestone for appraising the written conversation about music education in urban schools in the United States. To this end, three authors initiated a content analysis of publications from 2006-2015 that addressed urban contexts. Using Milner's urban school typology and Farmer's critical analysis of urban music education publications, we examined peer-reviewed trade and scholarly periodicals as well as master's theses and doctoral dissertations. Our findings suggest that while numerous authors have addressed this complex and multifaceted issue, efforts to address or resolve it may be confounded by limited perception, as suggested by the Parable of the Blind Sages and the Elephant. This investigation reveals the need for a collective way for the field—as a whole and in its constituent parts—to direct our written discourse and our practice toward challenging existing 'imaginaries' of urban places and the people that inhabit them, acknowledging their material realities, and envisioning their cultural and structural challenges as part of the collective work of all music educators.

Keywords: Music education, urban education, inner-city schools, content analysis

Introduction and Rationale

This article is inspired by a metaphor used by Wing (2009): the elephant in the (music) room. This metaphor suggests navigating the "fringes" of an obvious truth, thereby ignoring the issue rather than addressing it directly. We intend to consider this metaphor in light of the past decade of publications related to music education in urban settings.

In music education, the ever-increasing gap between those who have and do not have access to quality music education is our obvious truth. According to a 2007 report by the Council of Great City Schools, children educated in urban schools are twice as likely as those educated in non-urban schools…

> to be taught by a teacher who graduated from one of the least competitive undergraduate
> institutions, are 24 percent more likely to be taught by a teacher who failed the general
> knowledge component of the licensing exam, and are four times as likely to be taught by
> a teacher who was not certified in any subject. (Snipes & Horwitz, 2007, p. 3)

While it may not be accurate to say we do not acknowledge this truth, we often acknowledge it from a distant perspective—a problem "over there" that does not impact most music educators. We continuously navigate the fringes, eloquently yielding a perpetual cycle—identify the problem, discourse the problem, reframe the problem, (re)identify the problem—repeat.

It is imperative to understand that all urban schools do not encounter the same challenges; however, in general, urban schools serve higher concentrations of children living in poverty, teach more racially and ethnically diverse children, and educate larger immigrant and linguistically diverse populations than non-urban schools (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011; Dekaney & Robinson, 2014). Such sociodemographics are not themselves the

challenge of urban schooling (Rumberger & Palardy, 2005); however, they are often reflected in

structural and cultural challenges that impede urban schools' ability to effectively educate

students (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, & Noguera, 2011, p. 6). For instance, Elpus and Abril

(2011) found a strong negative correlation between many of the above characteristics (including

race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, native language, and parents' education level) and

opportunities for music study in schools.

Structural challenges include school policies and practices that hinder student success or

fail to adequately address students' needs, such as "(1) persistently low student achievement, (2)

a lack of instructional coherence, (3) inexperienced teaching staff, (4) poorly functioning

business operations, and (5) low expectations of students" (Ahram, Stembridge, Fergus, &

Noguera, 2011, para. 8). Cultural challenges are related to cultural dissonance between

practitioners and communities, such as "perceptions of race and class as limiting predictors of

school achievement, perceptions of intellectual deficiencies; and lack of cultural responsiveness

in current policies and practices" (para. 17). When resource allocations prioritize structural

issues, music is often left out. Conversely, the music instruction that does exist may not be

responsive to the communities being served (Gaztambide-Fernández & Rose, 2015). In other

words, the complexities of urban music education are paradoxical. Contributing factors that

create, maintain, and sustain problems in urban music education are systemic yet specific;

extensive, yet restrictive; limitless, yet limiting. Searching for the solution feels hopeless because

no single solution exists.

The National Association for Music Education (formerly the Music Educators National

Conference, or MENC) has officially recognized the disparity in the quality of music education

between urban and non-urban schools since the 1960s, at the height of the civil rights movement.

One of the first charges occurred during the historic 1967 Tanglewood Symposium where David McAllester stated, "The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems as in the 'inner city' or other areas with culturally deprived individuals" (Choate, 1968, p. 139). Using the metaphor of blindness, McAllester accused "those in 'the Establishment'" of being 'profoundly unwilling to face the invisible culture' of the inner city" (p. 139). (McAllester's failure to acknowledge the validity of urban culture with his use of the label "culturally deprived" suggests yet another kind of blindness, one that is at least as important as assisting in the solution of "urgent social problems.") In 1970, shortly thereafter, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC, now known as the National Association for Music Education, or NAfME) dedicated a full issue of *Music Educators Journal* to "Facing the Music in Urban Education" (Fowler, 1970).

June Hinckley (then president of MENC) brought the issue back to the forefront in her president's address in the July 1995 issue of *Music Educators Journal,* calling out "the contrast … between what should be and what is" (p. 33), by specifically addressing a situation in inner-city Los Angeles where students lost musical opportunities that had been available to their older brothers and sisters. These students, suggested Hinckley, "saw the elimination of music programs as one more expression of a lack of caring on the part of the school leaders and the community at large" (p. 33). As the 21st Century approached, MENC hosted Vision 2020: The Housewright Symposium on the Future of Music Education, both as a follow-up to Tanglewood and an opportunity to consider the future as the millennium loomed. Paul Lehman's optimistic address suggested that music programs in the 21st Century would "reflect the wide range of diversity that exists in the United States" (Madsen, 2000, p. 95) and The Housewright Declaration which (re)stated: "All persons, regardless of age, cultural heritage, ability, venue, or

financial circumstance deserve to participate fully in the best music experiences possible"
(Madsen, 2000, p. 219).

In 2006, the MENC again focused on urban schools with a pre-conference session at the
2006 Eastern Division conference that brought together a wide spectrum of music educators to
explore issues related to urban music education. That session resulted in the two-volume book
Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom, released at the 2006 MENC Biennial National
Conference. With 32 chapters in two volumes, editor Frierson-Campbell (2006a) sought to
"bring new voices to this conversation" about urban music education (p. xi).

While the voices featured in Frierson-Campbell's volumes—including teachers, teacher-
educators, scholars and policymakers—are both distinct and comprehensive; and while the two
books seem to have spurred numerous trade and research publications, there is little evidence
that connects the efforts of these disparate voices beyond that publication. It is safe to say that
such attempts by members of our profession, though well intended, have yielded numerous
metaphorical trips around the elephant in the music room. Believing that the 10th anniversary of
Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom (Frierson-Campbell, 2006b) provided an interesting
milestone for appraising the conversation, we initiated a content analysis of ten years (2006-
2015) of music education publications related to teaching music in urban contexts.

Framework

Definitions of "urban" are inconsistent across the corpus of trade and professional
literature related to education in urban settings (Farmer, 2015; Milner, 2012, Buendia, 2011).
One challenge has been defining urban and positioning the word in the context of space and the
populations that inhabit such space (Buendia, 2011). Regarding urban spaces, Milner (2012)
suggests conceptualizing urban schools based on socio-geographic considerations (p. 559), an

idea that adds context to the structural and cultural challenges (Ahram et al., 2011) described earlier. Milner's typology includes: (a) "urban intensive," for schools located in cities of 1 million people or more, where "the infrastructure and large numbers of people can make it difficult to provide necessary and adequate resources" (p. 559); (b) "urban emergent" for schools located in small and mid-sized cities with similar socio-demographic characteristics and related challenges, particularly resources; and (c) "urban characteristic" for schools that may or may not be located in big cities but are beginning to experience socio-cultural challenges, such as increased English language learners, that are sometimes associated with urban contexts (p. 559).

Buendía (2011) suggests that the urban construct is used in academic literature not only to signify place but also to reduce urban populations "to racial, economic, cultural and spatial attributes that are seen as corresponding to the totality of their aspirations, experiences and intellectual proclivities" (p. 2). By connecting the spatial with the cultural, such texts have "produced a discourse of individuals and spaces within cities" (Buendia, 2011, p. 2). These "imagined aspect[s]" ultimately impact urban education by "socially and culturally construct[ing] the people who live in it as well as their needs" (Leonardo, 2009, p. 144; Reay, 2007).

Farmer's (2015) research suggests that similar imaginaries regarding urban spaces and populations exist in many music education publications. Her analysis of the written discourse across 20 years of prominent music education publications suggested that words such as "inner-city," "at-risk," "race" and "diversity," are often euphemisms for "urban," which "is code for poor, minority, and unable to succeed" (p. i). By articulating the way our written discourse imagines urban music spaces as well as students and teachers, Farmer revealed that the "urban

music education" discourse privileges the White, suburban, middle-class ideal of music education.

While Farmer's research uncovered coded language that substitutes for 'urban' in the two most prominent journals published by the National Association for Music Education (i.e., *Music Educators Journal* and *Journal of Research in Music Education*), it did not reveal trends across the field. Beginning with Yarbrough's 1984 content analysis of the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, music education researchers have used this methodology to examine the content of articles, types of research samples, photographic depictions of gender in music books, and other texts to investigate trends. Because the "content analyst is using the text in a different way than they were intended" (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 36), a framework employing the following is needed to provide meaning: (a) "A body of text, the data that a content analyst has available to begin an analytical effort"; (b) "a research question that the analyst seeks to answer by examining the body of text"; (c) "a context of the analyst's choice within which to make sense of the body of text"; (d) "inferences that are intended to answer the research question…"; and (e) "validating evidence, which is the ultimate justification of the content analysis" (p. 35). Below we describe how we used Krippendorff's framework to examine music education publications related to urban settings. Our work goes beyond Farmer's (2015) study by expanding the body of literature and looking beyond the ways urban, and related terms are used, so the field will have a better understanding of how urban music education is being described and discussed across the professional music education literature published by the National Association for Music Education.

Research Questions

What are the current trends in the professional literature related to the practice and study of music education in urban schools since the publication of *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom*? This is the question we sought to answer with this research. While Frierson-Campbell's work seems to have spurred several publications, little is known about trends in the field since that time. The following research questions guided our study: (a) Since the publication, what research and/or information on urban music education has been reported in dissertations and theses, scholarly journals, and practitioner trade journals? (b) How is the word "urban" used in this literature? What other words are used, and how? (c) How do the sources specifically address the issues described in the literature? (d) Is there evidence of connection from research to practice and vice versa?

Method

In addressing questions about music education in urban contexts, we felt that it was important to query the relationship between the perspectives of practicing music educators and the researchers and other scholars whose intent is to inform and examine music teaching practice. Understanding that professional "cultural" differences between these stakeholders can limit communication between them (Labaree, 2003), we decided to examine three distinct bodies of music education literature: peer-reviewed trade periodicals as well as peer-reviewed scholarly research periodicals published by the National Association for Music Education (which calls itself "the only association that addresses all aspects of music education" [2020, para. 1]), and graduate research projects (i.e., master's theses and doctoral dissertations) listed in *Proquest Digital Dissertations.*

Trade journals included the *Music Educators Journal* (MEJ), *Teaching Music* (TM), and *General Music Today* (GMT) and scholarly journals included *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education* (CRME)*, Journal of Research in Music Education* (JRME), *Journal of Music Teacher Education* (JMTE), and *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education* (UPDATE). Our literature choices expand on Farmer's by including all trade and research journals published by the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) as well as one additional research journal, *The Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, which is recognized in the top quartile of North American music education journals by *Scientific Journal Rankings*. We also included graduate student research for two reasons: 1) master's theses provide a glimpse into the practical problems music teachers are trying to solve, and 2) doctoral dissertations may reveal the thinking of novice scholars who are navigating the boundaries between practice and scholarship. We felt that this combination of publications was representative of the written conversation regarding research and practice in the field between 2006 and 2015. We determined that overview sources such as handbooks and textbooks, as well as non-periodical policy and trade publications, were beyond our study's scope.

Procedures

Each co-author investigated one of the three bodies of literature and then shared their findings with the research team. McKoy searched selected periodical trade publications by entering each journal title into the *SAGE Journals Database* and then seeking the keyword "urban" and each of Farmer's codes within the year range of 2005 – 2016. Robinson (2018) followed a similar procedure for research publications. Frierson-Campbell entered the term "music education" as the subject term in conjunction with each of Farmer's codes to conduct a title, subject, and keyword search in *Proquest Digital Dissertations* for doctoral dissertations and

master's theses. Relevance was determined according to whether the publication pertaining to

music education (as opposed to the genre of 'urban music,' for instance) and noting whether the

contexts of the publication were related to one or more of Milner's categories of urban intensive,

urban emergent, or urban characteristic. A total of 139 relevant publications were identified by

the three authors, including 31 practical/trade publications, 51 scholarly publications, and 57

master's theses and dissertations. Next, each co-author did a frequency analysis of one genre of

relevant sources based on (a) source titles that included Farmer's (2015) terms, (b) audience, (c)

context/setting of the source content, (d) intent/purpose, (e) focus of the content, (f)

methodology, and (g) participants. After presenting our findings to each other, we discussed

them via video conference until we reached consensus (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Results/Findings

In all, we reviewed 139 sources across the three bodies of literature. Dissertations and

theses comprised 41% ($n = 57$) of the total, followed by research journals (37%; $n = 51$), and

professional trade journals (22%; $n = 31$). Our analyses across all three sources examined

percentage frequencies observed for five categories: Title, Audience, Context/Setting, Intent,]

and Focus. Analyses of percentage frequencies for the categories "Methodologies" and

"Participants" were limited to two of the three types of sources: theses/dissertations and research

journals (see supplemental materials).

Titles

When we examined the titles of all sources for the inclusion of one or more of Farmer's

(2015) five terms, "urban" appeared most frequently (36%; $n = 49$). The second-highest

percentage of sources were in two categories: those with titles that did not reflect whether the

nature of the content related to issues of urban education (26%; $n = 36$) and those featuring titles

with terms similar to Farmer's in connotation, but which were not included in Farmer's list

(26%; *n* = 35). Similar terms included: "African American(s)," "Hip Hop," "colonization,"

"culturally relevant," "ethnicity," "multicultural," "multiple risk factors," "radical musicking,"

"underrepresented students of color", "minority," "social justice," "socioeconomic,"

"underprivileged," "social class," and large metropolitan areas such as Boston, the Bronx,

Harlem, Queens, and Chicago.

Other terms uncovered by Farmer included "diversity/diverse," "at-risk", and

"race/racial," which respectively were found in the titles of six percent (*n* = 8), four percent (*n* =

5), and three percent (*n* = 4) of the sources we reviewed. "Inner city" was included in the title of

one percent (*n* = 1) of the sources, and "racism" was not found in the titles of any of the sources.

Audience

Our analysis determined that the literature we examined was directed at the following

audiences: in-service music teachers, undergraduates/pre-service music teachers, teacher

educators, PreK-12 students, administrators, policymakers, and parents. Fifty-five percent of the

sources (*n* = 75) in our sample were directed toward some combination of audiences. Thirty-

three percent of sources (*n* = 45) were intended for music teacher educators, followed by 13% (*n*

= 18) targeted for in-service music teachers. Only 1% (*n* = 1) of the sources targeted

policymakers. None of the theses/dissertations or articles in research journals and professional

trade journals were specifically directed toward administrators, P-12 students, pre-service

teachers, or parents.

Intent

We chose the word "intent" as opposed to "purpose" or "rationale" because we wanted a

term that would represent all of the three bodies of literature we were reviewing. Thus, for

theses/dissertations and research journals, intent represented the research purpose; for articles in professional trade journals, intent reflected the reason for writing the article. The two most frequent categories (each 15%, $n = 21$) were identifying effective music teaching practices in urban schools or other educational environments with ethnically and racially diverse student populations, and examining and evaluating perceptions and attitudes about teaching in urban schools and similarly situated educational settings. Investigating the effect of music instruction on academic or music achievement was the intent of 13% ($n = 18$) of the sources. Seven percent of the sources intended to describe community programs, institutions, or partnerships ($n = 10$), and another seven percent intended to inform policy ($n = 10$). In comparison, five percent of sources intended to describe student characteristics ($n = 7$). Five categories of intent had frequencies of 5% ($n = 5$) each: 1) identifying effective teacher preparation practices, 2) investigating teaching practices, 3) examining teacher retention, 4) examining the status of teacher professional development and/or recruitment, and 5) suggesting curricula. Three percent of the sources intended to provide professional development ($n = 4$). Two categories of intent had frequencies of 2% each ($n = 3$): 1) examining teacher preparation practices, 2) examining student recruitment and/or retention, and 3) identifying effective teacher characteristics. One percent of sources investigated philosophical ideas ($n = 1$). Two percent of the sources ($n = 3$) included a combination of codes and three percent of the sources ($n = 4$) were not applicable in terms of the codes we established for the category of intent.

Our analysis found some interesting differences in the frequency of intents between the types of sources we examined. For example, investigating the effect of music instruction on academic or music achievement was a relatively frequent intent for research publications (19% of graduate papers and 12% of peer-reviewed studies) but not for trade journals (3%). Evaluating

perceptions and attitudes of music teachers working in racially and ethnically diverse settings was the intent of 19% of both graduate and peer-reviewed research studies but also was not addressed in trade publications. Other notable intents addressed by research publications but not trade publications included:

- describing student characteristics (2% of graduate studies and 12% of peer-reviewed studies), and

- describing community programs, institutions, or partnerships (15% of graduate and 4% of peer-reviewed studies).

Music education policy was addressed most often in graduate publications (11%). Only trade publications suggested the intent of providing professional development (13%).

Focus

We chose the word "focus" to represent the area of the field that authors were addressing or trying to influence. The largest percentage of sources (22%; $n = 31$) focused on instruction issues. The next highest percentage of sources (14%; $n = 20$) featured a combination of focuses, followed by sources focusing on music teacher preparation at the collegiate level (9%; $n = 12$). Curriculum comprised the focus for eight percent ($n = 11$) of the sources reviewed. Academic achievement ($n = 10$) was the focus of seven percent of the sources. Student recruitment and retention ($n = 8$), magnet schools/ community institutions/ programs/ partnerships ($n = 8$), and teacher recruitment and retention ($n = 9$) each were the focus of six percent of the sources. Five percent of the sources ($n = 7$) focused on P-12 student diversity. Advocacy and policy comprised five percent of the sources ($n = 7$), followed by the impact of music on students (3%; $n = 4$). The remainder of the focus areas comprised two percent or less of the sources we reviewed and included P-12 teacher diversity ($n = 2$), the role of the teacher or the music program ($n = 3$), and

P-12 student access (*n* = 2). Three percent of the sources (*n* = 4) were not applicable in terms of the codes we established for the Focus category.

Distinctions between the focuses of the genres of literature we examined were also interesting. For instance, while 22% of the combined sources focused on instruction, that focus was much more frequent in trade journals (39%) and theses/dissertations (25%) than in peer-reviewed research articles (10%). The curriculum was also a more frequent focus for theses/dissertations (12%) and trade publications (10%), but not for peer-reviewed research articles (2%). Only research publications (i.e., graduate studies and peer-reviewed articles) focused on collegiate music education programs (5% and 18% respectively), P-12 student diversity (4% and 10% respectively), and academic achievement (12% and 6% respectively). Only graduate publications (11%) focused on community arts programs outside of schools.

Context/Setting

A variety of contexts and/or settings were exhibited in the dissertations, published research studies, and professional trade journal articles we reviewed. Multiple schools or school districts were the settings for 27% of sources (*n* = 38), the largest percentage among the 15 codes we established for this category. Music classrooms in urban schools were the setting in 14% (*n* = 19) of the sources, followed by sources that focused on individual schools (as opposed to multiple schools or school districts) (9%; *n* = 12), colleges and universities (9%; *n* = 12), individual or small groups of teachers (6%; *n* = 8), national data sets (6%; *n* = 8), large groups of teachers (5%; *n* = 7), individual non-school arts programs (5%; *n* = 7), settings within music organizations or associations (1%; *n* = 2) community (beyond school) settings (1%; *n* = 2), and international settings (1%; *n* = 1). In four percent of sources (*n* = 6), specific concepts or theories formed the context for the research conducted or the ideas presented. Eight percent of

sources (n = 11) featured a combination of contexts or settings. Four percent of the sources (n = 6) had settings not applicable to the codes we established.

Methodologies

For theses, dissertations, and research articles (n = 108), we were interested in determining the most frequently used research methods. Nineteen percent (n = 21) of the sources we reviewed employed experimental methods. The next highest percentage frequency was observed for qualitative case studies (15%; n = 16) and qualitative studies for which the design was not specifically indicated (15%; n = 16), followed closely by correlational studies (14%; n = 15). Descriptive quantitative studies comprised ten percent (n = 11) of the sources; seven percent (n = 8) of the studies involved mixed methods, and five percent (n = 5) were historical studies. Other methods (i.e., ethnography, narrative, phenomenological, discourse analysis, philosophical, action research, program and/or curriculum evaluation, white papers, literature reviews) were observed at frequency percentages of less than five percent.

Participants

The two most frequent categories of participants among theses, dissertations, and research journal articles were P-12 students (36%; n = 39) and P-12 teachers (23%; n = 24). The next highest frequency percentage (17%; n = 18) was for studies involving a combination of participants identified in our list. Pre-service teachers were the participants in seven percent (n = 8) of theses, dissertations, and research journals, seven percent of the studies (n = 8) did not involve human participants, and six percent of studies involved secondary data sets (n = 6). For four percent or fewer of the studies, the participants were educational administrators (n = 1), or the participants were not indicated (n = 4). Eight percent of the sources (n = 8) did not apply to

the codes we established for the Participants category. Parents were not participants in any of theses, dissertations, or research journals reviewed.

Discussion

Using methods related to content analysis, our purpose was to document details of the written "conversation" about music education in urban contexts from the ten years following the publication of *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom* (i.e., between 2006 and 2015). Because *TMUC* was an MENC (now National Association for Music Education, or NAfME) publication, we chose periodicals published by that organization, as well as one other North American research journal with similar eminence. We also included doctoral dissertations and master's theses published in *ProQuest Digital Dissertations* to include the perspectives of novice researchers. Because we were looking for trends and commonalities, we will discuss our findings across the three bodies of literature, making points about individual genres when pertinent. Note that specific information about each genre may be found in the supplemental materials.

Our first research question focused on what research and/or information on urban music education had been reported across the three bodies of literature we reviewed since the publication of the two volumes of *Teaching Music in the Urban Classroom*. The results of the frequency categories of intent and focus suggested that identifying and investigating effective instructional practices in urban music education and examining attitudes and perceptions about teaching music in urban educational environments were the primary focus of urban music education. As might be expected, the information reported in professional trade journals emphasized instructional effectiveness. Most of the dissertations and research journals focused on attitudes and perceptions regarding teaching music in urban educational environments. The difference in focuses between professional trade journals and both research journals and

theses/dissertations might be explained by considering the primary responsibilities in each context. In-service music teachers, the target audience for professional trade journals, are primarily interested in improving their instructional skills. On the other hand, music education faculty in higher education who prepare future music educators would understandably be interested in investigating factors that potentially impact the development of positive (or negative) dispositions toward teaching in urban schools.

We developed our second research question to investigate how the word urban was used in the literature. We also explored whether other terms were used and how they were used. In the titles we examined, urban was by far the most frequently observed term. An analysis of the source abstracts (see supplemental materials) reveals that, for the most part, the term urban is used to describe the locations of schools, as in Milner's (2012) definitions of *urban intensive* and *urban emergent*. However, the challenges noted by Milner (2012) as characteristic of urban intensive and urban emergent schools—resources, qualifications of teachers, and student academic development—were often implied rather than explicitly stated in the literature we reviewed. This embedded understanding of what is meant by urban substantiates our investigation of the term. Also, because one of the two next highest percentages of titles involved words similar to our codes (such as African American, Boston, Bronx, colonization, culturally relevant, ethnicity, Harlem, Hip-Hop, minority, multicultural, multiple risk factors, radical musicking, social class, social justice, socioeconomic, underprivileged), other keywords for urban may be worth investigating, both for continuing the critical examination of discourse around urban music education (as was Farmer's purpose) and for understanding how authors of various perspectives conceptualize other issues in urban music education.

Note that urban code words were used much less frequently for published journal articles, whether research or trade, than with graduate publications, which may reflect the impact of editorial teams on peer-reviewed publications. Still, the fact that more than a quarter of the titles in our sample used terms similar to those uncovered by Farmer suggests that there may be some coding going on. Titles may not be the most accurate determinant of authorial intent—conventions for creating titles differ by genre as well as by expected readers—but the title is usually the first element of written scholarship encountered by readers. Thus, choices for titles should be made with care to ensure that the author's intent and context are clear. Particularly in the case of titles that might have to do with specific contexts (such as urban settings), the words used are particularly noteworthy.

Our third research question dealt with how the sources we analyzed specifically addressed urban issues, whether structural or cultural, in music education. To speak to this question, we again considered findings related to authorial intent and focus. As described above, we chose the intent and focus of the words as opposed to purpose and rationale so as not to privilege the research perspective in the analysis of this body of literature.

The author intents described in our results section cover a wide variety of issues, with specific intents differing by genre. Overall, the sources in our body of literature addressed cultural challenges more often than structural ones. The most popular intent across the three genres of literature was identifying effective music teaching practices. Yet differences in the way this intent was addressed in scholarly versus research-oriented publications suggest different perspectives for authors of trade publications (who intended professional development for practicing teachers), versus authors of research publications (who suggested a broader array of intentions).

Music education policy, the most frequent structural intent, was addressed most often in graduate publications. More trade publications than research publications intended to identify school characteristics, possibly because their primary concern involves school settings. Only graduate and peer-reviewed research publications described community programs, institutions, or partnerships; this may reflect the fact that NAfME (the publisher of most of the trade and research sources we examined) is geared toward school music programs.

We used the word "focus" to represent the area of the field that authors were trying to influence. As with the category of intent, authors focused on cultural challenges more often than structural ones. More than one-fifth of sources overall focused on instruction, yet that focus was much more frequent in trade journals and theses/dissertations than in peer-reviewed research articles. Peer-reviewed articles and graduate student projects suggested some cultural focuses that were not included in trade journal articles (P-12 student diversity, collegiate music education programs, academic achievement, and P-12 student and music teacher recruitment and retention). Only peer-reviewed articles focused on assessment, and only graduate publications focused on P-12 teacher diversity. As with intent, only graduate publications focused on structural challenges related to community arts programs outside of schools. Other focuses that suggested structural challenges included advocacy and policy (not addressed by the peer-reviewed research articles we analyzed), and P-12 student access (also not addressed by the research articles we analyzed).

With our fourth research question, we sought evidence of connections between research and practice. We found a clear connection between research and practice in the category of intent. As mentioned in the discussion of our first research question, the two codes with the highest frequencies in dissertations were attitudes/dispositions and effective instruction. Investigations of attitudes and dispositions were the most frequent intent for published research

articles, while the most frequent intent in trade journals was effective instruction. This connection brings together the interest among music education faculty in recognizing and developing positive dispositions in university students and the interest among in-service teachers in effective instruction. However, the lenses through which these issues were viewed were notably different. Trade publications tended to address instructional practices as professional development, while research publications addressed instructional practice more abstractly.

Our analysis of the intended audience for the sources we reviewed finds that most sources address a specific audience: either practitioners or music teacher educators/researchers. Most research journal articles were aimed at music teacher educators. The audience for trade publications was evenly split between in-service teachers and a combination audience, usually of in-service and pre-service music educators. *Update* was the periodical most likely to address a combined audience of music teacher educators and in-service teachers. Dissertations were often aimed at a combination of in-service teachers and teacher educators, with or without administrators and policymakers, but since graduate research projects tend to have limited readership, these sources may not reach their intended audience unless the authors publish beyond their degree requirements. Few sources were aimed at pre-service music teacher candidates or administrators.

The categories of settings and participants also suggest connections between research and practice. The setting "multiple school districts" was important across all three bodies of literature, possibly corresponding to suggestions by Buendia (2011) and Milner (2012) that geographical places are an important part of the conversation regarding urban education. Also important in all three areas was the music classroom. Several theses and dissertation writers focused on individuals or small groups of teachers and on community arts organizations,

categories that were not addressed in the other bodies of literature. Research participants were most frequently P-12 teachers or P-12 students; only peer-reviewed studies included pre-service teachers in their research.

Our analysis of methodologies did not find overt connections between research and classroom practice, but the frequency differences between research methods in peer-reviewed journal articles related to urban music education (the majority of which were quantitative) and graduate student projects (of which a larger frequency were qualitative) raise interesting questions. Do experienced researchers (i.e., research practitioners) ask questions more suited to quantitative methods, while the queries of novice researchers suggest qualitative methods? Or do the distinctions represent a preference among peer reviewers for quantitative research?

Several limitations should be acknowledged, along with these findings. While publications during a specific time may provide evidence of professional concerns during that time, they are not necessarily analogous to what is happening in classrooms or research settings. Further, our choice to limit this study to peer-reviewed NAfME publications and graduate projects left other types of publications out of the analysis. We believed that such publications provided a snapshot of the ongoing conversation in North American music education during this period. However, this choice eliminated other periodicals as well as several handbooks and other resources devoted to culturally responsive and socially just teaching and scholarship that was published during this period.

Conclusion

Inspired by the metaphor of the elephant in the (music) room, we began this article by suggesting that our field was "navigating the fringes" of the situation regarding the lack of high-quality music education in urban settings. To query our field's response, we analyzed ten years

of publications from three professional literature bodies to represent authors and readers from a variety of professional roles—scholars, practitioners, and graduate students, navigating between those two roles. Our analysis suggests that while there is still some truth to McAllester's 1968 accusation of professional blindness regarding music in urban schools, there are also glimmers of hope.

We found many examples across the literature we examined that suggest concerns with cultural challenges such as teacher perceptions and attitudes as well as cultural relevance. Many peer-reviewed sources are using words in their titles that do not 'code' urban populations and urban spaces. There are clear connections between the intents and focuses of research and trade literature in general. However, different genres of literature are designed to reach different audiences. This is not a problem in and of itself, as each of our sub-fields has their areas of expertise. Yet, as Wing suggested in 2009, without adequate knowledge about our programs across the field, we cannot influence those things that are in our purview.

These findings bring to mind another elephant reference: The parable of the Blind Sages and the Elephant. In this story, a group of blind sages comes together to determine the nature of an elephant. Having limited sight, each can access only a single part of the animal and must determine its nature by feeling what is directly in front of them. This makes it impossible for them to agree on the nature of the beast in part or as a whole.

To have a shared, holistic understanding of the nature of the elephant in the music room, we must concede that we have more in common with the blind sages than we like to imagine. Each of us operates within a system—what some might call a community of practice—that rewards us for prioritizing some things over others, encouraging us to view music education discourse and practice through a particular lens. While many of us belong to a common national

organization, there currently is no specific mechanism for systematically gathering, examining, and disseminating information across the increasingly disparate communities of practice and discourse in a way that might open up our line of sight.

Next, we might determine where and how to begin challenging the limited imaginaries regarding urban education in our written discourse. If we want to be more inclusive in recruiting future music teachers, for example, we might address ways our work can become part of their mental picture of their future selves: Which school-based music education practices does our literature celebrate publicly? Whose practices do we feature in our journals? How do our written discourse frame the histories and other ideas that we teach and test in university curricula?

Another consideration lies in the realm of what Ahrams et al. (2011) call structural challenges, which for music education means policy challenges from the local to the federal level. Only 10 of the 139 publications in our sample addressed the topic of policy, with only one addressing policymakers as an audience. It may well be that our decision not to include policy journals limited our analysis of the discussion of structural challenges, but these results may be concerning. In addition to our focus on cultural challenges, we must not lose sight of structural ones, assuring that music education remains within the vision policymakers have for successful urban schools and that collegiate music education programs are seen as part of that process. Unfortunately, that does not always appear to be the case.

One of the catalysts for this study was a recognition that we cannot challenge a problem that we do not acknowledge (the elephant in the room). Our analysis suggests that unless we can perceive the complex and multifaceted nature of the problem, our efforts to address or resolve it may be confounded by limited perception (as in the parable of the sages). This investigation reveals the need for a collective way for the field—as a whole and in its constituent parts—to

direct our written discourse as well as our practice toward challenging existing 'imaginaries' of urban places and the people that inhabit them, acknowledging their material realities, and envisioning their cultural and structural challenges as part of the collective work of all music educators (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2011). Considering that providing effective music education in urban settings has been an acknowledged challenge since the 1967 Tanglewood Declaration, such an approach should be considered.

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