

Nova Scotian Roots:
Teaching Cultural Imperialism through Music Education
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Abstract

The colonial history of Nova Scotia is a complex web of power, violence, and displacement that is often not acknowledged at an institutional level. The impact of this history has left a permanent imprint on the social and political fabric of the province, creating a hierarchy of racial knowledge. The Nova Scotia elementary music curriculum offers a dynamic site to explore the ways in which that hierarchy was built through colonialism and how it shaped and continues to shape the province's education system.

My thesis examines the degree to which the Nova Scotia music curriculum addresses the impact of the province's colonial history, and how teachers navigate and interpret its content. By conducting an analysis of the Nova Scotian curriculum and interviewing music educators, I consider the ways that Halifax's musical life has been portrayed in its schools. My thesis does this by addressing the following question: how do music educators interpret and navigate the music curriculum?

In answering this question I find that music educators in the public school system are mostly white. Music educators are given an incredibly broad curriculum to interpret and use in whichever way they deem most appropriate. In other words, music educators in Nova Scotia can include diverse content in their classrooms if they feel it is relevant or important. If they decide not to include diverse content, the experience of non-white students is sidelined, and non-white local music, like African Nova Scotian music, remains absent.

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My research seeks to explore the ways that Halifax’s musical life has been portrayed in the Nova Scotian music curriculum from Grade primary to Grade 9, the way in which music teachers navigate this portrayal, and the consequences of the narratives chosen and not chosen. The main question that drives my research is: how do music teachers in Halifax interpret and navigate the music curriculum in Nova Scotia? Additionally, I question if they make adjustments to acknowledge diverse cultural and musical histories. To answer these questions I conducted an analysis of the Nova Scotia music curriculum and interviewed elementary and junior high school music teachers in Halifax.

The transfer, displacement, and enslavement of African and Indigenous peoples by European powers is often absent from Canada's written history (Cooper 2007, p. 68). This is particularly striking in Nova Scotia given that African Nova Scotians make up 44% of the province's visible minority population, making them the largest visible minority at 20,790 people (ANSA, 2015); thus, the multi-racial history of Nova Scotia, and the cultures tied to it, is still very visible in the city of Halifax today (Fraser 2013) but largely missing from what is taught.

Various studies conducted have concluded that one of the causes of systematic academic under-achievement in the African Nova Scotian community is the significant absence of African Nova Scotian representation in the curriculum, the administration, and the teaching staff (Thiessen 2009; Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Fraser 2013). Fraser (2013) argues that processes used to test students' academic capabilities remain largely unquestioned, and are assumed to be universally effective. This will undoubtedly have an impact on which students have the opportunity to excel. These processes need to be considered when determining the potential for academic achievement amongst students who may have non-Eurocentric cultural experiences or may deviate from what is perceived to be standard learning styles.

The exploitative and abusive practices that people of colour faced in Canada are deeply embedded into society, and maintain a racial hierarchy today. This hierarchy continues to severely impact the lives of African Nova Scotians. Instead of considering these deeply embedded power structures, the dominant population and institutions have developed false explanations for racial inequality that exculpate themselves and conceal their role in the dyer circumstances many populations of colour experience (Bonilla-Silva,

2009). Racial hierarchies continue to impact African Nova Scotians by restricting their access to and success in academic pursuits.

The absence of African experience, culture, and history in the provincial curriculum exemplifies one part of the systemic erasure of African presence from Nova Scotian history. (BLAC 1994). Music and formal music education is a fascinating site to explore racial exclusion because of the significant link between music and culture, and which narratives are chosen and not chosen. Thus, of particular interest to my research is the way non-European musical traditions, specifically music stemming from aesthetics of the African diaspora¹, are included, framed, and discussed in the Nova Scotia provincial curriculum. As a result, my thesis examines how do music teachers in Halifax interpret and navigate the music curriculum and do they make adjustments to acknowledge diverse cultural and musical histories?

My hope is to offer supplementary data to the larger discussion of systemic racism in Nova Scotia elementary schools. I will do this through curriculum analysis and interviews to explore whether teachers interpret the curriculum as Eurocentric or exclusive, and what they may do to mitigate that for a multiracial and multicultural classroom. Interviews will also explore if music teachers feel they need to insert inclusive and historically accurate depictions of *local* music, and the reasons for why or why not.

¹ Tricia Rose discusses the complexity of overlapping cultures throughout time. Through colonialism, some cultures have mixed and created specific types of cultural products– yet she insists that some cultural products grow exclusively from an African diasporic aesthetic. This is seen in the artistic priorities of the music, and is connected to a long pattern of artistic evolution within African communities (Rose, 2008).

Literature Review

To address my key research questions it is important to examine the following three topics: the relationship between the curriculum and the classroom, the potential of the anti-racist classroom, and diversity in music education. I will begin by examining the meaning of these three topics and will use them to frame the analysis of the curriculum and interviews.

My literature review will indicate the four guiding themes that I will use to analyze both the curriculum and the data from my interviews. The four guiding themes are: the degree to which the curriculum demonstrates *cultural imperialism* and how this manifests in the classroom, whether multicultural music is *othered* or situated within the classroom, the way *local* music is situated, and the way in which the curriculum and music educators discuss *diversity*. Within these themes, I will examine five key terms that will help to articulate my research question and data analysis: *local*, *diversity*, *cultural imperialism*, *Eurocentricity*, and *whiteness*. I seek to ground my research in the work of critical education theorists and to extend the understanding of inclusivity or exclusivity in Nova Scotian music classes. The goal of my research is to broaden the discussion of cultural imperialism in the education system and to challenge the ways in which diversity in music education is conceptualized.

The relationship between the curriculum and the classroom

Curricula are widely understood to offer a guiding framework for teachers to use when designing their lesson plan and delivering their lessons. Curricula, however, are frameworks assigned to music educators by the province and have the potential to limit or restrict educators—depending on what the province deems as valuable and valid knowledge. I am interested in how the curriculum in Nova Scotia can translate into the classroom. Building on Giroux, critical pedagogy theorist Peter McLaren (2007) suggests that curricula can be a capitalist tool that introduces students to their individual positioning as either dominant or subordinate in the established hierarchy of knowledge (p. 212). Similarly, Dei (1996) cautions that there is a constant knowledge hierarchy generated by the validation of some knowledge systems and not others, and that “for marginal voices, the school curriculum and pedagogic practices have become sites for contesting their marginality and expressing opposition to the traditional roles of schools” (p. 21). In other words, Euro-Canadian experiences and knowledge are given more value than others. This can also be referred to as *cultural imperialism*, which Young (1990) defines as “the universalization of one group’s experience and culture and its establishment as the norm” (p. 57). For the purpose of my research, I will refer to *cultural imperialism* and *Eurocentricity* in generally the same sense, as the two inextricably articulate that a curriculum serves dominant groups, sidelining the needs and experiences of those on the margins (McLaren 2007). Cultural imperialism is the first of the four themes that I will address in my analysis. Specifically, I will explore the degree to which the curriculum reinforces cultural imperialism, and how this manifests in the classroom.

Most often, curricula speak exclusively to the dominant class – or more specifically in the North American context the experience of white middle class students – thus ensuring that other students do not have their experiences validated (hooks 1994; McLaren 2007). However, critical education theorists insist that teachers have the opportunity to counteract this imbalance (McLaren 2007; hooks 1994; Adjei 2010; Netshinghe 2012; Dei 1996). In particular, teachers could choose to critically engage with the cultural imperialism that is potentially present in the curriculum and can work to deconstruct it by subverting the dominant strategies at play and recognizing the legitimacy of other forms of knowledge (Adjei 2010, p. 83). Netsinghe (2012) emphasizes the important role that teachers play by claiming that the diverse experiences of music and culture could not be present or validated in the classroom without instructors actively seeking to include them (p. 384). Lea and Sims (2008) discuss the difficulty teachers may face confronting cultural imperialism in the curriculum. Teachers must start by identifying the systems which privilege white students and alienate others. They maintain that this is difficult because of the “complexity, ubiquity, and invisibility of *whiteness*” (p. 12, emphasis mine). Indeed, although white skin is visible, whiteness remains invisible to those who inhabit it, and therefore it remains invisible to white people who are oftentimes in power. Although whiteness and systems of power can be elusive, scholars insist that teachers must work to identify these systems of privilege in their classrooms because without this, “they will continue to reproduce negative stereotypes and prejudices, and to act in racist ways” (Ahlquist & Milner 2008, p. 113). Halifax is not exempt from the ubiquity of whiteness, and I seek to explore the ways in which this manifests in the classroom.

Privileging whiteness can be seen in the province Nova Scotia. For instance, in 1994,

the Black Learners Advisory Committee released a report following their extensive study of African Nova Scotian academic experiences in Nova Scotia and made numerous recommendations to the provincial government. In 2009, Victor Thiessen released another report also outlining the academic under-achievement of non-European students in Nova Scotia in the subjects of math and English. Both reports point explicitly to a failure on behalf of the province to address systemic racism in the education system (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Thiessen 2009). Other work, such as K-Lee Fraser's (2013) shows that schools prioritize Standard English and that this prioritization negatively affects the Ebonics speech community amongst African Nova Scotians. She connects this to the concocted colonial notion that white people are intellectually superior to people of colour. This is echoed by Wanda Thomas Bernard and Fred Wien (2001) who conducted consultations with African Nova Scotian communities who raised concerns regarding the lack of African Nova Scotians in administrative positions of power –whether this be in the Department of Education, the Halifax Regional School Board, or the position of school principal– and the capability to have a meaningful impact on policy and practice. This report also highlighted the need for youth programming with “culturally relevant learning materials” in an effort to “help young people cope with racism”, and the expansion of educational access programs for youth to gain entrance to other university professional programs” (p. 7-8). As a result, the Nova Scotia education system and other institutions have exhibited the cultural imperialism outlined above by critical education theorists. Speaking to teachers about the way they negotiate such cultural imperialism is how I will attempt to learn about cultural inclusivity in Halifax classrooms.

Dei (1996) suggests that there are meaningful ways to recognize and value diversity

within structures that are largely controlled by dominant social groups. One example is to re-conceptualize the colonial “self/other” dichotomy that occurs in much of European contemporary thought, and can certainly appear in classrooms in Halifax. Although he identifies as largely being prescribed the role of the “other” as an African Canadian, Dei (1996) posits that the “other” should be re-conceptualized “in a progressive sense of political and cultural affirmation of difference” (p. 13). I will apply the concept of a self/other dichotomy to the way that multicultural music, or othered music, is situated within the curriculum and the classroom. This is the second of the four guiding themes that I will use in my analysis. Given that most music teachers are white, it is important to question the ways that they might discuss some music as othered. Does the curriculum instruct music educators to speak in a self/other dichotomy when discussing non-white music? How do music educators navigate this in the classroom?

The studies outlined above present a clear picture of why the term *local* should be questioned in the Nova Scotian music curriculum. Indeed, it is clear that local government and local policy do not always represent or cater to those who inhabit the *locality* of the province. Michael Lambek (2011) discusses *local* as “an instance of people addressing together the problems of their human and historical condition” (p. 198). Given the incredibly diverse population and specifically, the diverse “human and historical conditions” of certain groups in Halifax, I posit that we should consider the city to be a space where many equally important concepts of local exist and also consider the ways in which power will affect how different local(s) interact with each other. For these reasons, the third guiding theme I will use in my analysis is the way that local music is defined. My research will ask, how does the Nova Scotian curriculum define local, or local music? Does

the curriculum exclude certain types of local music? Does the curriculum speak of local and global as a dichotomy, and does this other certain cultural and musical identities? And importantly, how do teachers interpret local music in the classroom?

The potential of the anti-racist classroom

Music educators have the opportunity to foster an emancipatory experience through music education. Prominent anti-racism educator and scholar George J. Sefa Dei (1996) defines anti-racist education as “an action-oriented strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and the interlocking systems of social oppression” (p. 25). Dei asserts that this educational framework serves to resist the persistent stereotypical racialization of Indigenous and non-white peoples and to identify oppressive structures as issues of power and inequity. With institutions systematically inserting ideas of diversity and inclusion into their ways of operating, one may find it surprising that not many school systems have explicitly adopted models such as Dei’s (1994) to improve inclusivity on a practical level. Some institutions and teachers may fear discussing contentious issues such as race, gender, or class in a critical way because they would rather avoid emotional students and potential conflict in the classroom. hooks asserts that teachers must rethink their perception of safety and conflict in the classroom and consider what actually encourages students to meaningfully engage in educational material (p. 39). Further, which students do teachers fear may get emotional? Could this be an example of what Ahlquist & Milner (2008) caution as maintaining the comfort and privilege of some students while sidelining the needs and experiences of others? As demonstrated by her personal experience as an educator, hooks (1994) identifies that students have been far more willing to engage in the subject matter when it directly pertains to them and their experience (pg. 87). Indeed,

with a Eurocentric curriculum, students of colour may not feel that they can identify with the content, and therefore will be less likely to engage than students of European descent. Additionally, students of colour may find the system as inherently flawed when they don't see their experiences represented or acknowledged (Dei, 1996). Both of these systemic factors can negatively affect student success. Anti-racism education has the potential to subvert some of these institutional barriers to learning. As Adjei (2010) aptly asks, "what is the purpose and usefulness of education if it cannot motivate learners to show interest and commitment to issues of social justice, fairness, and equity?" (pg. 84). Indeed, what is the purpose of education if it disengages, discourages, or invalidates the experiences of local Halifax communities? I will continue to discuss questions such as these in my document and interview analyses.

The meaning of *diversity* in music education

Institutions are beginning to intentionally include and teach multicultural music; however, this is largely in order to benefit students of European descent by fostering more cultured, globally aware students. Some scholars insist that students should learn repertoire from another culture to broaden their musical range (Netsinghe 2012; Gonzo 1993). Indeed, this further speaks to the reality of cultural imperialism in the curriculum, as the student is assumed to be of European descent and the multicultural music is othered— existing only to further the white student's *cultural capital*. However, it is less common to critically study the erasure of the cultural experience of students that are physically in the classroom and have been in the area for generations. This is the intention of my research topic.

There is a growing trend in institutions to attempt to diversify their staff, students, and curriculums, without meaningful systems in place to ensure sustainable support for such

diversity or inclusion. Many scholars insist that the institutional trend of using language around tolerance, diversity, and inclusion needs to be critically examined to locate who is truly benefiting from the use of this language (Ahmed 2012; Aubrecht 2010; Brown 2006; hooks 1994; Razack 1998; McLaren 2007). When tolerance is discussed at an institutional level it often positions those who are being tolerant—white people— as culturally superior (Brown 2006; Ahmed 2012). Tolerance can then unintentionally maintain the structure of dominance that it is ostensibly attempting to dismantle (Brown 2006; Aubrecht 2010). The insertion of *diversity* discourse can “promote Western supremacy and aggression even as it veils them in the modest dress of tolerance” (Brown 2006, p. 7). In addition, systems of diversity, or “equality regimes”, can in fact be “inequality regime(s) given new form, a set of processes that maintain what is supposedly being redressed” (Ahmed 2012, p. 8). Interestingly, the addition of words such as diversity and tolerance actually exposes the whiteness that is already in place. The effort to diversify an institution or tolerate diversity reveals that the institution has in fact failed at diversity (Ahmed 2012, p. 33). This is the fourth guiding theme that I will use in my analysis of the music curriculum and interviews. I will examine how diversity is discussed and whether it is used to encourage meaningful inclusion of different experiences, or maintain dominant power structures. How is diversity used in the curriculum, and how does this translate into the classroom? Specifically, how do music educators use and interpret the term diversity?

Despite these contradictions of tolerance and diversity, many scholars argue that there are ways to meaningfully engage with the lack of representation and multiculturalism in institutions, and some find this to be specifically possible in music education (Lea 2008; Netsinghe 2012; Hoffman 2012; Mansfield 2002). If teachers are able to engage with the

complexity of power structures and cultural imperialism, music education can become an emancipatory space (Lea 2008; McLaren 2007). This can happen by the adoption of techniques like Lea & Sims concept of “educulturalism”, which serves to “undo—that is, reverse the effects of—the hegemony of whiteness as it is manifested in schools and classrooms”. They practice educulturalism by infusing lessons with social and cultural issues founded on the basis of illuminating cultural imperialism (Lea & Sims 2008, p. 1). Particularly concerning the affirmation of identities and experiences often ignored or excluded, music education can offer students an empowering opportunity to obtain a sense of agency in their art and life (Lea & Lea 2008). Hoffman (2012) describes their perception of an inclusive music education as a “culturally responsive music curriculum through which students and teachers affirmed diverse stories of individuals present in our public school community” (p. 1). Although there are limitations that institutions or a curriculum can put on the emancipatory potential for spaces of music education, critically engaged teachers can work to counteract these limits and offer students a more inclusive learning experience. My interviews will to explore the ways that teachers apply concepts like these in their classrooms in Halifax and whether they acknowledge, and attempt to counteract, cultural imperialism.

Music educators who teach in the Halifax public school system face a particular challenge in subverting the curriculum if it is Eurocentric. If they have not yet considered the structural systems of power that serve to invalidate students of colour, particularly the experiences of African Nova Scotian students, they perpetuate the same erasure and systemic racism that the Black Learners Advisory Committee (1994), Thiessen (2009), Fraser (2013), and Bernard & Wien (2001) all identified. This will then, as Ahmed (2012)

and Brown (2006) suggest, render the province's language around diversity and inclusion extraneous.

My thesis will fill one of the gaps in the research outlined above—that is, it will examine the ways in which music educators do or do not take the opportunity to create a meaningful and inclusive environment for students who have been traditionally excluded by cultural imperialism. I will attempt to fill this gap by conducting an analysis of the Nova Scotian music curriculum and by interviewing elementary music teachers who have taught in Halifax. Using the literature I have outlined above, I will ground my findings in the larger theoretical understandings of tolerance theory, critical pedagogy, and anti-racist education. Next, I turn to discuss the methods used in the analysis.

Methodology

Measuring the Potential for Subversion and Anti-Racism

In order to explore my main research question, how do teachers navigate and interpret the provincial music curriculum, I analyzed curriculum documents and conducted semi-structured interviews. More specifically, I conducted an analysis of the three main documents which outline the provincial music curriculum, including: *Arts Curriculum Music Primary-6*, *Learning Outcomes Framework Grades 7-9*, and the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum- Foundations Arts Education*. These documents cover the entire music curriculum from kindergarten to grade 9 in Nova Scotia,

and also present the principles upon which the curriculum is based. In my curriculum analysis, I focus on the four main themes that I have outlined in my literature review in an effort to address my research question. The four guiding themes are: the degree to which the curriculum demonstrates *cultural imperialism* and how this manifests in the classroom, whether multicultural music is *othered* or situated within the classroom, the way *local* music is situated, and the way in which the curriculum and music educators discuss *diversity*.

In addition, I interviewed elementary and junior high school teachers and an alternative music educator. I asked each participant approximately 12 questions using semi-structured interviews. These interviews attempted to access a range of diverse experiences while also remaining feasible within the time constraints of an Honours thesis. In order to conduct the interviews, I used a snowball recruitment process. I contacted music teachers in public schools with whom I am already acquainted with in Halifax, as a musician myself. They forwarded my recruitment email to their contacts and I received sporadic responses. Each interview ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. I recorded each interview with a portable digital audio recorder. Participants were given the option to refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study. Following the four themes outlined above, the interviews focused on how music teachers interpret diversity, local, and multicultural music the music curriculum, how they conceptualize these ideas in the classroom, and the ways that music teachers adjust their lessons combat cultural imperialism –that is, to ensure their lessons more accurately reflect the diverse musical and cultural traditions of their students,

I transcribed the interviews and used critical education theory, multicultural theory, and whiteness theory to analyze them. I considered and compared both the analysis of the

curriculum, and the ways that teachers describe their experience teaching this curriculum in the classroom. In my discussion, I will focus on the intersection of teacher's experiences, and the way that the curriculum situates students, teachers, and multiculturalism. Using my four guiding themes, I will discuss both my analyses and offer conclusions to answer my research question. Additionally, I will attempt minimize any risks associated with this study by consciously writing in a way that attempts to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Participants

Building from the concerns already raised by Nova Scotia education scholars, (Black Learners Advisory Committee 1994; Thiessen 2009; Fraser 2013; Bernard & Wien 2001), my research question contains three assumptions: that the provincial music curriculum is Eurocentric, that Eurocentrism will have a negative effect on elementary school students, and that there is a way to provide more meaningful and inclusive music education to students in Halifax. In order to fully explore my research question, I found it crucial to draw from a variety of sources. I interviewed 7 music teachers who teach primary to grade 9 music. Additionally, I interviewed 1 alternative music educator. This is valuable because my research question intentionally allows space to question the music education system and whether it is representing and educating the entire population of music students in Halifax. Interviewing someone outside of the music education system was crucial to properly examine the purpose of their alternative music program, whether they can identify gaps in music education that they may perceive themselves to be filling, and if they have any helpful models to offer formal music educators in order to make those spaces more inclusive. The questions that I asked the alternative music educator varied from my standard

set of questions, but followed the same themes. In my analysis, I will be treating all 8 interviews, including the alternative music educator, with the same weight and validity. As music educators, they are offering students the space to explore their creativity and musical knowledge, whether it is in a formal classroom or not. By treating all interviews in the same way, it will allow the opportunity to think critically about the formal music curriculum in school and to consider how this system shapes our perceptions of music education.

Curriculum Analysis

As noted in the methods section, the curriculum analysis examines three governmental documents. These include: *Arts Curriculum Music Primary-6*, *Learning Outcomes Framework Grades 7-9*, and the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum- Foundations Arts Education*. The first two documents are from the provincial Department of Education and specifically detail the province's expectations of the music educator and the outcomes for the student. *Foundations Arts Education* is a recommended curriculum that was written by a committee made up of the four Atlantic provinces' education departments and music educators.

The purpose of this analysis is to further explore how the province designed and prescribed the experience of music education. That is, to examine what musical resources and evaluation structures are given to music educators, and what is generally expected of them and their students. It is important to note that there are currently no accountability measures in place to ensure that music teachers are adequately representing the curriculum in their classroom, or that they are covering all of the "outcomes" that are outlined and required in the curriculum. I will be paying particular attention to my four guiding themes:

the degree to which the curriculum demonstrates *cultural imperialism*, whether multicultural music is othered, the way *local* music is situated, and the way in which the curriculum discuss *diversity*.

Nova Scotia: Arts Curriculum Music Primary-6

This document applies to all music classes from primary to grade 6 in Nova Scotia. The sections most relevant to my research are *Equity and Diversity* (p. 5), *Citizenship* (p. 8) and *Personal Development* (p. 9) in *Curriculum Outcomes*, the *Specific Curriculum Outcomes* for Primary-Grade 6 (p. 25-159), and *Assessing and Evaluating Student Learning*, in particular *Ways of Knowing and Diverse Learning Needs* (p. 195-198). I will discuss each section in more detail:

Equity and Diversity

In this section, the curriculum states that,
“Students’ development as learners is shaped by many factors, including gender, social and cultural backgrounds, and the extent to which individual needs are met. In designing learning experiences in music, teachers should consider the learning needs, experiences, interests, and values of all students” (p. 5).

In addition,

“In recognizing and valuing the diversity of students, teachers consider ways to

- *provide an environment and design learning experiences to affirm the dignity and worth of all learners*
- *redress educational disadvantage*
- *model the use of inclusive language, attitudes, and actions supportive of all learners”* (p. 5).

In the chosen excerpt and in the remaining text that follows, the term diversity is used to represent both ethnicity or culture, and also learning style. In this 276 page document, the term diversity is mentioned 9 times. Social and cultural backgrounds is mentioned once above as a factor that shapes student development, yet this is the only

reference to cultural diversity in this section. Although ethnicity and culture could definitely be considered part of the statements above, the *Equity and Diversity* section does not directly encourage music educators to consider ethnicity and culture as a distinct factor or priority in their classroom, and doesn't state this as something worth evaluating when planning and delivering lessons.

This section discusses “valuing the diversity of students”, but again does not distinguish which kind of diversity they are implying. Language like “valuing the diversity of students” does not explicitly point to the way in which teachers or other students should value this diversity. There are no specific tools offered to teachers in order to fully value and include diverse musical experiences into their lessons. Importantly, the document does not identify their interpretation of diversity, therefore this section does not clearly situate the teacher or student in relation to multiculturalism.

Curriculum Outcomes: Citizenship

In the next excerpt, diversity is explicitly discussed as cultural. Cultural diversity is certainly valued, as it is presented as one of the main curriculum outcomes. The text below situates students outside of “social, historical, and cultural diversity”, and seems to assume the students occupy a space of neutrality, or even whiteness. In other words, the text states that students will broaden their awareness of these factors, but does not position the students clearly inside or outside of what is deemed to be diversity.

“Through experiences in music, students broaden their awareness and understanding of social, historical, and cultural diversity. In music, ideas are grounded in social, historical, and cultural traditions. Consequently, curriculum in music provides students with an opportunity to

- *use knowledge, skills, and values learned in music to demonstrate value and*

respect for cultural diversity in local and global contexts” (p. 16).

What does “global contexts” entail? Who is included or excluded from this context? Because global is not specifically defined, music educators could interpret this in a variety of ways. Are recent immigrant students situated within the global category? What about African Nova Scotian students who practice traditional African music in their daily lives? It is not clear whether the obscurity of the term global will promote inclusivity or exclusivity in the classroom.

Curriculum Outcomes: Personal Development

In this section, the curriculum discusses the ways that students may experience personal development from the benefits of music education. The curriculum states:

“The experience of success and achievement, and the joy of learning that music promotes, can raise students’ self-esteem and increase their motivation for learning across the curriculum” (p. 9)

As Dei (1996) and Lea & Lea (1998) posit, the current state of the curriculum and the education system does not allow **all** students to feel success or achievement equitably. Given that the majority of educators are white, students of colour may feel devalued, alienated, and eventually lose faith in the education system when they do not feel represented (Dei, p. 15). This would certainly not encourage success, achievement, or raise the self-esteem of students of colour.

Specific Curriculum Outcomes: Understanding and Connecting contexts of Time, Place and Community

This section will specify the outcomes students are expected to reach through music

education. The most relevant section to my research is the following:

By the end of Grade 3, students will be expected to

3.1 describe ways they use music in school and at home

3.2 describe music they encounter in their communities

3.3 explore music from various cultural and historical contexts, including the music of Atlantic Canada (p. 14)

And, in Grade 6, it states students must be able to,

3.1 demonstrate an awareness of how music is used in their school and community

3.2 describe their personal musical experiences in the community

3.3 explore music from abroad range of cultural and historical contexts

3.4 use a variety of musical forms to give meaning to Canadian cultural and historical events and issues (p. 14).

In this section, “the music of Atlantic Canada” is not defined or specified, and left completely open to the educators’ interpretation. Some educators may teach Celtic music and assume they are fulfilling the need for Atlantic music education. This is not an accurate interpretation of Atlantic Canada, though it is a common one.

Many questions arise from the primary-Grade 6 curriculum. “Atlantic music” has not been defined, and therefore is left open to the interpretation of the music teacher. Similarly, although the curriculum encourages that students share “personal music experiences”, do teachers offer space for that? If so, what would that sharing look like? And finally, what does it mean to explore “musical forms to give meaning to Canadian cultural and historical events and issues”? None of these recommendations are specifically defined. This leaves ample room for interpretation or misinterpretation of the intention of the curriculum. It would seem that each individual music educator is able to define and present

certain narratives of local, music experiences, and cultural and historical Canadian issues. Presently, there are no accountability processes for teachers, or outside emphasis on the importance of diverse music education. For example, although the curriculum clearly states that diverse music experiences are a priority in the classroom for Nova Scotia, teachers are not offered any resources in order to effectively enact diversity in their classroom. On professional development days, teachers do not attend cultural competency workshops. It is difficult to imagine that music educators could effectively include diverse musical experience in their classroom without any support or resources from the school board or the province.

In the interviews, I hope to explore whether the curriculum as empowers teachers to create inclusive learning environments, or if the curriculum allows educators to maintain the positioning of students in their roles of either dominant or subordinate in the hierarchy of knowledge and experience (McLaren 1989).

Grade 7-9 Learning Outcomes Framework

This document applies to all junior high-school music programs, or Grade 7-9. The music programs for this age largely manifest as “band programs”. In other words, a classroom that houses a variety of instruments that usually conform to a jazz band framework– however, this does not mean they perform jazz music exclusively. All students learn to play one instrument (percussion, various wind instruments, brass instruments, maybe piano and double bass), and together they play cooperatively to create a musical ensemble. Some schools will also have a strings program, where students can play violin, viola, cello, and double bass. Students will learn musical pieces as a group, and perform twice or more a year in a school concert setting. In this document, there is one section on

music in the Grade 7, Grade 8, and Grade 9 curricula, *Understanding and Connecting Contexts of Time, Place, and Community*. This is the most relevant section of the document and is present in the same form in all three grade levels.

Grade 7, 8, & 9: Understanding and Connecting Contexts of Time, Place, and Community

GCO 3: Students will be expected to demonstrate critical awareness of and value the role of the arts in creating and reflecting culture.

- *Identify and describe use of music in daily life, both local and global*
- *Compare music from a range of cultural and historical contexts*
- *Examine and describe ways in which music influences and is influenced by local and global culture*

GCO 4: Students will be expected to respect the contributions of individuals and cultural groups to the arts in local and global contexts and value the arts as a record of human experience and expression.

- *Reflect on ways in which music expresses the history and the cultural diversity of local, national, and international communities*

There is no mention of diversity in this section, but the 142 page document mentions diversity 14 times. Interestingly, there is a consistent dichotomy between “local and global”. This is not inherently Eurocentric, but it is important to consider how music educators may interpret this dichotomy. Again, what exactly does local music mean, especially in contrast to global music? Are recent immigrants considered to have local or global musical identities? What about African Nova Scotian students who may practice traditional African music in their homes and lives? I am interested in the ways that music educators navigate these aspects of the curriculum, and how these issues manifest in the classroom. My literature review speaks to the importance of recognizing and appreciating the “other”, or in this case the “global” (Dei 1996). The curriculum clearly speaks to this, but allows music

educators the freedom to define what the global is, and how it is represented in the classroom. Representing and appreciating music that is othered will be something I focus on in the interview section. Students are not specifically situated in relation to multiculturalism, except for the designation of local and global. Cultural exchange is clearly valued in the above excerpt and mandated in the classroom.

Foundations for Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum

This document is described by its authors as,

a framework on which educators and others in the learning community can base decisions concerning learning experiences, instructional techniques, and assessment strategies. This framework provides a coherent, integrated view of arts education and reflects current research, theories, and classroom practice”.

It is intended to be used to “inform subsequent development of curriculum, guides in the arts from school entry to grade 12” (p. 1). This is a large comprehensive document that was created in collaboration with the education departments of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. There are two authors from each province as it is meant to be a cohesive document that can apply to all of the Atlantic provinces. Additionally, there were provincial working groups comprised of “artists, teachers, and other educators...who provided input and feedback to the document during the development process” (p. iii).

The specific “outcomes” are again outlined from Grade primary-Grade 12, in the exact same form as the previous two documents I have discussed. What differs from the other two curricula is the more extensive and specific *Equity and Diversity* section which appears at the end of the document in *Contexts for Learning and Teaching*. This section states,

“The society of Atlantic Canada, like all of Canada, is linguistically, racially, culturally, and socially diverse. Our society includes differences in race, ethnicity, gender, ability, values, lifestyles, and languages. Schools should foster the understanding of such diversity. The Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Arts Education Curriculum is designed to meet the needs, values, experiences, and interests of all students.

Dance, drama, music, and visual arts promote a commitment to equity by valuing, appreciating, and accepting the diverse multicultural and multiracial nature of society, as well as by fostering awareness and critical analysis of individual and systemic discrimination. Arts education encourages students to question their own assumptions, and imagine, understand, and appreciate realities other than their own” (p. 53).

Diversity is mentioned eighteen times in this document, and is broadly described to represent a multitude of factors, including race and culture. This document does not necessarily situate students or teachers in relation to multiculturalism, although it does suggest that schools should “foster the understanding of such diversity”. Because diversity was broadly defined, it would appear that the authors are intending this to be directed at all students. It is clear that this document values and encourages cultural exchange, as it is the framework upon which the other two curricula formed their inclusion of diverse musical and cultural experiences. The curricula generally refer to this as “citizenship”.

This document asks students to “question their own assumptions”. This aligns well with many of Dei’s (1996) discussions of subverting cultural imperialism by questioning dominant norms and contesting marginality by opposing traditional perceptions of knowledge hierarchies. Additionally, this document openly acknowledges the prevalence of systemic discrimination, and posits that the arts is an effective site for critically analyzing the role that each individual plays in the perpetuation of systemic discrimination. This also supports Lea and Simms’ (2008) ideas for subversion in the classroom, yet for these principles to truly be enacted, this needs to be led and fully supported by the educator. This

will be further explored in my interview section.

The authors explicitly state that this document is intended to ensure the needs of all students are met. Since it has outlined that students have a variety of unique experiences, it is very clear that this document is encouraging a far more nuanced interpretation of music education. Stating that it would like to meet the needs of all students, while taking diversity of all forms into account, this document appears to be calling for a comprehensive, inclusive framework of education that acknowledges diverse experiences in the way that Dei (1996) would suggest—an affirmation and appreciation of difference.

The Nova Scotia music curriculum is explicit in its intention to include diverse musical experiences. It is not, however, clear on how music educators should interpret and apply diversity to the classroom. The curriculum is open enough to be interpreted in many ways. In the interviews, I will investigate the ways that music educators interpret this and how diversity manifests in the classroom. Although there is no guidance given and not accountability measures in place, diversity is a significant portion of the curriculum and is certainly intended to be appreciated and implemented in the classroom.

Interviews

To supplement the curriculum analysis, I interviewed music educators from a variety of schools with different socio-economic conditions within Halifax Regional Municipality. I have changed all of their names to maintain anonymity. All of the public school educators

were white, except for an alternative music educator who is a black man of Caribbean descent. The gender distribution of the other seven participants were 6 men and one woman.

Common Themes

There were a number of commonalities across the interviews. Almost all of the participants claimed that the curriculum is a completely open and basic guideline that gives the teacher full agency to design and deliver lessons. This was generally said in response to my question of whether they felt the curriculum accurately reflected the diversity of the province. Fred Ward teaches band at a junior high school in a suburban area that is mostly comprised of students of Arabic descent and white students, with a few African Nova Scotian students. He discussed whether the curriculum represents the diversity of the province by saying, “I don’t think it does, and I don’t even think it was intended to”. Bill Underwood, a junior high school teacher who currently teaches band at a school in an affluent area, claimed that the “curriculum has nothing to do with what we are teaching”. Richard Turner is a band teacher at an isolated rural junior high school where the majority of students live in acute poverty. He also mentions that the curriculum “doesn't mention Halifax. It does mention local, and personal history, it doesn't say you have to do Mi’kmaq music. Or Scottish, or Cape Breton, but there’s a lot of music available for that part of the culture”. Turner is pointing to how the curriculum allows teachers to interpret what local music signifies, and noting that Celtic music, or Scottish and Cape Breton music, is much more accessible to teachers than other forms of local music, like Mi’kmaq music. He sees a significant gap in resources for non-Celtic music, which he explicitly speaks to in some of my other questions.

Participants claimed that teachers generally have complete agency over what the students hear, learn, and perform. Wanda Eaton, a teacher who has taught at 3 different schools in the HRM, including one that she described as exceptionally culturally diverse, claimed that it is “up to the teacher to care about stuff like that... (because) the curriculum is very flexible, you can do whatever you want it and make it covered”. Martin Kline teaches at an affluent urban school, and is the only teacher I interviewed with a music budget and support from his school’s administration. He feels similarly to Eaton, and says that “The curriculum doesn’t care, it’s up to the teacher to identify what is important to teach in class. The curriculum is wide open for interpretation”. Carl Edwards teaches elementary music to students in a suburban area and he is shocked by the racism he sees in Halifax .When asked how the curriculum encourages teachers to incorporate the sometimes complex cultural history of Nova Scotia, Edwards responded “I’ve thought a lot about this. It encourages you to (include) it, but it doesn’t give you a lot of direction for how or why”. Richard Turner agrees and states that it’s “more to do with the music (the teacher) chooses”. Turner is currently arranging sheet music for the Mi’kmaq Honour Song for his junior high school band because he feels like there is not enough Mi’kmaq content in the curriculum.

However, other interviewees felt like music educators will teach whatever they like, or whatever they feel most comfortable with, because there is such flexible guidelines around what content needs to be included in lessons. Martin Kline discusses this and raises the idea that teachers have full discretion over the music they include and don’t include in their lessons. Additionally, as Carl Edwards points out, “there is no oversight for music teachers. Most administration have no idea what the outcomes (or curriculum) are for music, there is no one to peek over your shoulder to see what you are doing”. Martin Kline

points out that “when we go to in service or PD (Professional Development) days, which is very rare for music teachers, there is no one there to speak to us about ethnic diversity, coming from the same stream, which is Canadian origin or western European”. Wanda Eaton adds that “I don’t feel any pressure from the curriculum because the principals don’t know it, so I feel safe to do what I want...Its up to the teacher”.

An important part of inclusivity and representing diverse experiences can come in the form of teaching practices. Different cultural experiences will have different ways of teaching and learning, and participants spoke about whether different ways of teaching fit into the prescribed evaluation structures that are mandated by the province. Many of the music educators discussed this issue and noted that evaluating students within the education system can sometimes restrict the type of content that is taught. When I asked him about the ways that he has made his classroom more inclusive of diverse musical experiences, Bill Underwood responded, “Yes teaching techniques. It’s really really basic. And its really powerful. Call and response...you can teach feel a lot faster orally than in writing. Most of music you can teach faster by doing, not writing. Straight to oral and muscle memory. And the rhythm so its present. It forces you into the present... and along with that comes the whole non-hierarchical model”. He added that, “Yeah music literacy is overrated in schools yet its extremely practical. That’s the way I teach it...so it would be the equivalent to not being able to read books, you would manage fine in life”. In relation to how these ideas translate into evaluation techniques, Underwood says “These outcomes (or evaluation standards) are different for every subject. In the arts, they can be really fuzzy”.

Alternatively, junior high band teacher Fred Ward discusses these different practices as fundamentally impossible to evaluate. He insists that “if I were to focus on improv

(improvisation), the community would not see it as a band...our new curriculum has a little focus on improvisation and it makes use of solfège (music literacy) in its approach”. He adds that “teaching kids to make sounds with their instruments and experimenting, its all kind of cool and works and sounds like music, but its not really music...the improv thing is cute and all, but they really need to learn melodies”. Ward is very clear about the limitations of the school system, and how diverse musical experiences just don’t align with the current education system. He says that, “we have to generate a mark. And this other stuff, really cool stuff, cannot be quantified, that’s the problem...(for) creative projects, all I can say is ‘done’ or ‘not done’”.

Both Underwood and Ward describe their experience of needing to quantify diverse teaching practices within a fairly strict Eurocentric system, yet they feel drastically different about the value of this effort. Underwood is adamantly in favour of pushing the education system’s boundaries and attempting to re-conceptualize barriers to include diverse musical experience. Ward expresses that this is just not possible within the system, and also makes it clear that he does not think these alternative or non-Eurocentric learning models are valuable in the classroom.

Brett O’Neill teaches a group of junior high school students that are working class or middle class, and a combination of Asian descent, Middle Eastern descent, and white. He presents an alternative way of applying non-traditional teaching methods within the European classical music genre. He noted,

Our program is based around experiential process and it is designed so that we don’t become drill and kill people, or beat notes into students, that we are developing their understanding of music as a whole...we’re doing a Beethoven symphony, so I never use bar numbers, I use form. So

I'll say start at the development...the recapitulation², because I don't want them to just think about notes...why we're interpreting the things we are, based on what we know about Beethoven, so I am trying to have the students perceive what the composers intent was and respond to it.

O'Neill also feels that the curriculum can be interpreted in radically different ways, and that "you could teach this curriculum through a drum and dance program, you could teach this through a guitar program. Its designed to meet the needs of whatever community it is being taught in, which I think is its greatest strength...I believe we can be as inclusive as we want to be. I just think its hard". By saying this, O'Neill shows that he believes it is possible to teach in a variety of styles and also promote inclusivity within the evaluation and curriculum structure presented by the province. He believes it is possible to be inclusive, but recognizes that it takes effort and not all teachers are necessarily interested in making that effort. O'Neill echoes many other participants in believing that the curriculum is incredibly broad. This again highlights the idea that teachers choose the priorities for their classrooms, and those priorities may or may not include promoting an inclusive and representational environment.

Each teacher used diversity in a similar way, and would often question what kind of diversity I meant when I mentioned it in one of my questions. Some music educators would not discuss cultural diversity unless I explicitly asked, even if I needed to ask more than once. They would often discuss diverse learning needs instead, or diverse mental health needs. Some spoke instinctively about gender, and needed to be specifically asked to comment on cultural diversity. For example, when I asked Bill Underwood about the ways

² *Development* and *recapitulation* are both terms for a certain recognizable point in a musical piece that follows a specific form structure. By doing this, O'Neill is attempting to change the way that students conceptualize music and deepen their understanding of musical progression and the intention behind Beethoven's work.

in which he has made his classroom more inclusive of diverse experiences, he responded that “playing music at all is a diverse experience because they don’t do that at home”.

Wanda Eaton had a different interpretation of the term diversity. She mentioned that one school she taught at hosted a diversity day where students were asked to perform music from their culture and could practice their performances outside of school hours. She made it clear that this was not part of a school day or the curriculum, this was “extra”. Fred Ward continues to emphasize his interpretation of diversity as not feasible within the evaluation structure, and says “if I can make (my lessons) more diverse, how am I going to mark that?”. Carl Edwards used diversity to recognize the whiteness of music educators in Halifax and states that “there’s lots of great teachers that are from African, that’s an amazing way to have diversity in the classroom”. Brett O’Neill continues to explain the curriculum and completely open and up to the teacher. He discusses diversity as foundational to the curriculum and worthy of emphasizing. Discussing this, he claims that “Nowhere in (the curriculum) does it say, ‘Only talk about white people’. It tells you to use music to have students explore their community... If you have teachers that say no it doesn’t, then they don’t know how to read”.

It is imperative to be reminded that all of the music educators discussed thus far are white. As a result it is worth asking how does this affect the way they conceptualize diversity, and how valuable it is to them? Bernard Taylor is the alternative music educator that I interviewed. Taylor is the founder and executive director of an alternative music program that serves youth who are at risk or young offenders. When asked about diversity in the formal music education curriculum, he states that “I think diversity (in curriculum) is a good thing, (but) based on observation I would say it is slanted somewhat, to pretty

classical, maybe even Eurocentric would be a good word to describe it”. He adds that “a curriculum that reflects the diversity of its environment is key...sure, you have outcomes that you are trying to beat, but I think that outcomes can be met in interesting ways”. Taylor agrees with other educators like Underwood and O’Neill, and points to the fact that teachers have the freedom to insert different teaching techniques or diverse content into their classrooms, but they must have the will to do so. Indeed, if teachers do not value diverse experiences in the classroom or think critically about cultural imperialism or their own whiteness, they may point to prescribed evaluation methods as a barrier to maintaining an inclusive and diverse classroom.

A topic that continually came up without probing was the conversation around what to call the holiday concert in the winter. Wanda Eaton graduated from a progressive bachelor of education program and was prepared to have tough discussions at her new job about systemic oppression and inclusivity. She was surprised when her principal kept referring to the winter concert as a Christmas concert.

I made an announcement about the winter concert...I’ve always been conscious of calling concerts ‘winter’ concerts...and he changed it to the Christmas concert. I went to tell him I am very consciously calling it the winter, and he said ‘no this is the celebration for Christmas’. But I am being inclusive. It was funny that my administration has pushed Christmas...I find...this is a very ‘churched’ province. It’s more socially acceptable to talk about holidays and ignore other ones

Carl Edwards also expressed the importance of using inclusive language, and discusses the difficulty he faces in attempting to ensure his Muslim students felt included in his music classroom.

This has become a big concern around Christmas concerts, there are all sorts of rules and etiquette for approaching music in (Muslim) culture, and I’m not well versed enough to know. You have to go to mosque and talk to the imam, and music is not as accessible...resources are hard to find. That’s a challenge...I’ve had administrators come to me and say, the concert has to be really multicultural and I’m like, okay, I try, but it’s winter, and we live in Canada...we can’t say we’re going to do a Haitian theme, we have no Haitian kids here...they don’t identify with it...it’s

okay if we are talking about snowmen...its appropriate to stay away from the religious part, that's more of a consumer thing

Richard Turner similarly expressed the importance of inclusivity and the ways that administration promote or inhibit this with their language. He has had a variety of experiences surrounding naming the winter concert.

One school said you have to call it a Christmas concert, people are going to freak out, and the other school was the opposite. It was the same music, except one was a Christmas concert and one wasn't. The school that wanted the Christmas concert was boondocks, lots of country kids, and lots of Mi'kmaq kids...but there are typical nova scotia kid demographic, that would have been there 80 years ago...but what about our Mi'kmaq students? What about our Muslim students? It's hard. I'd like to have a collection of a half dozen for each culture.

The music educators that I interviewed spoke about themselves in relation to multiculturalism and whiteness in very interesting ways. Bill Underwood points out that a lot of the music he teaches in his band class comes from African diaspora aesthetics, and he says that the students “know it, but they don’t know they know it. Once you point it out, it starts becoming more noticeable”. Similar to whiteness, where music comes from and what people have gone through to produce certain music is often taken for granted and unexplored by those who are not directly oppressed or impacted by these dominant assumptions. When asked if he feels limited in the classroom by his personal cultural tradition or experience, Bill Underwood responded “Sure, I mean I can’t teach strings, I’m not that white... I barely understand bagpipes and I’m a quarter Scottish”. Underwood situates himself not only in his whiteness, but points to the complexity of identity and experience, and exposes the tendency to essentialize cultural experience to ethnicity.

Wanda Eaton frequently reminds her students to think critically about the fact that they are mostly learning about “white dead dudes”. She adds “I try to pick music that isn’t just a bunch of dead white dudes...or alive white dudes trying to play African music. I feel worse doing that”. In other words, Eaton is highlighting two of the options she feels that she has in the classroom. Her access to resources appears to be limited to classical musicians or

what she refers to as “white dead dudes”, and other white people attempting to be more diverse. It is clear that she feels white male musicians are the dominant resource that is available for the classroom. Discussing her experience with the term “world music”, Eaton expresses that

I don't like that term because, what isn't world music? But I took a lot of ('world music' repertoire) because they were more fun. All my (university music) teachers were from the part of the world they were teaching, and to me that was okay, because you grew up there, and now you are sharing it with me, but living here and going to African drumming workshops and it is a bunch of white people leading white people, I feel weird. As a teacher I also feel, I don't know...I have a student teacher, he is fielding this, but I correct him a lot. He started doing African music, he is clear in saying that Africa is huge and there is different pockets and that is great, but in the videos he was showing instruments they were going to learn was a bunch of white university students. I was like I know its hard to find Youtube videos of good quality, but I really need you to try. I'm noticing it, their noticing it.

Fred Ward discusses his interpretation of diversity by saying that “we should be doing some Celtic tunes, there are so many kids from Scottish descent, that’s not touched upon either (in the classroom)”. When I asked if he felt restricted to what he could teach because of his personal cultural traditions, he responded “No I don’t, I’m okay. I mean if there were other instruments they wanted its hard to work them in, but other than that we are good”. At the end of the interview, he adds that “music is like, everyone. It’s not in your headphones, it’s everything, it’s communal. I think kids are starting to get that music can be a community”.

When I asked Carl Edwards about the way that the curriculum encourages the incorporation of Nova Scotian history, he says it is lacking cultural context. “It’s portrayed really falsely...Halifax is a pretty racist place I find, it’s shocking, maybe because its isolated and insular. It’s pretty weird”. When I asked him whether he felt limited by his cultural tradition, he answered “You have to be careful, as a white man especially, to come in and start talking about other people’s experiences in their cultures, man, I know what its

like to be a *white guy*”.

Richard Turner did not situate himself or his whiteness during the interview, and instead spoke generally about how the curriculum is open yet neglects to specifically include certain communities, like the Mi’kmaq population. However, after our interview was finished, he approached me and asked to record one final thought. He acknowledged the power and opportunity that he had to think critically and encourage students to challenge their assumptions in the classroom.

I was traveling in South Africa, the home of apartheid, and it struck me how similar it is to here. The whole history, Europeans invading and taking over. And the difference is, more than 80% of them survived, where there is 90% black and here its 90% white. People think of south Africa as this terrible place where all of this bad history happened, but it played the exact way here, except the minority group is native, so that’s one of the things that’s driving me to try and make a difference here, its so real that South Africa is that place, when really here is the same. And music is an opportunity to really talk about this kind of stuff

Alternatively, Brett O’Neill points out that he feels limited in the classroom by his personal cultural experience, and how this could potentially inhibit diversity in teaching. However, he asserts that music educators need to challenge these things and work around them to ensure their classroom is inclusive.

(I feel limited) all the time, everyday. What do I know about music from Africa? What do I know about music from Korea? What do I know about Indian, or Aboriginal North American music? I know a lot about western classical, and I know an obscure little genre of music developed in Kentucky called Bluegrass, and that’s what I’ve lived with my whole life. I have a choice, I can see my limitations and be defeated by them, or I can go around them. Every teacher makes that choice. Music is too big, you can’t know everything, that would be insane. But you have to teach from where you are and realize that there’s always more to learn.

In the curriculum analysis section it was clear that the curriculum prioritizes multiculturalism, cultural exchange, and building students’ cultural music repertoire to offer them a comprehensive music education experience. How does this translate into the classroom? As discussed above, the curriculum does not mandate certain types of cultural

music study; thus, it is completely up to the individual educator to choose which cultural tradition to recognize and valorize.

All of the music educators that I interviewed expressed the importance of a diverse curriculum, classroom, and cultural exchange. However, some spoke more clearly than others. Bill Underwood outlined multiple personal pursuits to recognize and include diverse experience in his classroom and in music education in general. When he first began teaching in Nova Scotia, he set up a meeting with a principal in a pre-dominantly African Nova Scotian school to discuss how they could integrate the spirit of the local Baptist church into the music program, as he found it was currently lacking diversity and energy. He also discussed a number of ways that current teaching systems fail, and has been intentionally integrating non-European ways of teaching.

If a kid has an idea, I'll take it off the floor. That's an African concept. In the group there will be whole range of abilities from beginner to expert and we are all going to play the same stuff, That's an African tradition. so that's cultural diversity (in the classroom)... Take away the hierarchy.

Wanda Eaton discusses her experience teaching in a pre-dominantly African Nova Scotian community, and how different students engage with different types of educational styles.

In (a school that is in a rural area), which is mostly African Nova Scotian, they have the most fun with improvising. They were more creative, and would go for it more than other schools. I don't know if it was just that group of kids, but more of those kids go to church, sing in church. Also I learned how to twerk at (this school), I was like shutting it down. I'm going to keep my job today. (But) they taught me things too.

Alternatively, Fred Ward discusses the universality of contemporary American popular music.

A kid that comes from Kuwait knows Lady Gaga like a kid that comes from Pugwash. A lot of pop music is stuff that can be arranged in a band situation. But a lot of it is so consumable. Pop music is written by teenagers for teenagers...All the kids want to do more tunes that they know...They gravitate to songs that are like Jazz, more like R&B, or a gospel-y R&B.

Carl Edwards finds that some non-European education and cultural traditions work better in his elementary music classroom.

The diversity aspect is secondary because without the engagement, it doesn't matter what I talk about. The flip-side is some cultures are easily represented and some are not. Middle eastern stuff is difficult to approach from an elementary school standpoint. Rhythmically too advanced, different scales, we can listen to it but we cant play or engage with it. But when you look at African music for example, that stuff is made for elementary music. Its really physical, which kids are into, and the scales are mostly pentatonic, they can create with those.

However, when he was teaching junior high band music, there were some aspects of music that he insisted needed to be included as a means of fostering intellectualism in musical consumption and ensuring that credit was given where credit was due.

My number one push is to really instill, when we are dealing with popular music and dance stuff, how huge the influence of African-American music is on this stuff. I feel that if there is a push that needs to be made, that's it. If they're going to move forward and understand music as a cultural force, you can't spread it thin. If you choose one thing they can hear in their life, all the music they hear on the radio is from an influence of African American music. And its an overlap of the two, African American and European cultures mixing, so that's important in everything we do. We do a lot of African music because it suits the music that helps them develop, but bringing it home to some of the communal aspects of African music has a big impact on the way they behave around the instruments, understanding instruments as personalities, I find that works really well. And I think its an important thing, its an easier spiritual aspect to get across. The communal aspect...that's the aspect of diversity that I push. All the schools I've taught at, African Nova Scotian has been the dominant or secondary population that I've taught.

Almost all of the music educators spoke about the value of cultural exchange, and their interest in prioritizing diversity in the classroom in some form. They all acknowledged that the curriculum encourages them to include diverse experiences in their lessons and allow students to share their cultural and musical identities in the classroom. However, the music educators had varying interpretation of local music is, what is represented in their lessons and what is missing, which cultural experiences should be prioritized, and whether they had access to diverse resources and materials. This raises questions about whether the curriculum should be more strict in defining what should be included in classrooms, and whether the whiteness of the music educators limits their ability to include, represent, and

value diverse music identities in the classroom.

Bernard Taylor has a unique perspective on diversity in music education as an alternative music educator of colour and a father of two children who are currently part of the Nova Scotian elementary music program. Taylor runs an arts program that offers youth at risk and young offenders an opportunity to explore the arts in a supportive environment, which prioritizes healthy life choices and creativity. He says the purpose of his program is “to walk alongside young people...(from) marginalized communities to help them figure out what it means to be in healthy relationships...it really is about moving from a negative space to a positive space...we take direction from the young people in the community, and not the other way around”. Youth involved in his program have the opportunity to explore creativity in a variety of ways. Many youth use his program to pursue their interests in hip hop music, and production. When reflecting on his children’s experience in elementary music, Taylor states that music education is

...largely about learning how to play instruments...and going to the musical concerts that my children put on, my two children, hip hop doesn't factor in. A lot of the young people we're working with don't really talk about their music programs, it doesn't come up, but based on observation, I don't know how involved (the) majority of the students (that) I work with (are)...I would say that I think its great to focus on classical and traditional music...(but) I would love to see schools engage young people with what they are listening to. Is there a hip hop appreciation in schools currently? I don't think so...so I think there is a lot to learn from the culture that young people are consuming, and I know as adults we are often very critical of it, because some of it is fluff...some of it is commercial, but...lets dig a little deeper, and connect with the, a curriculum that connects young people with where they are at, I think is important...and just will create a much more engaged class, I would imagine.

When I asked Taylor how he conceptualized inclusive music education in Nova Scotia, he responded:

A music program that is truly global... that is able to trace the roots of whatever music genre you are focusing on...Drumming is a very important fixture to African culture...so how is African drumming connected to European classical music? Is there a connection? And on first blush, people would say

probably not but...why isn't that a question we can explore? And it just makes it more relevant to the young people too, when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum...If I were writing a music program I would want to do that type of connectivity, because nobody exists in a vacuum...I think it can be so much broader...from across geographical, ethnic, socioeconomic...I think we can meet outcomes in ways that are mutually beneficial, so the student feels enriched.

Unintentionally, Taylor makes a very clear statement about the ways the educators can broaden their understanding of curriculum in their classroom. “Outcomes”, as I have spoken to previously, is the curriculum used for Grade 7-9. This curriculum identifies different outcomes that each student should meet at the end of certain lessons. Taylor uses this term without having knowledge of its significance within Nova Scotian curriculum, and discusses how these outcomes need to be thought of in more creative ways. Taylor suggests that this can open up space for more inclusive teaching methods. Additionally, he discusses the interconnectivity of various musical forms. He feels this should be emphasized and can be used as a way to introduce more culturally diverse styles and experiences.

The interviews certainly shed light on the ways that the curriculum is interpreted and applied to the classroom. The openness of the curriculum is clear and indicative of the power that music teachers have in determining which diverse content is valuable and necessary. Music educators decide what is to be considered local music. They also have the agency to determine which teaching styles to use in the classroom, and how to measure whether students are reaching the outcomes in the curriculum. What needs to be considered is how the cultural experience of music educators will affect the content they choose to include and which cultural content they value, and how this is immediately affecting the experience of students of colour who only have access to music teachers of European descent.

Additionally, very few music educators identified the way power pervades their classroom and privileges some students over others. Since this has largely not been considered, music educators are likely to perpetuate the same erasure and systemic racism that the Black Learners Advisory Committee (1994), Thiessen (2009), Fraser (2013), and Bernard & Wien (2001) all identified. This then renders the curriculum's emphasis on cultural inclusion as extraneous (Ahmed 2012; Brown 2006).

As many of the interviewees highlighted, there is an immense lack of support from the provincial government and the school board for music educators. There is no training or guidance offered to aid teachers in implementing the cultural diversity from the curriculum into the classroom. There is no accountability process to ensure that music teachers are including culturally diverse music and/or teaching and evaluation practices. There is also no way of knowing whether music educators are ensuring that all students feel culturally respected and included in the classroom. As Dei (1996) highlights in his work, students will be academically disengaged and may not thrive if they do not feel that the system has their best interests in mind. The lack of an accountability process could allow for a lack of diverse representation and therefore disengagement in Nova Scotia classrooms. If cultural diversity is not being prioritized institutionally in the way the government hires teachers, and the way they subsequently train them, we cannot expect that it is prioritized in the classroom either.

Conclusion

According to the Coalition for Music Education in Canada, Nova Scotia values music more than all other parts of Canada (CMEC, 2010). Their study discovered that

schools rely most on funding from their local school boards, yet also reported that schools across Canada largely don't believe their school boards value music programs (p. 40-59). Nova Scotia schools reported that lack of funding was their top concern, and with widespread government cuts to arts education funding, this certainly seems to be a valid concern. I have learned through this study that music programs can have a profoundly positive impact on the lives and educational experiences of students in the province of Nova Scotia. It is imperative that **all** students have access to this meaningful and fulfilling educational experience it is important for the dominant population to recognize that European music and systems of education are not universal, or superior.

In this study, my research questions were answered in a variety of ways. The curriculum is a broad document that can be taught in whichever way the educator feels is most valuable. The music educators I interviewed shared their different perspectives on the curriculum and diversity in the classroom, but all pointed to a similar set of issues. It is important to remember that the large majority of music teachers in the Halifax school system are white, and how they might access global music, or various types of local music, needs to be considered. Terms like diversity, global music, and local music are often present in the curriculum, but are never specifically defined. The interpretation of these terms is left completely to the music educator. However, music educators are not offered adequate support to explore these issues and meaningfully integrate them into their lesson plans. During professional development days, educators are not offered cultural competency workshops or workshops on diverse music. It is unclear how teachers can integrate these important themes into their lessons without any resources. Without this support, educators may find it difficult to effectively ensure that their lessons are diverse. As Netsinghe (2012)

emphasizes, diverse experiences of music and culture could not be present or validated in the classroom without the instructor actively seeking to include them (p. 384).

The four guiding themes that I have outlined in my literature review and data analysis have all exposed various issues with the current curriculum and the way it is interpreted in the classroom.

Firstly, the curriculum attempts to subvert cultural imperialism by recognizing the value of diversity, and the inclusion of diverse cultural and music experiences into music education. However, there is no support for educators in defining, or inserting the diversity that the curriculum calls for. Further, there is no way to confirm that teachers have valued diversity in the classroom as the curriculum as intended. This is a severe gap that can lead to misinterpretations of the curriculum, maintaining the musical experiences of dominant social groups, and sidelining the experiences of marginalized students.

The curriculum certainly others multicultural music, as my second theme has explored, and will often discuss global and local music as a dichotomy. This translated into the classroom when music educators discussed the difficulty they had integrating diverse musical experiences into their lessons due to lack of resources, or the restrictions of the evaluation system. This means that some music is prioritized because of the educators familiarity with certain music, and if certain music is easily measured and evaluated within the education system. Therefore, the music of dominant social groups is more easily taught by largely white music educators in Halifax, and multicultural music is othered and only integrated if the educator decides it is measurable or important.

The third theme I outlined was how local music is situated in the curriculum and the classroom. Similarly to the discussion on cultural imperialism, local and Atlantic music are

both terms that are not defined in the curriculum. Teachers are then forced to interpret these terms in the best way they can, inevitably varying greatly from classroom to classroom.

Finally, diversity was discussed in many different ways in both the curriculum and the interviews. Diversity and diversifying music in the classroom was consistently emphasized in the curriculum. Some educators discussed diversity as a consideration in their lessons, and other educators echoed the curriculum by centering diversity in their lessons.

The various systems that critical education theorists have suggested, highlighted in my literature review, do not seem to be at work in classrooms in Halifax. For example, for teachers to insert systems like “educulturalism” (Lea & Simms 2008), educators must have access to resources and content that could support this type of learning. In addition, very few of the educators I interviewed acknowledged racial power structures present in the classroom. As Ahlquist & Milner (2008) highlight, educators will continue to “reproduce negative stereotypes and prejudices, and to act in racist ways”(p. 113) if they do not acknowledge whiteness and identify how these dominant systems manifest in their classrooms.

The violent colonial history of Nova Scotia is often not acknowledged at an institutional level (Nelson 2008; Tattrie 2010). Although the tourism industry presents Nova Scotia as a quaint seaside province with many fishing villages and deep Celtic roots (Maguire 2011; McKay 2005), the ethnic and racial history of the province is more complex. My research is particularly important for the city of Halifax and the province of Nova Scotia because of it illustrated the persistent denial of the province’s multi-racial and ethnic history and the complex racial dynamics that currently inhabit the city today.

The questions I have raised, such as which systems of knowledge are valorized, who feels represented in the curriculum, and whether music educators are attempting to make their classroom inclusive, should not be solely applied to the sphere of music education. These types of questions demand to be asked in all aspects of public education, and social and institutional life in Nova Scotia. In future research, it is necessary for white scholars to interrogate³ the ways in which *cultural imperialism* pervades our public schools in many different subjects and forms.

I leave my study with a number of concerns. Does the music curriculum and the music classroom accurately represent Halifax's complex social and ethnic fabric? How does this affect students? What could be done to improve the exclusivity and diminish Eurocentricity of music classrooms in Halifax?

³ Dei (1996) discusses the way in which *interrogation* of dominant systems does not simply mean to examine, but importantly also implies that the person doing the examining is acknowledging their complicity in the dominant system (p. 12)

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Appendices

Recruitment Email

Dear Music Teachers,

I am an Honours Student at Dalhousie University completing my undergraduate degree in Social Anthropology and Musicology. I am contacting you today to ask if you would be interested in participating my Honours research project, *Nova Scotian Roots?: Exploring Diversity Through Music Education*. In this study, I hope to interview elementary and junior high school music teachers on their experiences with diversity in the classroom and in the curriculum. The interviews would take about an hour to complete in a location of your choice, and are completely anonymous. You can remove yourself from the study at any time, except for after March 1 when I will have already completed the analysis of my data.

I have attached the consent form to give you a clearer idea of what the study will entail.

If you are interested, please respond to this email or give me a call at 902-240-9744.

If there are any other music teachers (kindergarten to grade 9) that you think would be interested in participating, please feel free to forward this email to them as well.

I would be more than happy to answer any questions you may have by email or phone. I

hope to hear from you soon.

Warmly,
Alexandra Killham

Interview Questions

Alternative Music Educator

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and also about your program?
2. How would you describe the demographic of the people that participate in your program?
3. What do you see as your purpose?
4. Are you able to adequately support the projects you wish to work on?
5. If so, what enables you to do that? If not, what would enable you to do that?
6. How many participants in the program are students or former students?
7. Have any students or former students ever brought concerns to you about their school's music programming?
8. Can you discuss any concerns you may have with the music programming in schools in the HRM or the curriculum in general?
9. How do you conceptualize inclusive music education in Nova Scotia?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say in regards to diversity or inclusiveness in music education?

Public School Music Educators

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself? Where you went to school, how long you have been teaching for, the various schools you have worked at, and anything else you would like to add?

2. How would you describe the demographic of your current class/classes? Eg. Ethnicity, languages,
3. What's your relationship to the curriculum? Have you read it fully, or have you read it more than once?
4. How does the curriculum reflect the diversity of the province?
5. How does the curriculum encourage you to incorporate the history of Halifax or Nova Scotia into your lessons? How relevant do you feel that the history of area is to your lessons?
6. Can you tell me some of the ways that you have broadened the lessons offered by the curriculum to be more inclusive of diverse experiences?
7. What kind of comments have students made in regards to the diversity in the curriculum or in your lessons?
8. Do you think that students feel represented in the lessons or in the curriculum?
9. Can you give some specific examples of ways you have encouraged diversity or inclusiveness in your lessons that the curriculum didn't highlight?
10. Do you ever feel limited or restricted to what you can teach or interpret based on your personal cultural tradition or cultural experience?
11. Can you talk about any pressure you feel by the curriculum to teach in a certain way?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add on the topic of diversity in music education and your personal experience?

Ethics Consent Form



CONSENT FORM

Nova Scotian Roots?: Exploring Diversity through Music Education

You are invited to take part in research being conducted by me, Alexandra Killham, an undergraduate student in Social Anthropology, as part of my honours degree at Dalhousie University. The purpose of this research is to interview music teachers in an effort to learn about the ways in which the curriculum acknowledges diversity and the opportunities they have to teach inclusively using the curriculum. I will write up the results of this research in a paper for my class, called the honours thesis.

As a participant in the research you will be asked a number of questions pertaining to your experience teaching music using the provincial curriculum. The interview should take about an hour and will take place in a quiet location where you feel comfortable. The interview will be audio recorded. If I decide to use a quote from you, all identifying factors will be removed and a pseudonym will be used.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You do not have to answer questions that you do not want to answer, and you are welcome to stop the interview at any time if you no longer want to participate. If you decide to stop participating after the interview is complete, you can do so until March 1. I will not be able to remove the information you provided after that date, because I will have completed my analysis, but the information will not be used in any other research.

Information that you provide to me will be kept private and will be anonymized, which means any identifying details such as your name and school name will be removed from it. Only the honours class supervisor and I will have access to the unprocessed information you offer. I will

describe and share general findings in a presentation to the Sociology and Social Anthropology Department and in my honours thesis. Nothing that could identify you will be included in the presentation or the thesis. I will keep anonymized information so that I can learn more from it as I continue with my studies.

The risks associated with this study are no greater than those you encounter in your everyday life. However, because there are few elementary school music teachers in Halifax, it is possible that music teachers may be able to identify other music teachers from quotes that I use in my thesis. I will do my best to maintain confidentiality and hide the identities of the participants in my study.

There will be no direct benefit to you in participating in this research and you will not receive compensation. The research, however, will contribute to new knowledge on diversity in education in Halifax. If you would like to see how your information is used, please feel free to contact me and I will send you a copy of my honours thesis after April 30.

If you have questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me or the honours class supervisor. My contact information is Alexandra.killham@dal.ca. You can contact the honours class supervisor, Dr. Howard Ramos, at the Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Dalhousie University on (902) 494-3130, or email howard.ramos@dal.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may contact Catherine Connors, Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-1462, or email ethics@dal.ca.

Participant’s consent:

I have read the above information and I agree to participate in this study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher’s signature: _____

Date: _____

REB Final Report



Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board

Letter of Approval December 08, 2014

Ms. Alexandra Killham

Arts & Social Sciences\Sociology & Anthropology

Dear Alexandra,

REB #: 2014-3445 **Project Title:** Nova Scotian Roots? Exploring Diversity Through Music Education

Effective Date: December 08, 2014 **Expiry Date:** December 08, 2015

The Social Sciences & Humanities Research Ethics Board has reviewed your application for research involving humans and found the proposed research to be in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on *Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*. This approval will be in effect for 12 months as indicated above. This approval is subject to the conditions listed below which constitute your on-going responsibilities with respect to the ethical conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Valerie Trifts".

Dr. Valerie Trifts, Chair