

Valuing Racialized Student Voices: Transforming Learning Through Peer Mentoring

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Abstract

Although the practice of peer mentoring has had a place in education for many years, it has not routinely served as a platform for racialized students to use their voice in constructing their classroom learning. The history of music programs in the United States, with their dependence on Eurocentric music and disregard for the music of racialized persons, is a reminder that through the years, and continuing today, many programs only pay attention to some of the voices in the classroom. In this article, I investigate the promise that peer mentoring holds in equalizing the conversation. Although researchers have found many benefits in peer mentoring for racialized students and their teachers, their findings are contradictory and create paradoxes. These anomalies involve power structures in the classroom, othering of students, reproductive vs. transformational learning, and the potential for peer mentoring to reaffirm whiteness in school music programs. Drawing upon feminist pedagogy, with its collaborative construct of knowledge, inclusive sharing of experiences, and empowerment of all voices, I explore and critique how music teachers can use peer mentoring to create brave spaces for learning where racialized students share their knowledge and experiences while learning.

Keywords

Peer mentoring, critical social justice, feminist pedagogy, racialized students, whiteness

The increase in music education research regarding social justice issues, including whiteness¹ (e.g., Bradley 2006; Bradley et al. 2007; Koza 2009), race (e.g., Bradley 2007; Hess 2013; Hess 2017), and recent social movements such as Black Lives Matter have made me wonder how music educators might become change agents in encouraging or reinforcing anti-racism in secondary level school music programs. Might educational methods be expanded or refitted so that racialized students have a greater say in what and how they are learning? I use the term *racialized students* to categorize students who are devalued in terms of race, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, and language (Berry, Jay, and Lynn 2010) by dominant White populations in the music programs in secondary schools (e.g., Talbot 2018) and in society (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017). The devaluation of students, then, is embedded “in a racialized society where whiteness is positioned as normative, [and] *everyone* is ranked and categorized in relation to these points of opposition” (Ladson-Billings 1998, 8). Situated within these points of opposition, racialized groups “are positioned in unequal ways in a racially stratified society” (Omi and Winant 2015, 130), and this positioning entails intersectionality, where “race is gendered and gender is racialized” (Omi and Winant 2015, 133).

The concept of being racialized “is best understood as a process” (Gans 2017, 342) instead of a single act that is “view[ed] ... through multiple and intersecting lenses.” Racialized structures are conducive to “shap[ing] racial experience and socializes racial meanings” (Omi and Winant 2015, 126). These experiences are shaped, then, by the dominant whiteness in society that contributes “to the systems of domination that work against so many by retaining an unvarying focus on vestiges of systematic racialized privilege that subordinates those perceived as a particularized few—the ‘others’” (Harris 1993, 1791). This creates the conditions for “U.S. education [that] barely acknowledges the intersection of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and language” (Berry, Jay, and Lynn 2010, 6). The devaluation of racialized students emerges from these conditions inherent in society and U.S. education, that encompass “how the group is represented, what degrees of access to resources it is granted, and how the unequal access is rationalized” (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 226). In my discussion, then, I also use the term *racialized* to “capture the active dynamics that create the lower status in society”

(Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 226); that is, the consideration of how racialized students are valued by the dominant group in the music classroom learning situation.

Although some have argued for curriculum revision to address dominant whiteness and unequal learning opportunities in the music classroom, these recommendations are often what Juliet Hess (2017) describes as “nebulous” (16) and result in policy that is not necessarily reflective of the needs of a specific learning environment. As I think about these issues, I wonder if those designing policy now (e.g., school boards, administration) might also include contributions and feedback from racialized students. Could the students themselves play a more significant role in developing anti-racist initiatives that would result in meaningful learning experiences and simultaneously help reduce racial inequity (Kendi 2019)? Peer mentoring, an instructional technique that provides opportunities for self-directed student contributions to learning, represents an approach with the potential also to foster anti-racism in school music programs.

As I reviewed the many benefits of peer mentoring as an instructional technique, however, I was also curious about how racialized students at the secondary levels are prepared to engage in peer mentoring—both in roles as mentors and mentees—or if they are learning to reproduce knowledge and mentoring styles from their music teachers. How can peer mentoring serve as a platform for transformative learning that values racialized students' voices, knowledge, experiences, and learning in the music classroom?

A further consideration was whether racialized students would even have access to peer mentoring. According to Gustafson (2009), music programs in the United States have a history of suppressing music from Black cultures to promulgate Eurocentric music, and Bradley (2015) holds that these traditions continue today. Eurocentric music embodies what Gustafson (2009) referred to as the “European aesthetic” for a “musically cultured class,” wherein “race was not an overt concern” (82). The “musically cultured class” then elevated Eurocentric music as the music “worthy of learning.” This classification resulted in part because these Eurocentric composers, who were predominantly White, produced notated compositions. Therefore, Eurocentric music was considered more advanced than music from racialized musicians, including Black jazz musicians, where the music was learned aurally (Goodrich 2008). Perceived to incorporate less-than-desirable features such as dancing, the “musically cultured class” believed such music led to

sexual promiscuity (Gustafson 2009). In this system of Eurocentric music, additional intersecting issues exist, such as “the normalcy of heterosexual content,” which overlooks the contextualization of gay composers (e.g., Copland’s “Lincoln Portrait” removed from Eisenhower’s inaugural events due to McCarthyism) (Bergonzi 2009, 23). This European aesthetic nurtured an environment that led to *whiteness* in music, whiteness that aligns with “the dominant ideology of White supremacy, defined as the system of domination that systematically and structurally privileges White people” (Hess 2017, 16). Such structural privilege also incorporates a system of intersectionality wherein music teachers and their students “are ... silenced by the heteronormativity that persists in music education” (Minette 2018, 3). Despite this silencing, though, White music teachers often “set the norms” for judgment of racialized students (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, 223) and are part of the system of domination.

In addition, the institutional focus on Eurocentric music and maintaining the White culture that ultimately “assures the reproduction of Whiteness in music education” (Bradley 2007, 148), the intersectionality with race (e.g., Omi and Winant 2015) becomes a foregone conclusion. Consider the bottom line: music teachers of secondary students are predominantly White (Gardner 2010); heteronormative conditions compound intersectionality that keeps racialized music teachers who identify within LGBTQIA+ from revealing their sexual identity (e.g., Minette 2018); the entrance requirements of university music programs demand an ability to perform Eurocentric music (Koza 2009; Lind and McKoy 2016). Elpus (2015) points out that university-level music education students seeking licensure are predominantly White (86.02%). These figures contribute to what Talbot (2018, 3) terms a “relative homogeneity of the music teacher workforce.”

To further compound the issue of whiteness, music teachers typically serve in an authoritarian role as the sole deliverers of knowledge (e.g., Lebler 2007) in the classroom. An authoritarian teacher who values privileged educational ideologies such as Eurocentric music may construct walls around racialized students (Parmar et al. 2015). These positions “raise questions not only about representation, but about access and power” (Talbot 2018, 2). White music teachers then operate in an authoritarian system that denies equal access to racialized students in secondary school music ensembles (e.g., Elpus and Abril 2011), a system that continues when

they enter university-level groups (e.g., Ishitani 2006). This discrimination hinders their educational participation and success (e.g., Chavous et al. 2008).

Recently, researchers in music education have begun to focus on issues of *whiteness* (e.g., Bradley 2007; Hess 2017; Lind and McKoy 2016; Talbot 2018), but in general, this attention to social justice issues is long overdue. As Bradley et al. (2007) pointed out, “coming to terms with how whiteness functions in North American society to reproduce an inherently racist status quo is thus crucial for White people who are serious about social justice issues in music education” (295). In my discussion, *critical social justice* describes the divided and unequal structures in society “along social group lines that include race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability” (Sensoy and DiAngelo 2017, xx). I assert that music teachers should act in a manner that effectively addresses social justice issues.

Through the discussion, practitioners and researchers can continue to learn about how music teachers can provide opportunities for racialized students to contribute to the learning that occurs in music classrooms. This prompts questions about what is taught in music classrooms, where “increased enrollment of students of diversity...poses a challenge for course content to be more inclusive and teaching methodology to be more responsive to all members of any given course” (Bryson and Bennet-Anyikwa 2003, 132). Although steps have been taken to diversify content taught in school music programs, less emphasis is placed on *how* it is taught (Bradley 2006; Talbot 2018).

Despite the complexity of the discourse surrounding racialized students and given that institutions can suppress what Bradley (2007) calls “dissenting voices” (147) with regards to race, music teachers interested in establishing an equitable environment in their classrooms can begin by creating an atmosphere of welcome for all students, regardless of the ways that some may have been marginalized. Peer mentoring is an instructional technique that encourages constructive interactions to help students share their voices and emphasizes *how* knowledge is shared in the learning process (e.g., Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000; Reed-Hendon 2013).

Although researchers have found many benefits in peer mentoring for racialized students and their teachers, their findings are contradictory and create paradoxes. These anomalies involve power structures in the classroom and reproductive vs. transformational learning. Engaging readers with how researchers have explored peer mentoring contextualized through diversity and inclusion

issues is one of this paper's goals. This engagement may then initiate further conversations and future research to broaden awareness of the transformative potential for peer mentoring in supporting racialized students' agency and leadership in the learning process.

Peer Mentoring

Under the guidance of the music teacher, peer mentoring provides opportunities for secondary school students to contribute their voices to meaningful learning (e.g., Goodrich 2018; Hebert 2005). Researchers in music education have found that students can learn how to understand and retain subject material from their peers (e.g., Hebert 2005; Johnson 2011), develop social skills (e.g., Goodrich 2018), and engage in critical reflection of what they are learning (e.g., Goodrich, Bucura, and Stauffer 2018).

The music teacher plays a pivotal role in bringing about and maintaining peer mentoring systems (Goodrich 2018). In this role, the music teacher typically serves in the role of facilitator, one who guides and models for students how to be a mentor and how to be a mentee (Johnson 2015). Peer mentoring is multifaceted in that it can include hierarchical and non-hierarchical structures. For example, when peer mentoring is structured hierarchically, a more knowledgeable peer, the mentor, works with a less knowledgeable peer, the mentee. Although the more knowledgeable peer is often older, this is not always the case. A high school senior could mentor a younger peer in classroom management, while a sophomore could mentor seniors for musical reasons, such as intonation (e.g., Goodrich 2007). In non-hierarchical structures, peers considered to possess similar knowledge and equal musical abilities could mentor each other (e.g., Johnson 2011, 2015).

Peer mentoring, as contextualized in this paper, is a process that begins in the music classroom or ensemble rehearsal and is primarily curricular; later in this paper, however, I discuss how researchers have explored how peer mentoring can extend into the surrounding community. I describe how students engage in peer mentoring that involves racialized students in both roles of mentor and mentee, how students from dominant groups are involved in these processes, and how learning becomes transformative for both racialized and dominant groups of stu-

dents. This discussion demonstrates how peer mentoring, though a complex instructional technique, has many benefits for addressing the issues of the marginalization of students.

Leadership

Students interact with their peers when mentoring. Through this process of socializing, racialized students can become leaders and contribute to the learning that occurs in the music classroom and ensemble rehearsal. In addition to developing leadership for the purposes of learning, racialized students can also use their leadership to help students and music teachers from dominant populations understand their privilege. At its core, socializing provides the verbal and nonverbal interactions (e.g., Goodrich 2007, 2018) that present racialized students with opportunities to share their voices (e.g., Johnson 2011). Leadership, then, is one of the most salient outgrowths of socializing (e.g., Goodrich 2018). Through leadership, students can assume a more significant role in what the curriculum covers and how learning occurs in the music classroom. During this process, the role of the teacher can shift from being the sole authoritarian of knowledge to a facilitator who can help encourage all voices—especially the voices of racialized students—to make contributions to learning in the music classroom.

Rationale

Researchers in music education have investigated peer mentoring among marginalized students, including studies of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic diversity (Johnson 2011), students with developmental disabilities (Darrow et al. 2009), and physical disabilities (Jellison, Brown, and Draper 2015). Studies about peer mentoring and racialized students, however, are relatively scarce. Thornton (2018) provides a personalized account as a Black male mentored by faculty in programs aimed at minority youth. Farmer (2015), Hendricks and Dorothy (2018), and Shields (2001) explored teacher-to-student mentoring among racialized youth in music programs, and Goodrich (2020) examined intersectionality and how music teachers can use peer mentoring to aid with resilience among LGBTQIA+ students. Discussion of certain aspects of peer-to-peer mentoring among racialized students—*how* it works, *what* racialized students contribute to and learn from each other when engaged in mentoring, *how* racialized

students contribute their knowledge and experiences to students from dominant groups, *how* it transforms learning in the music classroom—is difficult to locate in music education literature. Therefore, in this article, I suggest ways researchers in music education could explore how students participating in peer mentoring reflect critically “on what students learn [and] why they should learn it” (Mayberry 1998, 446).

Feminist Pedagogy

Although educational researchers have not investigated all aspects of peer-to-peer mentoring among racialized students, they have considered the numerous ways that peer mentoring supports racialized students. For example, their studies have explored how teachers guide racialized students through the process of peer mentoring (e.g., Lindwall 2017; Tingson-Gatuz 2009) and how it functions (e.g., Pope 2002; Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón 2007). Furthermore, the role of the teacher in creating and sustaining peer mentoring opportunities is a significant part of the learning process for racialized students, providing them with opportunities to make their contributions to meaningful learning in the classroom.

Feminist pedagogy serves as the framework for this discussion, as it helps contextualize peer mentoring within social justice issues. Pedagogy from a feminist perspective assures opportunities for students to engage in “shared decision-making and negotiation, increased student collaboration and independence” (Gould 2011, 130). The core of feminist pedagogy includes the interactive processes between students as they collaborate. These interactions provide a foundation for racialized students to share their knowledge and experiences, which can lead to transformative learning. Peer mentoring is a platform for students to share what they know with each other. According to Bryson and Bennet-Anyikwa (2003, 132), “feminist pedagogy is one possible teaching methodology that creates a ... classroom environment fostering individual and collective growth” among students.

Further, feminist pedagogy helped me to draft research on peer mentoring, for it is “based in a desire for social transformation” (Mayberry 1998, 447); a central premise is that it “promotes social change” and the “liberation of learners via critical thought” (Ochoa and Pershing 2011, 24). My research resides within the desire that “feminist pedagogy by design is to be responsive to student’s needs and realities” (Bryson and Bennet-Anyikwa 2003, 133). Feminist pedagogy aligns with peer

mentoring, then, for it provides a conduit for collaboration in learning activities that helps students “become effective voices of change within the broader social world” (Mayberry 1998, 447). In learning that emanates from feminist pedagogy, “teachers and students actively learn together through dialogic interactions with the goal of challenging structures of oppression, repression, and inequality” (Mayberry 1998, 447). Through these interactions during peer mentoring, students may transform from “passive knowledge-consumers” to “knowledge-producers” (Chow et al. 2003, 260). Peer mentoring helps racialized students reshape classroom learning for each other and for students from dominant populations. Feminist pedagogy guides this give and take, where “students ... critique the unequal social relations embedded in contemporary society and ... ask why these circumstances exist and what one can do about them” (Mayberry 1998, 447).

Developing critical thinking skills is an essential part of transforming learning experiences through peer mentoring. hooks (1994) argues, “classrooms must include all voices and experiences and move beyond practices of tokenism for a transformative education” (138). Music teachers should design learning experiences that promote critical thinking. Gould (2011) asserts that “the inroads into the education profession feminism has made through pedagogy exist almost exclusively at the level of both theorizing about and implementing teaching practices and curricular content” (130).

To connect peer mentoring research with research on social justice issues in music education, I use Coeyman’s (1996) four components of feminist pedagogy, including “diversity, opportunities for all voices, shared responsibility, and orientation to action” (78). *Diversity* “engenders trust and risk-taking in both students and instructors” (78). Both are essential to peer mentoring, where music teachers play an important role in creating opportunities for racialized students to feel that their contributions are valued in the learning process. *Opportunities for all voices* allow all students to contribute to a learning process that “promotes collaboration, not competition” (Coeyman 1996, 79). These opportunities begin with the music teacher, who helps promote collaboration among all students. Within this collaboration, students may disagree with each other, which Coeyman argues “is a necessary stimulus to greater creativity” (79). In *shared responsibility*, students can take turns leading learning; when learning from each other, “rotation of responsi-

bility can promote greater ownership” (80). Rotation is important to the peer mentoring process, for it prepares students to switch roles between mentor and mentee. During the process, the teacher plays a vital role as one who “must function as an interpreter of multiple perspectives, or as a facilitator” (80). *Orientation to action* is a process that “promotes learning by doing” (80), and both Johnson (2011) and Strand (2005) have found that students better understand subject matter when, for example, they explain musical concepts to their peers.

To explore how researchers have investigated peer mentoring among dominant and racialized students, I searched using the term “peer mentoring” combined with one of the following terms: “racialized students,” “minoritized students,” “minority students,” “marginalized students,” “race,” and “racism.” To create this discussion, I used Coeyman’s four components of feminist pedagogy to help in the analysis of educational research on peer mentoring and racialized students. Throughout this process, I identified content related to how teachers use peer mentoring with racialized students and compared their findings to Coeyman’s four components. For example, in many of the studies, the role of the teacher was paramount with creating and maintaining effective peer mentoring experiences, so I identified that section as “Role of the Teacher.” As I organized the findings for this paper, the sections evolved. Once I read all the studies, I began to group findings in accordance with Coeyman’s four components. Three indispensable guideposts developed: creating entry points, generating a sense of belonging, and transforming learning beyond the classroom. *Creating entry points* explores the role of the teacher in creating a safe learning environment for racialized students to engage in peer mentoring; *generating a sense of belonging* considers the role of the teacher when creating opportunities that value racialized student voices during peer mentoring. *Transforming learning beyond the classroom* examines how shared responsibility among racialized students can lead to orientation to action with peer mentoring outside of the classroom. I contextualize these three guideposts with studies about peer mentoring in music education research and social justice research in music education to provide insights into how practitioners could potentially use peer mentoring in music classrooms.

Creating Entry Points

Creating opportunities for racialized students to have a voice in their learning begins with the music teacher, who develops peer mentoring opportunities for her students (e.g., Johnson 2015; Karcher et al. 2010). Music teachers play an active role in pairing and preparing the mentor and mentee (e.g., Karcher et al. 2010) so that “expectations are clearly understood and ... [both the mentor and mentee] acquire the appropriate tools and skills for success” (Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón 2007, 98). Johnson (2015) explored peer learning in secondary music classrooms and stated that it is the initial responsibility of the music teacher “to give students the opportunity to create, elucidate, articulate, and validate their own opinions and musical understandings with others” (41).

In this planning role, teachers should be aware of: (a) contexts or locations for mentoring, (b) structures such as dyads or groups, and (c) goals to include specific tasks for academic achievement (Karcher et al. 2006). Preparation of peer mentors is critical for shared responsibility; mentors who are seen positively by their peer mentees will forge stronger relationships with them, leading to a higher level of trust that yields positive outcomes in learning. Thus, music teachers need to pair mentors and mentees with discernment (e.g., Hansman 2002; Pope 2002). Most mentees appreciate mentoring from someone of the same race (Pope 2002); for example, Harris (1999) found that African Americans may regard a White mentor as less helpful than an African American mentor. Inasmuch as “persons who serve as mentors may primarily be members of dominant and/or hegemonic groups” (Hansman 2002, 39) who may not know anything about the culture of the mentee, these peer interactions can “do more harm than good” (Lindwall 2017, 76).

Although research indicates that students prefer peer mentors of the same race, music teachers need to set up peer mentoring experiences for shared responsibility that involve combinations of students from dominant populations with racialized students. This organization can be fluid, with mentoring groups sometimes remaining intact depending upon the reason for mentoring (e.g., developing lyrics for an original composition) and at other times switching to different mentoring pairs (e.g., racialized students and students from dominant populations). Entry points into peer mentoring can begin with musical goals (e.g., learning the melody of a tune by ear) and even non-musical goals (e.g., classroom management) where all students, under the guidance of the music teacher, take the initial steps toward

learning a specific goal. The rotation helps students learn from and value each other's backgrounds. This "intersection of race, class, ethnicity, [and] ability" can, however, create situations where students "experience difficulties initiating and participating in mentoring relationships" (Hansman 2002, 39). Within this intersectionality especially, the music teacher's role is vital, for creating peer mentoring for students from dominant populations and racialized students is an essential part of the transformative learning process. Teachers need to understand the cultural and ethnic diversity of the students in their classrooms; modeling caring learning communities based on this understanding is an important step toward transformative learning (Gay 2002).

To help establish caring learning communities, music teachers can have students engage in peer mentoring to reflect on how they might be privileged in some aspects of their lives but not in others. For example, this could include a warm and supportive family but low socioeconomic status, middle class but racialized, or male but queer. To aid students with becoming more aware of their privilege, before the first session, the music teacher—through modeling shared responsibility—can show students how to mentor and field their questions about what to do and when. In addition, clearly articulating the goals for peer mentoring at the beginning, and having students reflect on what they have experienced as mentors and mentees at the end, builds further self-confidence about being able to participate in the peer mentoring process. Peer mentoring, then, becomes a conduit for music teachers to create opportunities for racialized students to have a voice in classroom learning.

Throughout this process, music teachers can integrate social justice issues into learning musical content in the music classroom. This can help all students with their reflections and conversations regarding assumptions and biases and may open a space in which racialized students' perspectives, backgrounds, and interests can illuminate and guide discussions through this process orientation to action. With careful guidance from the music teacher, peer mentoring can help students from dominant populations to develop a richer understanding of what it means to be racialized, what it means for a person to be racialized in aspects of their identity, and how debilitating it can be to experience micro-aggressions and systemic "isms" on several fronts at the same time. Thus, what begins as simple musical goals via peer mentoring can help students become knowledge producers (Chow et al. 2003)

and lead to conversations about systemic racism and marginalization, understanding one's privilege, and learning to value the perspectives of all students, especially those who are racialized (e.g., hooks 1994).

However, a mentor from a dominant culture working with a mentee from a non-dominant culture may result in a complex dynamic (Lindwall 2017), for "some may not be willing to sacrifice their time for development of others" (Aderibigbe et al. 2015, 65), and "people of the dominant culture must be open to giving up power" in order for racialized voices to be heard (Lindwall 2017, 89). Continued supervision of peer mentors is crucial (Shotton et al. 2007), and teachers during their peer mentoring preparation with racialized students need to be willing "to listen with the intent to understand, instead of respond" (Lindwall 2017, 89). According to Hansman (2002), "knowledge should be viewed as socially constructed by mentors and protégés in negotiation with each other" (48).

Throughout this process, the music teacher is responsible for creating brave spaces² for learning. Doing so can aid teachers to "go beyond the surface of understanding and explore the complex nature of learning" (Lind and McKoy 2016, 31). Embedded within this complexity are opportunities for racialized students to "share their stories of pain and struggle" (Arao and Clemens 2013, 139). It also requires teaching students from dominant populations to reflect on their privilege, assumptions, and biases and to develop self-reflexivity about how they can contribute to brave spaces for everyone. This process then "requires the very qualities of risk, difficulty, and controversy" when creating brave spaces for students from dominant populations and racialized students (Arao and Clemens 2013, 139); however, the process can encourage shared responsibility for racialized students to contribute to learning and motivate students from dominant populations to be open to interactions. The music teacher is responsible for maintaining a learning environment where all students, dominant and racialized, feel comfortable contributing to learning. In these brave spaces, peer mentoring then becomes multifaceted and goes beyond learning some aspect of music. In turn, this will lead to transformative learning experiences for all students (hooks 1994).

The process of peer mentoring is successful when mentees respect their mentors and feel cared about, and when mentors and mentees can relate to each other through their sharing of similar personal experiences and cultural backgrounds (Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón 2007). Mentors, according to Tingson-Gatuz

(2009), are successful when paired with mentees who had these shared experiences and backgrounds. “Through personal conversations students learned about cultural identity, relationships with family, and societal problems, which resulted in self-exploration and greater understanding about problem-solving in both personal and organizational contexts” (82). Through heightened ownership in learning and the development of these connections via personal conversations, peer mentoring aids with more meaningful learning when “it brings learners front and center in the learning process, challenges them to engage in new ways and take ownership of their learning, fosters their self-efficacy and continually values their culturally situated knowledge” (Lind and McKoy 2016, 32).

Peer mentoring exhibits the power relationships inherent in a mentor-mentee relationship, however. According to Hansman (2002), peer mentoring relationships embody two levels of power: micro and macro. Micro includes the relationship between mentor and mentee, and macro includes power relationships in an organization. The micro relationships are influenced by the macro dynamics of the organization, the latter of which may not reflect the needs of racialized students (Hansman 2002). The teacher then needs to step in and encourage the trust and risk-taking necessary for students to have meaningful learning experiences resulting from peer mentoring.

How do White music teachers become aware of their social position of domination so they can *begin* to create opportunities for racialized students to contribute to meaningful learning? Not all music teachers understand their privilege; acknowledging what they do not understand is an important first step. In addition, guiding students through the process of peer mentoring also requires having ongoing difficult conversations about race and racism (Bradley 2007). During these conversations, music teachers need to become pupils themselves and learn about the experiences of racialized students, particularly those associated with racism. Teachers are then better equipped to use peer mentoring as a platform for student interaction, a place for students to share what they know with each other. Although peer mentoring is typically used for some specific aspect of learning music, a supplemental benefit surfaces in the broader discussion of how dominant groups maintain control over racialized groups.

While music teachers may understand the context of this responsibility in their schools, Hansman (2002) urges caution, for the macro dynamics of an institution

may reflect the interests of White dominant cultures instead of the interests of racialized students. Although studies indicate that peer mentoring provides numerous benefits for racialized students (e.g., Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000; Pope 2002), Thornton (2018, 54) argues that peer mentoring “opportunities are often not planned and are only available to those fortunate enough to be part of the mentoring process.”

This situation presents an operational paradox. Although teachers typically serve in an authoritarian role that can reinforce dominant White policies, it is also within the teacher’s authority to take risks and become the initial catalyst for creating peer mentoring experiences through which racialized students have a voice in the classroom. Music teachers then can counter the White-dominant macro dynamics of an institution by creating micro dynamics through peer mentoring. Students from dominant populations begin to become aware of their privilege, and racialized students start to feel more comfortable sharing their experiences. Peer mentoring provides a platform for examining privilege that “involves a process of dialogue through which youth may dissent from dominant discourse on their own terms” (Hess 2019, 28). Through their role as facilitators, music teachers can guide students to take risks toward exploring difficult issues during learning such as racism, which can help racialized students dissent from dominant opinions. Providing opportunities for students to have a voice in learning can also aid with “mitigat[ing] the dynamics that may reinscribe those same hierarchies and structures that enabled oppression” (Hess 2019, 131). Throughout the process of peer mentoring, then, racialized students can begin to feel more comfortable in the music classroom and make valuable contributions to learning. As all students engage in shared responsibility, racialized students have increased opportunities for their voices to be represented in the learning process (hooks 1994). These are only the foundational first steps toward opportunities for all voices, but students participating in peer mentoring also begin to see the importance of diverse perspectives in the music classroom.

A converse challenge occurs when mentees “uncritically accept their mentors’ and their organization’s or institution’s cultural norms and values” (Hansman 2002, 46), such as learning Western musical notation. As Karcher et al. (2006, 710) state, “the wholesale acceptance of mentoring as an effective intervention strategy may be an obstacle to systematic efforts to examine mentoring critically.”

Teachers then must help students understand how “to examine critically the advice they receive from their mentors” (Hansman 2002, 46). Access to support within schools is “an extraordinary phenomenon,” and the gatekeepers who are committed to racialized students can help them achieve success with peer mentoring (Stanton-Salazar 2011, 1067).

Reproductive vs. Transformational Learning Techniques

Students engaged in peer mentoring often share similar interests, knowledge, and experiences, yet research indicates that race, gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, and language are not routinely considered in this process (e.g., Mayberry 1998). Johnson (2015) points out that the music teacher is the primary resource for students learning to mentor. When students progress to actual peer mentoring and engage in shared responsibility, will they merely *reproduce* the knowledge they have learned from their White teachers, or will they use their knowledge and experiences to help *transform* their classrooms into forums about relevant topics such as race and racism? Does peer mentoring as often practiced set up another paradox, wherein it concurrently provides greater opportunities for racialized students while reaffirming dominant whiteness in school music programs?

Despite the benefits to both students from dominant populations and racialized students engaging in shared responsibility in learning from each other, racialized students may become othered during peer mentoring. Othering is a process “underpinned by denigration and a deficit logic” by which dominant populations view racialized populations as deficient in some way (Crozier, Burke, and Archer 2016). Othering can also involve race, class, and gender (Crozier, Burke, and Archer 2016). At the core of this issue, then, is the “paradoxical combination of sameness and difference” (Lawler 2008, 2), in that inclusion from a prior position of exclusion reinforces a learning environment where racialized students become othered. Despite the best efforts of the music teacher to provide opportunities for all voices in the learning process, othering “may reinscribe power hierarchies between teacher and students, and further exacerbate colonial, patriarchal, and racist systems of oppression” (Hess 2019, 34). Music teachers, then, need to be aware of their role in othering students. For example, when they *use* peer mentoring to *give* racialized students a voice, they are instead reaffirming dominant power structures

in that racialized students can only contribute to learning when granted permission by the music teacher and thus reaffirm dominant whiteness. Music teachers need to be aware of the powerful potential of peer mentoring to create situations where students are othered, for the perception is that some students “are normalized at the expense of others that are positioned as abnormal” (Jones et al. 2020, 494). This perception can lead to normalizing whiteness, for “othering is based on negative connotations, which therefore reaffirms White norms as superior” (Crozier, Burke, and Archer 2016, 42). As a result, dominance is re-centered toward students from the dominant student populations instead of dismantling it.

Students learn how to mentor and what knowledge to share from their music teachers. Music teachers need to be flexible in how they structure mentoring opportunities (Hansman 2002). However, peer mentoring does not always look the same; it does not take place all the time in every music class (Goodrich, Bucura, and Stauffer 2018). Music teachers still lead singing in secondary general music classrooms; ensemble directors still select repertoire and lead rehearsals. If music teachers are flexible in how they structure mentoring and are open to taking risks, however, the transition from being the sole authoritarians in the classroom to becoming facilitators of knowledge is more likely to occur. Working together during this process, music teachers and racialized students can engage in dialogic interactions that can help to re-envision the current episteme of “oppression, repression, and inequality” (Mayberry 1998, 447). Racialized students share their perspectives on and experiences with racism through these dialogic interactions, and inroads toward anti-racism that can counter whiteness in music education can begin. Through these dialogic interactions, “youth in school music programs may engage music to tell their own stories and speak back to the deficit discourses that affect their lives” (Hess 2019, 11). During peer mentoring, students engage in orientation to action, where their socializing with each other not only includes musical goals for learning but helps racialized students to “provide counter-narratives to dominant discourses [that] create space for different imaginaries” (Hess 2019, 53). Although the music teacher facilitates peer mentoring and needs to carefully monitor socializing—especially making sure that the dominant populations are not reaffirming whiteness—the students can gradually begin to decentralize learning based in whiteness and make valuable contributions to learning in the music classroom. Transformative learning can begin to materialize in brave learning spaces

set up by flexible music teachers who are aware of their privilege and systemic racism and where racialized students can share their voices via peer mentoring.

Student voices are the most salient drivers of this transformation. Assured the freedom of self-expression, racialized students can participate in generating this orientation to action. As racialized students share their needs, cultural backgrounds, and racial experiences with students from dominant groups who recognize their privilege, conditions in the music classroom become less tense and more collegial. This ultimately becomes the foundation of microdynamics for peer mentoring in the music classroom. Music teachers also need to be flexible regarding the ever-changing populations they teach (Hansman 2002). Each music classroom is different, depending on its population, and this dynamic may also change throughout the school year.

In addition to the many benefits that peer mentoring holds for racialized students, the process also allows music teachers to use transformative student-centered instruction in the classroom. Shared responsibility is not only a rotation of responsibility among students but also between music teacher and students. This may allow music teachers to follow Talbot's (2018) direction to re-envision music education as a tool for change and allow for transformational learning drawing on more diversified perspectives for learning in the music classroom.

Generating a Sense of Belonging

Brave learning spaces provide a platform for students to engage in meaningful learning during peer mentoring. Social interactions are a primary component of orientation to action in peer mentoring (e.g., Karcher 2005; Stanton-Salazar 2011). In addition to serving as an instructional technique for teaching subject material, peer mentoring also helps students build relationships and develop a feeling of belonging as they become part of a group (e.g., Karcher 2005; Thornton 2018; Wiger 2016), an important part of shared responsibility. The relationships provide opportunities to “participate in multiple sociocultural worlds” (Stanton-Salazar 2011, 1069) wherein racialized students can achieve success (Wiger 2016). For racialized students, these multiple worlds “require adoption or execution of certain social identities, and effective accommodation to a system of value and beliefs, expectations, aspirations, ways of using language, and emotional responses familiar to insiders” (Stanton-Salazar 2011, 1069). According to Pope (2002), “the setting must

incorporate an opportunity for these mentors to learn about students from various ethnic backgrounds” in a “more comforting climate” of success for racialized students (43).

Group mentoring activities work well, for racialized students become members of a group where they identify with their peers' cultural practices and norms (Karcher et al. 2006). This helps establish opportunities for all voices to gain a “sense of belonging in school, contribute to improved academic achievement, reduce emotional and conduct problems, and help ... plan for the future” (Karcher et al. 2006, 719). According to Wiger (2016), young people then build upon these relationships to help each other succeed in school and reduce discrimination as students gain a general sense of going through the learning process with their peers. Although opportunities for socializing foster a feeling of belonging for both mentors and mentees (Schwitzer and Thomas 1998), Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón (2007) urge caution in dealing with the negative attitudes that can lead to situations where “a lack of commitment hinder[s] the development of the relationship” (91).

However, not all students from dominant groups or racialized groups can be grouped culturally, which sets up another paradox. Music teachers who make grouping decisions based on assumptions risk replicating hierarchies based on presumed cultural backgrounds, which keep racialized students on the margins of learning. In terms of cultural heritage, racialized students represent diverse backgrounds, and there is no assumed heritage nor cultural background connecting students together. What they likely have in common are experiences of racism. Under the guidance of the music teacher, racialized students can learn how to avoid giving up power to students from dominant groups, as noted in Lindwall's (2017) concern, and become leaders in setting up learning in the music classroom and ensemble. The music teacher can initiate difficult conversations about race, and these can continue to evolve with input from racialized students.

Social interactions are an essential building block of leadership development (e.g., Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000; Tingson-Gatuz 2009). During peer mentoring, student mentors take on increased shared responsibility and may need help in fine-tuning their communication skills; this may lead to the improved self-confidence necessary for developing effective leadership (Good, Halpin, and Halpin

2000). Research indicates that students of color benefit from mentoring by students of the same race (Tingson-Gatuz 2009). Leadership can be cyclical, referred to as *lateral mentoring* by Tingson-Gatuz (2009), wherein mentors prepare mentees for leadership. Mentees then become leaders so that one after the other, the system becomes self-perpetuating.

Decentralization

Peer mentoring assists racialized students in taking on a greater role to shape the micro dynamics of the music classroom. This effort can promote decentralization—a primary component of feminist pedagogy—that can lead to racialized students’ having a voice in music classroom learning and helps all students move away from being passive knowledge-consumers (Chow et al. 2003). This process requires trust and risk-taking for both music teachers and students.

Peer mentoring holds opportunities for learning by doing. Students learn from each other; they also begin to critique *what* they are learning and *how* they are learning it. During their reflections on peer mentoring, this critical thinking is a crucial element of the brave learning spaces because marginalized students have the same opportunities for input as dominant groups (hooks 1994). In hooks’ teaching, she acknowledged “the need for critical thinkers to engage multiple locations, to address diverse standpoints, to allow us to gather knowledge fully and inclusively” (91). Critical thinking assists in “crossing the boundaries” that are defined by the groups present in a learning situation (hooks 1994, 130); racialized students then can develop the “critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate” (Ladson-Billings 1995, 469). This process also becomes self-perpetuating: mentees become mentors over time as new students enter the music program. Peer mentoring then contributes to a music classroom environment that helps nurture the growth of each student towards empowerment in learning in the music classroom.

Transforming Learning Beyond the Classroom

Researchers have discovered that the social interactions created during peer mentoring can extend beyond the classroom (e.g., Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000;

Reed-Hendon 2013; Schwitzer and Thomas 1998; Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón 2007). Pope (2002, 43) stresses that “mentoring programs cannot be one dimensional,” and peer mentoring can include mentors who continue “guidance to the student in academic, personal, and professional areas.” Social interactions developed during learning can extend outside of the classroom and can range from dinners and celebrations (Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000) to going to movies (Schwitzer and Thomas 1998) to volunteerism in the community (Dennison 2000). According to Stanton-Salazar (2011), peer mentoring can go beyond academic achievement and involve extracurricular collaboration so that racialized students can “change the world” at institutional and community levels (1093). As a result, “youth empowerment [is not] divorced from engagement in meaningful social change” (1093).

Classroom peer mentoring provides opportunities for social interactions needed for racialized students to connect to the surrounding community (Christensen 2011; Dennison 2000). By peer mentoring in groups, racialized students can share their experiences and become empowered; this helps them “re-engage with other communities” and use what they have learned in these groups (Christensen 2011, 261). School and community groups can cooperate in helping prepare racialized students to become role models (Dennison 2000). Peer mentoring is multidimensional in that “sharing with others is a means for modeling a respectful, responsible, safe method for community building” and extends beyond the school (Christensen 2011, 264).

The opportunity to network is another benefit of peer mentoring that reaches beyond the walls of the classroom. Peer mentoring allows students to make valuable contacts outside of school and assemble a resource pool to draw on in their future careers (Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000; Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón 2007). Students who mentor each other in school may be interacting with their colleagues-to-be (Good, Halpin, and Halpin 2000), for instance. Shotton, Oosahwe, and Cintrón (2007) point out that peer mentoring goes beyond academics (e.g., selecting a major), and peer mentors help mentees connect with the surrounding community for support and guidance. Social injustice can also become the focus of many mentoring sessions for participants (Tingson-Gatuz 2009). For example, in Tingson-Gatuz (2009), peer mentors introduced mentees to community organizations and showed the mentees how their involvement helped them

succeed at whatever they tried in the future. In turn, these students went on to become leaders in their respective communities.

The instructional technique of peer mentoring has the potential to become a gateway to deconstructing whiteness, not only in music classrooms but also in the surrounding community. Opportunities for all voices on the micro-level may begin a social transformation of the dynamics at the macro level of an institution. For example, Good, Halpin, and Halpin (2000) point out that the relationships developed between students during shared responsibility and peer mentoring can extend to social events such as dinners and to even more involved activities such as volunteerism in Big Brothers/Big Sisters (Dennison 2000). Students from dominant groups and racialized students can participate in community activities that can effect change at the community levels (Stanton-Salazar 2011). Peer mentoring encourages racialized students and students from dominant groups to seize opportunities to enact social change beyond the school. What begins in music classrooms can then go outside the school into a wide array of programs that can help effect change. In this way, peer mentoring extends beyond the walls of the music classroom and provides a conduit for what Mayberry (1998) terms the “effective voices in change within the broader social world” (447). The self-perpetuating cycle of peer mentoring in the music classroom can then migrate to new areas beyond the school. Mentors in the current music classroom have learned the skills to become mentors as adults in their communities (Dennison 2000). Here they can help impact social transformation on a larger scale.

Final Thoughts

Peer mentoring practiced with competence in the best of situations is not *the* solution to all the issues of whiteness in school music programs. However, it is *one* instructional technique that can help move students and music teachers toward a greater understanding of valuing diverse voices. Talbot (2018) points out that “as music teachers, we have the power to create new situations, even when we feel the pressures to conform to the dominating practices of our spaces for teaching and learning” (x). Peer mentoring has the potential to help create a powerful synergy between music teachers, racialized students, and students from dominant populations through critical reflection on what is taught and how it is learned. Much of the research on peer mentoring and racialized students examines the benefits of

mentoring. Through peer mentoring, racialized students can aid with transformative learning in their roles as mentors. Not only do racialized students learn by being mentors, but their active roles in leading the learning in the music classroom can help to de-center dominant whiteness in music programs. With this synergy, transformation of learning begins to occur when racialized students share their voices in reshaping the micro dynamics of the music classroom. Through students' reflection on what and how they are learning during peer mentoring, the music classroom can become a hub for changing the macro dynamics of the institution. With the understanding and insight gained in this process, racialized students may eventually begin to transform the world outside of the classroom. Peer mentoring, then, is not a one-time activity planned solely for some aspect of academic achievement. Instead, it becomes part of the fabric of *how* course material is taught, potentially leading to societal transformation, wherein all racialized voices are valued and supported in schools and communities.

About the Author

Andrew Goodrich is an Assistant Professor of Music, Music Education at Boston University, Boston, MA. Research interests include peer mentoring and exploring why adult amateur musicians continue to engage in music learning and participation. Goodrich has published research in the leading music education journals including the *Journal of Research in Music Education*, *Music Education Research*, the *International Journal of Music Education*, the *Journal of Music Teacher Education*, the *Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education*, and *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*. Recent chapter publications include *Teaching School Jazz: Perspectives, Principles, and Strategies* (Oxford University Press), *The Oxford Handbook of Preservice Music Teacher Education* (Oxford University Press), and co-author with Keith Kelly in *Listening to Voices Seldom Heard: Perspectives and Narratives in Music Education* (Springer).

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Notes

¹ Throughout this paper I do not capitalize the term “whiteness” to identify it as a concept. I do, however, capitalize “White” when it refers to a racial designation, as per CMOS 17, Section 8.38.

² Critique of the term *safe spaces* with regards to diversity and inclusion brings up the idea that although teachers create *safe spaces* with the best of intentions, are they really deemed safe by the students whom they are intended to help (Arao and Clemens 2013)? For the purposes of this paper, *brave spaces* is contextualized as a learning environment where students and teachers can co-create spaces for learning in which students can “make their own meaning of brave space,” and teachers can “shar[e] their own beliefs as facilitators” that “can lead to rich learning in alignment with ... justice-related objectives” (Arao and Clemens 2013, 142).