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Culturally Responsive Teaching and Music Education

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Culturally Responsive Teaching and Collegiate Music Educators

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Introduction

The United States' music culture is predominantly focused on the Western music tradition. Yet, the population in the United States is wildly diverse and continues to become even more so at a rapid rate. Because of this, culturally relevant teaching has become an increasingly discussed topic in music education. World music pedagogy has existed since the late 20th century, but often the focus has just been touching on cultures that are different from Western classical music. This begins to tokenize musical cultures outside of traditional European ones. Although many music educators have good intentions when they program more diverse music, often there are mistakes in authenticity and context. Sometimes this causes the lesson to lose its value and may ultimately put those who are classified as outside of the Western classical tradition in the "other" category. This can make music outside of Europe seem almost like a roadside attraction, rather than something with its own rich, deep history and place within a culture.

Why do some music educators feel out of place with music outside of the classical tradition? It can be traced back to the Eurocentrism of music schools in the United States. Music schools focus primarily on the classical Western music realm, including topics such as music theory, socially accepted ensembles and performance practices, and more. This tradition is a longstanding one. Many established music professors remain in their realm of comfort teaching familiar music and concepts to their students, since that is what they were raised and educated on. This paper looks to find how collegiate music professors at an urban public university view and have experienced the concepts related to culturally relevant teaching, especially when working with future music educators.

Culturally responsive teaching (Schmidt and Smith, 2016; Bond and Russell, 2019; Fitzpatrick, 2012; Shaw, 2016; Shaw, 2012) is a way for teachers to connect to their students and to create a positive and encouraging atmosphere for learning. This pedagogy also helps teachers prepare students to live in a diverse world and to broaden their worldviews. Students can become more understanding of the world around them and aware of the systems of oppression that may be in their lives and the lives of others.

Literature Review

Culturally responsive teaching is not only related to ethnic, racial, and language diversity, but can also include different socioeconomic levels, ideas of gender roles and norms, cultural expectations, impediments due to financial situations, school funding, scheduling, overall culture, and more. For instance, some teachers' culturally responsive actions may make participation in music courses more accessible to students (Bannerman, 2019). Culturally responsive teaching is a facet of social justice and equity in the classroom. At its core it is a way for teachers to work to remove the barriers in place that oppress their students in various ways. Researching the background of each song, facilitating quality classroom discussion, and providing a reflective, well thought out atmosphere allows music educators to reach their students wherever they are and in whatever way they need (Hess, 2017).

Often students feel a disconnect between their home lives and their place within the music classroom. Additionally, teachers whose cultural backgrounds differ from their students often find their own cultural experiences and expectations to be the norm, while the expressions and behaviors of other cultures are viewed as different and perhaps even unwanted. When students find that the cultural experience they have had and continue to live in is not recognized and valued in the classroom, and particularly in the music classroom, then students begin to feel

alienated from the material they are supposed to be engaging with. Teachers must reflect on and recognize both their own cultural background and experiences and those of their students to find where they can be of the most value to the latter (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

As mentioned above, some literature traces the issue of lack of social justice and cultural relevancy back to inherent issues with undergraduate music education programs. Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor (2014) discuss how students of minority backgrounds, including students of Black, Hispanic, LGBTQ, and low socioeconomic identification find the most trouble in entering and then remaining in undergraduate music education programs. Students often lack the resources and support from both the school and professors as well as their family. This level of difficulty does not seem to be faced so strongly and as often by students of Caucasian descent, and a lack of students of diversity graduating from undergraduate music education programs leads to a lack of representation in the K-12 teaching field (Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor, 2014). This can be defined as a positive feedback loop: the circumstances of undergraduate music schools disfavor students of diversity, so they are less likely to graduate. Those who do graduate end up reinforcing preexisting structure powers that led to lower graduation numbers among the students of diversity.

A struggle with culturally responsive teaching may also be traced back to traditions within the classical music realm that also tend to dominate music education at many levels. Indeed, students often feel limited by traditions that are based on things like gender and race. Examples of these limitations include when there are times when a conducting program at a university rarely has been led by a woman; when the concert programs may not feature music of composers who are not just white and male; and when students can feel pressured to pick their instrument based off the associated gender roles of the instrument (Peters, 2016).

Music teacher educators in the United States value preparing their students to teach in a diversifying climate. However, research has shown that music teacher educators do not always value different elements of culturally responsive education (CRE) the same. A national study of music teacher educators by Bond and Russell found that more classroom time was placed on teaching how to create a safe and caring environment in a classroom and less time on issues like reducing the divide students find between their home life and school life. Music education students also find that there is conflict between the theories of responsiveness they are taught in their methods courses with the real-life field experiences they have in schools. The article also touches on issues stemming from the fact that since CRE is a term that has come about in the last 15 years, the topics within it are not always ones with which music teacher educators have experienced in their own careers. Music teacher educators need to make a concerted effort to ensure that pre-service music educators are being fully prepared to teach in a culturally responsive way (Bond and Russell, 2019).

Pre-service music educators express varying degrees of preparedness and willingness to teach in culturally diverse settings. Although some may express willingness to teach in a diverse setting, many pre-service educators would choose to teach in a setting that was similar to the one they grew up in. When the majority of pre-service music educators are white, female, and middle-class, this risks underserving a significant number of student populations that do not fall into this demographic. Research indicates that many pre-service music educators say they hold beliefs that support cross-cultural competency, but it is hard to say whether they will actually apply those beliefs or if they are responding in a way they deem as acceptable. Some pre-service music educators do not feel they are prepared to teach in a culturally diverse setting, even if the matter was presented in their pre-service educations (McKoy, 2013).

Creating a culturally responsive music classroom can be a challenge, especially for beginning teachers. With little real-life experience, beginning teachers are learning to manage the goals for their classroom and the realities of teaching. Additionally, beginning teachers are lower on the hierarchy of influence and decision making. This may mean that their classrooms may go through unanticipated challenges that the beginning teacher has little influence on. However, all of these challenges do not mean that beginning music educators should give up on the idea of culturally responsive teaching. Although things may not be ideal initially, beginning music educators still have an opportunity to influence the musical culture at their school and provide a culturally responsive music education for their students (Schmidt and Smith, 2017).

One of the most recent developments in education overall, but particularly music education, is regarding the treatment of transgender and LGBTQ students. Transgender students report discrimination not just from their peers, but also the adults in charge of them at school. Previous studies have found that discrimination is linked to lower academic performance and overall lower self-perception, among other issues. Even though transgender students fall under the protection of Title IX, they still face discrimination. Some music educators report that they do not feel comfortable and/or confident teaching transgender students (Silveira and Goff, 2016 pg. 141.) The culture of the school system and its setup can foster the continuation of these hurtful ideals, and yet it also offers the opportunity to change this pattern. Although studies show that LGBTQ students tend to have more positive experiences overall in their music classrooms versus their other classrooms, music educators can still improve their outlooks and the overall environment in which they teach (Silveira and Goff, 2016).

Learning about music from multiple cultures, often different from one's own, is a way to increase understanding between cultures. Although many music teachers have a genuine desire

to appropriately address and teach music of a variety of cultures to their students in order to broaden their horizons, educators go about it in different ways. Many music educators try to present the music in a non-Western way that resembles how it may be learned within the original culture. However, this takes away from students' abilities to naturally connect to the music especially if they are from a Western music tradition. This may unintentionally alienate students from the very music with which the teacher is trying to create a connection. By using the students' prior experiences and understandings to connect them to the new music presented to them, music educators are more likely to foster positive and meaningful connections to multicultural music (Blair and Kondo, 2008).

Time is always a challenge for music educators. A limited amount of time for instruction within the school year means teachers must make a decision on what they want to teach, how, and to what depth. When presenting music from an unfamiliar culture, some teachers may be tempted to change it to make the song easier for both the teacher and the students to learn. In other words, teachers may significantly reduce the authenticity of a culture's music in order to make it easier to present in the classroom. However, reducing authenticity for simplicity's sake, not because of classroom restrictions or the fact that music from another culture presented within another will never be absolutely authentic, can lead to a lack of genuine connection to and understanding of the musical concepts within the given musical culture. There are multiple methods to try to replicate music authentically, including regarding authenticity as a continuum, considering reproduction, reality, and relevance, and historical and personal authenticity (Koops, 2010). In other words, it can be difficult to make music relatable to students who are unfamiliar with it while at the same time not distorting the music by simplifying it inappropriately.

Even with the intention of using culturally responsive pedagogy, students still sometimes feel alienated from the music in their classroom due to the dominant Eurocentric tradition that forms the basis for many school music repertoire choices. Shaw (2016) suggests teachers must be wary about music that seems more culturally diverse but is actually harmful and misrepresenting of a culture. An additional complication is with students who are to varying degrees a part of or removed from their home culture versus their school culture. For instance, a student who immigrated to the country with their parents compared to a student who was born after their parents immigrated to the country. Students may recognize when a more culturally diverse song is used in the curriculum as an add on, not as a main part of the curriculum. When teachers use more culturally diverse music as a cosmetic embellishment of an otherwise Eurocentric curriculum, students can potentially feel alienated (Shaw, 2016).

One way to improve cross-cultural teaching is to form positive relationships between teacher and students. Teachers must lead this by developing their own cultural competency. Ruth Gurgel (2015) summarizes how a teacher can build these positive connections with their students in a diverse classroom as:

[The teacher should ensure] that students experience continual musical achievement, taking responsibility for initiating positive relationships, becoming culturally competent by viewing personal experiences and understandings as culturally situated instead of "the norm," caring for students with humility and caution by working to understand students' culturally situated understandings and values, and constructing an environment where students are seen as equal contributors to learning with teachers. (pg. 78)

Teachers must also be careful to observe their thinking patterns and recognize potential biases, and ensure that the unwanted and potentially 'undesirable' behaviors of their students are not a response reflecting their cultural background. This also requires teachers to reflect on their own musical upbringing and what that culture was like, and how that may compare to the one they are teaching within.

A study in children's multicultural sensitivity, called the Music Culture Project, showed that children of different backgrounds can still identify when a performance of a song is not reflective of the culture it is trying to represent with a proper introduction to the song and culture beforehand. Children are able to identify themes of racism, appropriation, and discrimination in and around said music. When taught appropriately, children can identify the importance of a song within its given culture and even what role it plays. Children cannot and will not always be perfect in their understanding, but appropriate introduction to and teaching of these themes can build children's multicultural sensitivity inside and outside of music (Howard, 2018).

At its heart, culturally responsive teaching is a student-centered approach instead of a repertoire-centered approach. Instead of considering what would be the best music to program, teachers who choose to teach in a culturally responsive way consider what their students bring to the table with their own backgrounds, and what those students need from the teacher and the music classroom in response. Shaw (2012) states, "Instead of thinking of culture as something distant and removed, one way that culturally responsive teachers can attend to the cultures present in their own classrooms is by including repertoire that honors their own students' cultural heritage" (pg. 76). Students may be part of multiple cultures at once, including socioeconomic status, race, gender, etc. One might recognize that a student's culture of origin might not be the culture they identify with in daily life. From rehearsal strategies to repertoire choices and everything in between, music educators can help to ease the disjunction students may feel between their home lives and their school lives (Shaw, 2012).

The purpose of this study is to find how different collegiate music educators handle culturally relevant teaching in the modern classroom. Since many collegiate educators remain at that level of education for long periods of time, has there been a change in anticipation and

response within the classroom? Are there challenges created after recent world events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic? As found in the literature above, schools of music in the United States tend to be predominantly white and not representative of the country's population at large. Does this have an effect? How do the students' and the teachers' musical and personal identities play into the culture and choices within the classroom? As social justice issues evolve in the modern world, how are teachers making their students feel welcome in their classroom?

Methodology

Participants

Participants in this case study were three tenured music professors at an urban public state university. Each specialized in a different area of music. These areas include instrumental ensembles, vocal ensembles, and music history/academic courses. Each professor holds a doctorate degree, and each has been in their position at the university for at least 5 years.

Each interviewee had a unique background in music and all differed from each other. One talked about how they were surrounded by their mother's musical experiences all throughout childhood, which eventually led to the pursuit of music in higher education. Not everyone in this interviewee's family was supportive of this idea, but because it was paid for by scholarships, eventually it was accepted. The second interviewee spoke about how, "I come from a family of academics, and so the whole idea of like going on to college and getting a degree was – it was never discussed. It was so self-evident, you know." This interviewee entered college studying music, with no real plan initially as to what they would do with their degree. Both of these were very different from the third interviewee's background. "My parents were not at all musicians, nor were they encouraging of me becoming a musician. So they fought that all the way until I got a job." These contrasting backgrounds recall Peters' (2016) writing about how

students in undergraduate music programs receive varying levels of support from their home life. It is unclear from the interviews just how much these differing levels of familial support affected each interviewee's long-term outlook on music education.

Procedures

Following a literature review, interview questions were drafted based on the overall themes found within the journals. Interview questions were listed in an intentional sequence from broad to more specific questions.

Each professor was contacted via email to find a time to conduct a one-on-one interview. Each interview took place in the professor's school office. The interview questions were asked in the order listed in the appendix (see Appendix A), with any follow-up questions being asked immediately after their corresponding questions. The entire interview was recorded on the researcher's personal tablet. Interviews ranged in time from 26 minutes to 45 minutes long. Interviewees participated in the study of their own free will with no compensation.

Transcripts were coded after the completion of all interviews. First, themes were identified in each individual interview. After finding themes in each interview, themes were compared to see what the overarching findings of all the interviews were.

Results and Discussions

Given the contrast between the population of the United States and the population of American schools of music, it can be noteworthy to see what culturally relevant teaching looks like within the modern classroom. The interviews with the professors aimed to discover the specialists' ideas on culturally relevant teaching and what that looks like within their classroom. The collegiate classroom can include students from many different walks of life and may open the door for a more diverse learning environment than previously experienced. Something both

teachers and students experienced in recent times was the culturally shift of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, numerous social ideals have created varying levels of cultural changes for members of different communities. How do these changes impact the collegiate music classroom, which has been dominated by the classical Western culture for decades? What was found is that teachers recognize these challenges and are ready to work to make the classroom a welcoming place for every student – in other words, a more culturally relevant environment.

Diversity of the School

When asked about the diverse backgrounds of the students they teach, all three interviewees noted there is a lack of racial diversity among the student body of their classes. This directly connects with Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor's (2014) statement about the lack of diversity within undergraduate populations of schools of music in the United States. Because of the makeup of the school of music in which these professors are employed, there is not a large pool of racial diversity for professors to draw on to make connections within the classroom. Although there is little the professors can do to impact the racial diversity of their classroom, there are other facets of diversity professors can utilize to reach each of their unique students.

The first interviewee talked about a variety of kinds of diversity including the diversity of learners and diversity of musical experiences, stating:

I was taught that to be a successful teacher, you have to be able to say the same thing in many different ways...If you deliver a directive, and they try it and it doesn't work, and you know you got to try a different way, and that may be because how you're speaking to them or the way you're giving the directive is not meeting them where their skill set is and where their readiness is, so you've got to change that.

Later they discussed being aware that their musical experiences are likely very different from the ones of the students in their ensemble. These varying levels of musical experience require the director to put concerted thought into how to weave the ensemble together into a

performing group. Additionally, determining what kind of musical experiences are important to provide to students poses a challenge. There are other elements of putting together an ensemble. For example, the interviewee discussed how occasionally issues arise in the ensemble where there may be a few students who struggle to afford the required concert attire. This too is a way the educator must adapt their instructional choices. A teacher who recognizes the unique experiences of all their students and works to incorporate this knowledge into their teaching is a clear example of a culturally relevant teacher.

As stated previously, there is often only a very small number of students with the interviewee's ensembles that would be considered diverse compared to the rest of the ensemble. The interviewee stated that effort was made to bring in guest artists of minority statuses (including people of color and/or women) to encourage students "who have seen nothing but a parade of white dudes...it was uplifting for them to see somebody that looks like them who's really successful."

Finally, another facet of diversity this interviewee discussed is the more recent social development of gender identification and pronouns. Teachers must always be aware of how they are addressing students if they want to avoid alienating students who already feel different from their peers based on their identity. When teachers make this choice to be consistent and considerate of how they address their classes and the possible ways students may be grouped in an identifiable way (such as concert dress), this results in a more culturally relevant classroom.

The second interviewee made similar comments on racial and gender lines. They also mentioned that this impacted the diversity of the curriculum. The interviewee's outlook of the diversity of the institution was influenced from their own background, "I came here from California and I had done adjunct teaching for a year or two out there, and when I came here,

what I found shocking was a lack of diversity. It seemed like...all of my students were white and there was no diversity.” This interviewee also touched on diversity of musical experiences of students in the classroom, as the first interviewee did. By using a more self-motivated musical assignment that overlaps with multiple courses, they said, “I do get a sense of where they’re from and what their music is like.”

The third interviewee stated something almost identical to what the second interviewee said when asked about the institution’s diversity. “I don’t think there is very much diversity as far as racial diversity here at (institution), in comparison to what I’m used to coming from Southern California. It is predominantly Caucasian [here]. You might get the occasional African American or Black descent, very few Asian descent or Hispanic descent, but they exist.” As did the first interviewee, the third interviewee discussed how there has been a more recent development of gender and pronoun identity within their ensembles within recent times.

The overall findings in the theme of school diversity for the interviewed professors is simply that at this institution and school of music, there existed a number of different kinds of diversity outside the lines of racial identity. One of the most notable is the range in musical experiences prior to entering the school of music. The understanding of these differences among students allows teachers to adjust their teaching choices and potentially the curriculum to better include all their students and students’ needs. All specifically commented on the fact that many of the students are of the same racial demographic. Very little was mentioned in specific regards to overall gender makeup and socioeconomic demographics. This supports the findings of McKoy (2013) that a majority of pre-service teachers are white but does not touch on the rest of the statement, that students are generally middle-class women. Two out of the three professors

had developed their definition of a diverse school from their previous experiences at schools that had greater diversity.

Diversity of Curriculum

The response around the diversity of the curriculum at the institution varied depending on the interviewee's area of focus. For one interviewee, the focus was less about specifically programming a diverse program and more about programming quality music. When creating a program, this director does not focus on creating a culturally diverse program but instead picks from quality music that may or may not be written with the incorporation of diverse musical writing. "It's not like when I program I'm trying to create a journey for the listener, that's different kinds of things. But yes, I think there is an increased awareness of diversity as it relates to who the composers are and the types of music we trying to incorporate and introduce to our students."

For another interviewee, they expressed clear intention to program quality music that touched on diverse musical backgrounds, "I try to create a diversity of repertoire, both in who the composers are, but also the language." There is intent to represent cultures that may not often be seen in the repertoire. The interviewee later goes on to mention various themes present in the music programmed, including social justice, among other human emotion driven ideas.

The interviewee who dealt most with traditional classroom settings and curriculum seemed to undergo the most apparent change with the curriculum's focus on diversity. When the professor first started teaching the curriculum, they noted the difference in expectation from their previous experience:

Like out in California, I was teaching world music and there was a sort of assumption that you would be addressing more than just one tradition. And I came here and it was, no no, you're just – you do that. And so in the beginning...it's sort of the opposite, like there

was no diversity and no expectation there should be and I was surprised by that. As time has gone on though, we've [the school] caught up. And I think we're still catching up.

Later they stated,

Musicology used to be quote unquote masterpiece oriented...the role of the teacher was, "Look at this great work here and here's the reason why it's great." And that change that happened in musicology and in my generation, in my lifetime, is less about greatness and more about cultural relevance. And there's a phrase musicologists use, which is music does cultural work, and what they mean is it reflects the culture it's from, and also changes the culture it's from... Studying music from a cultural context, whichever music it is, it's just got to be valuable.

Additionally, when referring to textbooks, "They've become more inclusive and more diverse through time. Just look at the representation, for instance, of women composers in the tradition. Look at the, you know, renewed focus on, for instance, African American classical composers..." In other words, the updating of textbooks has allowed the interviewee to include more diversity that may have been lacking before, such as women composers and composers of color.

Overall, the three professors seemed to base their diversity choices in the classroom on what they value most in their music classroom. Two out of three of the professors based their choices in diversity relating to the latest developments in diverse curriculum and a desire to represent multiple cultures within the classroom. All three professors valued choosing quality material to use in their classrooms, regardless of if it specifically related to diversity or not. These decisions on curriculum correlate to Fitzpatrick's (2012) and McKoy's (2013) writings on how teachers are more likely to teach in areas that they are comfortable in, which is usually what their background is in. The professors interviewed had a tendency to fall into diversity patterns in which they were most comfortable and/or had previous experience with.

Connection to Music

Each interviewee had a differing viewpoint when it came to how their students' responses to music has changed in the classroom in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and music courses, traditionally in person, moving online. The third interviewee described how it has been more about how students conduct themselves in the classroom rather than their connection to the music. A visible issue is that students struggle with the process of performing a whole concert cycle. The overarching effect from the COVID-19 pandemic has been how students relate among one other and with their professor to be responsible and to communicate with others.

The first interviewee had similar experiences post-pandemic, and also touched on the fact that students did not have the physical or mental stamina they did prior to moving online. "You know, in the early days that we were playing, we didn't have the [physical] stamina. We were trying to play with bell covers and face masks." Because of the time spent with classes being online and a lack of opportunity to play within a large ensemble, the director found that they had to adjust their teaching and rehearsal planning to meet this physical need of the students. Later they stated, "this phenomenon [referencing their smart phone]...that sense of how long you can sit and concentrate on something? I think that continues." The professor continued on to say how the ability of students within their ensemble to focus on something tedious for a longer length of time occasionally presents a challenge, with students struggling to focus for the time needed to fully address a concept.

Finally, the second interviewee did not notice much of a difference in their students after returning to in person instruction. While they did notice some overall more positive receptions to being in live class versus a virtual classroom, the professor found, "Overall, no. Like if you dropped me down before or after the pandemic and I didn't know which one it was. I can't say that I would just see this gigantic difference."

An overall theme found in the interviews was that the professors did not sense that reaction and responses to music has changed visibly very much after being online for instruction in the past. Hess (2017) wrote about how culturally responsive teaching includes meeting students where they are to remove barriers. These professors found some level of their teaching style had to change to reach the new needs of their students, but that their overall approach did not change much following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Social Justice and Inclusivity

The interview questions with themes of social justice and inclusivity brought a variety of responses from the interviewees. From the second interviewee's perspective, inclusivity has been an evolving process as musicology has changed. The largest transition has been the inclusion of women and people of color in the curriculum, as well as the trend of growing diversity in the classroom population. "Coming up through when I was the age of my own students here, we never even heard of women composers, and that whole generation – men taught men. They taught male composers, and they didn't even think twice about it..." In terms of diverse composers, they responded with, "...and so maybe that's one shift that reflects diversity is substituting a composer that's probably a bit more appropriate." After this statement there is also the mention of female composers. When asked about the intent of diversity and inclusion in the classroom, the interviewee responded with, "I never really think of myself as trying to change as just simply trying to teach appropriately...It's obviously the case that a class should reflect diversity. There's just not even a question about that." In response to this idea, the professor has worked to include more musical cultures within the curriculum they teach other than the main focus on the Western classical tradition. Their hope is to present all the musical cultures present in their curriculum from outside of one narrow worldview.

When asked about the topic of social justice in the classroom, the first interviewee stated, “It depends on the piece of music...I don’t know that I walk into the music making arena thinking that the most important outcome of the experience is to provide with students is to ensure social justice. Now if I’m playing a piece that is inspired programmatically by something related to that, then yeah, we got to have a conversation.” The interviewee, as mentioned before, discussed the various evolution of social justice and identity matters in the classroom. An area of focus for the interviewee is learning to use more gender-neutral terms when addressing the ensemble as well as working to make sure the proper pronouns are used for each student.

The third interviewee’s response on the social justice topic was multifaceted. One of the outcomes was the idea that differing opinions are allowed and welcomed in academia. “So sometimes when you sing and partake in a musically historical thing, it can either fortify what you have believed or test what you believe, you know? ...But putting yourself through that is, in my opinion, an important part of the process.” The idea of incorporating social justice ideals is one they use in their classroom approach. “How I approach social justice is just about finding a way to be empathetic with the human spirit...I approach social justice in the choral ensemble to find a unifying factor.” This led into helping students gain cultural competency and creating an overall positive ensemble culture. “... a choral culture to my liking is one not just of high work ethic and high quality, but those things are embedded in a sense of inclusion and not just inclusion, but belonging. Where people aren’t just invited to the table, they feel welcome to return to the table.” One of the largest points of growth for the choral director has been around gender roles and identity in the choral world. “I mean, I didn’t realize how gendered choir is, and that sounds so dumb, but it clearly is. I mean, it was super gendered. But even me, I have some constructs in me where Sopranos and Altos are supposed to wear dresses and Tenors and Basses

are supposed to wear tuxes.” This realization, coupled with the social justice ideals of the ensemble, led to the decision to incorporate varying levels of identifying dress for those in the ensemble:

Because I feel I need to see a sense of expression, but now even next year I’m continuously trying to grow because next year we’re going to change it and have two..gender fluid and gender neutral options....It’s so everyone could not just feel like they’re neutralized...So I think also allowing people to be in a culture where they’re included, that they’re welcome and that they belong, but also that they can freely express who they are, not by being neutralized.

All three of the professors touched on ways in which they have worked to make their classrooms more welcoming along different lines such as gender identification and representation and minority racial groups representation. The attempt to support students of racial minority groups at a school that is predominantly white is potentially a way to support those students who may struggle to thrive in such environments (Fitzpatrick, Henninger, and Taylor, 2014). Each professor’s attempt to create a more welcoming environment specifically for LGBTQ students is a way that supports the conclusions of Silveira and Goff (2016), that music educators can work to make classroom spaces more inclusive for those students. All of these choices in the classroom seem to promote Gurgel’s (2014) idea of creating a positive student-teacher relationship within the classroom to foster a more culturally relevant classroom. Additionally, these actions fall under Hess’s (2017) definition of culturally relevant teaching.

Additional Impacts on Culturally Relevant Teaching

Both the second and third interviewees mentioned the weight of upcoming state legislation, and the impact it could have and could already be causing on the institution and music as a whole in regards to diversity and culture. The third interviewee remarked,

I think that is neutralizing us of that, it's almost neutralizing music, right, because in and of itself, people don't realize, I mean, that music has had a social justice stamp on it, even though we might not see it because we weren't living [at that time].”

and continued on to speak about the politics present in works by composers such as Verdi and Beethoven. The second interviewee remarked as well:

There's always the risk of someone feeling like that's [referencing diversity] the same thing as appropriating someone's music. So in other words, I teach African American music. And I'm making a profit off of teaching someone else's music...To not teach diverse musical traditions is wrong. To teach them, somebody might say that that's wrong too.

They later go on to remark about how the school has been strangely quiet on diversity training in light of the announcement of possible state legislature impacting the operations of the university. This outside influence of the state government on the teaching of music at the college level is certainly one whose influence only time will tell and may be found in later research.

A question raised during an interview was what is the responsibility of teachers to teach diverse music, and who does that responsibility generally falls on? The third interviewee stated,

Cultural competence is not the responsibility of the marginalized professors.

Marginalized being those who are at a disadvantage – women, people of color, transgender, you know – like, that's not our job. They should be everybody's. But it is falling on those people, in my opinion.

Conclusions and Further Research

Findings from all interviews pointed to all three professors using culturally relevant teaching in one form or another. This seemed to relate to the mindset each professor had for their

teaching and choices related to their classroom. Two out of the three professors indicated significant value on using the latest in relevant teaching within their classroom material, which promoted cultural relevancy. Although the school of music these professors work at does not have a diverse student population, each professor showed a willingness to learn and to create a welcome environment for any student now and in the future.

Further research would be needed to see what the impact of state legislation has on the future of culturally relevant teaching – not just in music education, but in all of education. Each professor commented on the potential looming changes in higher education due to these possible changes in state legislation and with definite concern, yet none were completely sure what that would look like. Additionally, very little of the literature reviewed in this study mentioned anything about where the burden of culturally relevant teaching should fall. One professor interviewed commented on this in detail. Interviews with professors also of minority status at the same and other institutions would provide insight into if this is a recurring theme in other schools of music. Finally, since culturally relevant teaching is at its core student-centered, it would be vital to find out whether the work these professors do in their classrooms leads their students to feel as if they are part of a culturally relevant educational environment.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. What was your musical upbringing like? How would you describe your background as an educator and a musician? And demographics, if possible.
2. How do your students' diverse backgrounds and upbringings affect your classroom/ensembles? How do you respond to that diversity?
3. Have you noticed a difference in students' responses and connectivity to music in a post-Covid world? If so, what does that look like?
4. What value do you find, if any, in choosing to present music from outside your and/or your students' culture(s)?
5. How do you approach music that is from an unfamiliar culture, whether that be to you and/or your students?
6. How do you learn about students' home musical culture or musical environment outside of school? How do you incorporate that knowledge into your choices in the classroom?
7. How do students respond to in school music (i.e., the curriculum) versus out of school music?
8. Quote of Friere and Hess. Paulo Freire (2000) asserts the role of education is first and foremost a political act. A teacher's most essential role is to develop students' ability to think, critique, question, and challenge. Hess (2017) wrote, "Music is an extraordinary medium for social justice. It facilitates personal and communal expression, storytelling, reflection, critical thinking, and creativity" (p. 73). Through the facilitation of a social justice pedagogy, particularly through the embracing of cultural relevance and responsiveness, "we can help them challenge, critique, and shape both their world and

their music in ways that help them express their ideas and tell their stories” (Hess, 2017, p. 73). What is your response to this quote?

9. Do you find you have to help students with cultural competency? In what ways?
10. How have you taken a role in improving the culture of inclusion and diversity of an ensemble and a school?
11. Do you think you should be responsible for social change around diversity and inclusion in your classroom? In what ways?