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Keeping Our Doors Open: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Music Education for 2019

In February of this year, music educators from around the state of Ohio gathered once again for the annual Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) Professional Development Conference held in Cleveland. The research track of the conference commenced with the Graduate Research Forum featuring music education scholar Dr. Regina Carlow of the University of New Mexico. Professor of Music and Interim Dean for the College of Fine Arts and Artistic Director of the UNM Children's Chorus, Carlow has focused the bulk of her research efforts on the marginalization experiences of students within secondary school music programs and their trajectory as musicians throughout their lives. Her research journey began twenty-five years ago as she began to recognize her own parents' and grandparents' stories in the faces of her students. In short, her passion for the marginalized in music education would become her life's work and "the paper [she] would never stop writing" (Carlow, 2019).
Keywords: music education, diversity, equity, inclusion, marginalized populations, social justice, culturally responsive pedagogy

Introduction and Opening Remarks

In February of this year, music educators from around the state of Ohio gathered in Cleveland for the annual Ohio Music Education Association (OMEA) Professional Development Conference. Each year the research track of the conference commences with the Graduate Research Forum, which features a guest speaker who is an authority on teaching and learning, practice, and research within the field of music education. This year's forum featured Dr. Regina Carlow, Professor of Music and Interim Dean for the College of Fine Arts at the Uni-

versity of New Mexico (UNM) and the Artistic Director of the UNM Children's Chorus. Carlow's research efforts focus on the marginalization experiences of students within secondary school music programs and their trajectory as musicians throughout their lives.

Carlow opened the session with a land acknowledgement for the territory on which the conference was being held. A land acknowledgement is a formal statement of recognition for the indigenous people and their history in the place which an event is taking place, connecting the past with the present. By opening the session in this way, Carlow exhibited her deep respect for the peoples and cultures that had previously inhabited the land while also demonstrating the importance of embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our country. This laid the framework for her presentation, *Keeping Our Doors Open: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Music Education for 2019*.

The land acknowledgement transitioned into present day with the speaker recognizing and honoring the significance research has played in the life of the OMEA Conference, both historically and currently, stating [that it is] "clearly an important part of the bloodstream of the cultural and artistic life of Ohio" (Carlow, 2019). Carlow, a Pennsylvanian who is grateful for her rich, musical life, further honored the legacy of Ohio music educators stating that now, as a career music educator, she also recognizes that the "big show" (Carlow, 2019) in music education was happening just next door in neighboring Ohio. These kind words of admiration brought a smile to the faces of the music education scholars and students in attendance, and further set them at ease to hear the presentation regarding marginalized populations, social justice, and responsive pedagogy in the educational setting. As the speaker noted and educational philosopher Maxine Greene (2004) states, "There have always been young persons in our classrooms [whom] most teachers did not, could not, see or hear."

Personal Background and Interest in the Topic

With the notion of marginalized populations in schools in mind, Carlow began to share her own family's story of marginalization in both society and schools beginning with her grandparents, all four of whom had come to America as single immigrants from central and southern Italy right after the turn of the twentieth century. Her own parents were both first generation Americans raised in poor, working class families. Lacking an opportunity for education, Carlow's father had felt the sting of being marginalized as an Italian-American and decided to change his name from *Zampaglione* to *Carlow*. This was a deliberate attempt to escape the

stigma of having an ethnic-sounding name, believing that change was necessary in order to be successful and to fit in socially. Her father, Franm Zampaglione, now Carlow, believed when others saw the new name, they might perceive him to be of a different ethnic background and treat him more favorably.

Carlow went on to recall memories of "playing school" with her grandmother, Maria Bavusio Zampaglione, who was illiterate in both English and Italian, noting that it was her grandmother who was her first subject of research, as she began investigating the music of her own culture. Though her grandmother could not read, she could sing, and sing she did. Carlow honored both her grandmother and her Italian heritage as an undergraduate music student when she presented a set of Neapolitan folk songs as part of her senior recital at Westminster Choir College, and this was also early evidence of her personal interest in validating and honoring the stories and experiences of the marginalized.

Though not recognizing it initially, Carlow's own interest in marginalized populations grew from such familial experiences. Her own journey as a music educator for 22 years would result in her teaching students from as many as 50 different countries, with many of those being recent immigrants. She began to recognize her own parents' and grandparents' stories in the faces of her students, and though she could not name the exact moment this realization occurred, Carlow notes, "It was the paper I never stopped writing" (Carlow, 2019). This was indeed the case, as her first research paper as a graduate student 25 years ago and her research up to this point, has centered on the "educational concerns of all levels of marginalized children to the teenager in the music classroom" (Carlow, 2019).

Multicultural Education, Marginalized Populations, and Music Education

Carlow began her discussion on marginalization and music education by delving into the history of American public schools at the turn of the twentieth century, when the purpose of schooling was to teach the uneducated skills such as repetition of tasks, reading, writing, and simple math so they would be well trained as future factory workers. In other words, as Carlow (2019) so aptly states, "Students went in different and came out the same."

Carlow also pointed out the origination of the phrase *melting pot*, which was based on a play of the same name by Israel Zangwill, the son of Eastern European immigrants. Though Zangwill's desire was that "the entire lexicon of religious and cultural differences [be] thrown away," the term was commonly referred to as a way to describe the "American absorption of immigrants" (Carlow, 2019). Carlow

continued to note that the *melting pot* view was "one of amalgamation—that we would all become one" (Carlow, 2019). She also noted that the romantic metaphor of this translated to public schools' goal of 'civilizing' immigrant students by separating them from their native culture and language. In turn, only those whose cultural and language association were aligned with educational leaders (predominantly white, English-speaking Protestant men) found true educational success, while those who did not espouse these characteristics failed to flourish.

This resulting tension established a double standard within the educational system at the turn of the century. Though encompassing some of the methodological benefits of the industrial revolution, American education was overshadowed, in some measure, by European philosophies not only in how subjects were taught, but also in the inclusion and omission of what was part of the curricula. In essence, immigrants' own cultures and native languages were prohibited in the educational setting.

Such biases extended into music education practices in the first half of the twentieth century as Euro-Germanic classical music traditions were esteemed above the many musical cultures of the growing immigrant population. European art music was deemed to be 'proper' because it represented the music of the upper class, and was the pathway for cultivating moral and intellectual development in students, especially through the replacement of German lyrics with more uplifting ones. Though many in the immigrant population acquired a love for this genre, the music was not representative of their native cultures. Folk melodies also served to Americanize immigrant students.

While educational leaders strongly promoted the idea of assimilation, which works to diminish differences of well-defined cultures and promote one distinct culture and social group, cultural pluralists emerged to emphasize the preservation of cultural and social identities within the larger culture (Healey & Stepnick, 2017). In his metaphor of the symphony, Kallen (1915) wrote:

> Thus, "American civilization" may come to mean the perfection of the cooperative harmonies of "European civilization," the waste, the squalor, and the distress of Europe being eliminated—a multiplicity in a unity, an orchestration of mankind. As in an orchestra, every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate them and melody, and the harmony in the whole symphony, so in society each ethnic group is the natural instrument, its spirit and culture are its theme and melody, and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all make the symphony of civilization, with this difference: a musical symphony is written before it is

> played; in the symphony of civilization the playing is the writing, so that there is nothing so fixed and inevitable about its progressions as in music, so that within the limits set by nature they may vary at will, and the range and variety of the harmonies may become wider, and richer and more beautiful. But the question is, do the dominant classes in America want such a society? (p. 220)

In essence, those espousing pluralistic principles in education desired the classroom to reflect the ideals of a democratic society. Pluralists saw the role of education as more than just teaching students to "manage [their] resources and overcome obstacles, but also, more specifically, [to develop] socio-ability, aesthetic tastes, sound intellectual methods, and sensitivity to the rights and claims of others" (Carlow, 2019). In discussing the contrasting ideas of assimilation and pluralism, Carlow also suggested that it is possible for the two to coexist to some measure; while some groups may embrace assimilation in order to diminish differences, others may pursue pluralism in order to preserve or increase differences.

Although European folk songs were largely used during the first two decades of the twentieth century, a cultural and musical shift began to occur, especially during World War II. A new appeal to unite the Americas led to an increased awareness of music and cultures from Central and South America, including the introduction of federally subsidized programs, such as the Service Bureau of International Education, which encouraged the inclusion of international music contributions. One such project highlighted by Carlow was the 7-year Federal Music Project, *Folk Songs of New Mexico*, by Helen Chandler Ryan, that documented the folk traditions of the Hispanic-American culture in the state of New Mexico and assisted in supplying music instruction to low income children.

The post-World War II economic and social scene began to change as thriving industrial jobs declined and gave way to new industries that placed more importance on education, making a high school diploma vital for economic survival. A new kind of pluralism also began to emerge, as once marginalized groups began to demand fair treatment, leading to the Civil Rights movement. In validating the rights of all minorities, more immigrants, especially those from Mexico, Latin America, and Asia, felt encouraged to come to America. Other minorities, such as women, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian people, as well as those who supported them, also firmly advocated for equal rights and treatment as a result of this earlier foundation.

As widespread change began to occur in education, music education was also affected. In 1957, the Ford Foundation sought to better understand the connection of the arts to American society. As a result, a number of projects such as the

Young Composers Project and the Contemporary Music Project were funded. Other projects such as the Tanglewood Symposium (1967), funded by the Music Educators National Conference (MENC), soon followed suit. Though immigrant students were not the direct focus, the declaration that "The music education profession must contribute its skills, proficiencies, and insights toward assisting in the solution of urgent social problems as in the 'inner city' or other areas with culturally deprived individuals" affirmed this priority. Since this time, a focus on minority and world cultures and music has been featured at music education conferences and in music education publications, legitimizing the international focus and its importance and place in the curriculum.

Recent Research and a Turn Toward Social Justice

After discussing the historical underpinnings of multicultural education, marginalized populations, and the role that music education has played in this, Carlow segued to contemporary research, beginning with data regarding English-language learners (ELL), most of whom are elementary students. California has the largest number of ELL students (21%) followed by Nevada and Texas (both 17%), New Mexico (16%), Colorado (12%), and Alaska and Kansas (both 11%). Perhaps most surprising to participants was that most current ELL students are citizens, with 72% born in the United States versus only 28% immigrants. Data also indicates Spanish as the most common language among ELL students, and more than 400 languages are spoken by ELL students nationwide, with cities rather than rural areas having the highest concentration of ELL students.

Carlow stressed the importance of a "label-free approach" (Hammel & Hourigan, 2011), conveying some of her own personal challenges in her career as a young researcher. Carlow also discussed gaps in immigrants' cultural literacy, and asked attendees to consider whether or not there should be a common vocabulary (shared symbols and references) for all, and to discuss this in small groups. The discussion led to further questions such as: *If there is a list of common vocabulary, who creates this list?* and *What types of things should the list include?* Some emphasized the importance of the vocabulary being student-centered and unique to the specific environment. Carlow added that vocabulary could be expanded to comprise numerous types of communication, including memes, gifs, images, and iconic sounds.

Social Justice Education Defined

Carlow transitioned to defining social justice education, referencing the work of author and educator Linda Christensen (2009). Social justice education en-

compasses several key components. This includes curriculum that: is applicable to students' lives; is multicultural, antiracist, and pro-justice; includes texts that represent and honor the diverse cultures of the students and society; and is designed to for classrooms to be participatory and experiential (Christensen, 2009). The ideals behind social justice education contend "all students have the capacity to learn and grow [and] deficits in skill does not mean deficits in abilities" (Carlow, 2019). Learning should contain both academic rigor as well as measures of activism, as students engage in their communities in meaningful ways.

Also referencing Linda Palmer's (2018) research, Carlow suggests that social justice education is "a critique of the normalization of privilege and power held in the hands of the few at the expense of the many" (Carlow, 2019). In spite of this, care must be taken when discussing *empowerment* and references to grave errors in history, as the conversation may no longer be an open dialogue if it is deemed as harsh rhetoric, inciting cynicism and frustration. If conversation does become heated, Carlow suggests a gentle reminder that marked change often takes a long time, and relaying stories of how people have experienced success in the past may help students better understand this. In contrast to a history lesson, the preference might be to approach the conversation sideways rather than head-on, using such forms as poetry, songs, and stories to teach empathy to students (Christenson, 2009).

Social Justice, Wide Awakeness, and Critical Pedagogy Research in Music Education

Aporia comes into play as students realize their formerly held beliefs may not be accurate, leading them down a pathway of discovery of deeper understanding (Plato, 380 BCE). A study by Colleen Sears (2016) cites Maxine Greene's (2004) concept of *wide awakeness* as a framework for music teacher educators to utilize when questioning previously held beliefs surrounding job training for undergraduate students. Greene (2004) asserts that one must be deliberate in engaging with the very real and complex issues within the lived experience, linking commitment to do so with morality and ethics.

Social justice issues seen through the lens of critical pedagogy are largely founded on Freire's (1970/2000) work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Frank Abrahams (2005) applications of critical pedagogy in music education also help frame the social justice conversation within music education. Elizabeth Palmer's (2018) literature review takes this approach, examining social justice issues of music teacher education practices as well as practices within the K-12 music classroom, with suggestions for more progress in socially just practices. Palmer notes that addressing such topics as privilege and oppression can be difficult due to the vulnerability

that is needed along with the admission of how one's own privilege may have served to oppress others.

Within the music education performance-based setting, there is greater opportunity for equality in the learning process as students' musically contribute, and the teacher serves largely in a facilitator role. Still, achievement gaps and inequities continue to exist in various music programs due to "families inadvertently [being] denied access" due to school size, location and economic status (Carlow, 2019). Even in the twenty-first century, Carlow asserts that music teacher education is still coming to terms with issues surrounding social justice, equity, and inclusion. Some universities are more progressive on this front than others, requiring courses on these topics, whereas even in the recent past, these may have only been optional or not offered at all.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in Music Education

Finally, Carlow addressed the connection between multicultural education and culturally responsive pedagogy and its further application to music education. Based on the research of Geneva Gay (2018), knowledge of cultural differences within a given community should: inform the curriculum, classroom environment, teacher-student relationships, and instructional approaches; celebrate cultural differences; establish empathetic learning communities where individual cultural differences are valued; and confront social injustice of all kinds (i.e. stereotypes, racism, prejudices).

Carlow conveyed her own goals when teaching undergraduate courses on this topic including: safe spaces for all learners; practicing culturally responsive pedagogy; examining non-Western music traditions; various social justice perspectives; and working with special populations (i.e. inclusion, self-contained, universal design). Carlow also mentioned a textbook as well as a number of articles and studies that address the topic of social justice within music education. (Bond, 2017; Doyle, 2014; Kelly-McHale, 2019; McKoy et al, 2017) as well as a textbook (Lind & McCoy, 2016) that address the topic of social justice within music education.

Final Thoughts

Carlow closed the session by referencing Sonia Nieto's (2018) seven components of multicultural music education: anti-racist, basic, important for all students, pervasive, promoting social justice, a process, and critical pedagogy as the underlying framework. Carlow stated that, as music educators, we need to consider the students and culture-bearers related to the music, not just the music itself.

In this same vein, Carlow drew attendees' focus to a United States Department of Culture and Arts video, *Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgement,* whose stated purpose is to "call on all individuals and organizations to open public events and gatherings with acknowledgment of the traditional Native inhabitants of the land" in the hope of "sparking a movement…[wherein] millions would be exposed…to the names of the traditional indigenous inhabitants of the lands they are on, inspiring them to ongoing awareness and action" wherein this will be the practice widespread (United States Department of Arts and Culture, 2017).

Carlow expressed previously reflecting on her own journey as a "first-generation high school graduate from a wild first-generation Italian family…to a researcher, teacher, conductor, and [now] administrator," along with her deep gratitude to her parents for prioritizing education. Even though she at one time never thought she would say this, she is "acutely impressed and grateful for her Italian heritage" (Carlow, 2019). As a result, Carlow is "always searching for clues as to how to open doors and keep the conversation going, and leaning in to difference when it's possible" (Carlow, 2019). In short, she affirms Greene's (2004) notion: *I am forever on the way*.

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