

**Inclusion: Final Thoughts**

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MUSIC 9586: Music Education in Inclusive Contexts

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July 19th, 2020

The last two weeks, my thoughts on inclusion have shifted significantly. Looking back, I realize how difficult it is to teach in a way that is different than the way I have been taught. Change requires a desire to be reformed in order to begin the process. Upon beginning the process, there requires clarification on the details and implications of such reforms. Once these implications have been fully absorbed, then there is mental capacity for action. Admittedly, there is much in my philosophy of music and teaching that is still deep in the process. I will respond in accordance with the various topics of our two week period of study and briefly discuss where my thinking currently rests with each of these. Although my thinking continues to be disturbed from its rest, I will give a brief summary of my process.

My vision is to see more programs that build community and unity, rather than competition and division. Before this class, I believed that this idea was idealistic rather than realistic, and I believed it would be unproductive. When I saw the model presented by DeVito (2020), my view on community music was transformed. The ideal has become reality. Goals of music production started to fade from my musical ambitions. I hope to bring thought into action in presenting a similar program to my church staff and elders. I hope to include anyone who has a love of music and is willing to participate. Hopefully, this will allow those living in the apartments within our church building to create friendships and find a sense of “home”.

Many of the incoming apartment residents struggle with mental illness or impairments. In reading Mitchell’s thoughts on community musicking, therapy being a side effect of this, I know that this type of approach is practical and can be a reality at my church. I also know that many of the residents have personally let me know they would love to try music. My hope is that this community musicking will act as therapy for many who will call our church “home”.

Pastoral visitation to the sick and elderly is a recurring event in a pastor's schedule. As a worship pastor, I am seldom involved in visitation. Spiritual care and music therapy have collided in my thinking over the past few weeks. As I attempt to conflate the two, I have been processing a practical application for spiritual care through music. I hope to present a plan for regular musical visitations and become more involved in the spiritual care of the sick and elderly.

As a Christian, I have had to work through issues related to sexuality and the LGBTQIA+ community in a number of ways. I recall being an adolescent and having to work through friendships with those of non-cisgender identification. This was difficult for me, but looking back I am thankful for those experiences. Rie's story (Nichols, 2013) was revolutionary for me. I had never before considered the fears and daily crises a transgender individual must face. It must take such significant courage just to enter any kind of social context.

What was really difficult for me to read was Rie being physically beaten by his peers just for being different. What a tragic consequence of hateful thoughts turned into action. This has prompted my thinking on the subject. I need to be intervening if I hear anything that can be taken as hateful or destructive language toward anyone who would identify as being on the LGBTQIA+ gender spectrum. A phrase that stood out to me that would be useful in peacefully confronting hateful speech is, "What do you mean by that, and why would you say something like that?". Instead of limiting people's right to speak their mind, I am instead trying to help them think through the implications of what they are saying and how that might affect another human being.

The issue of decolonization is fairly new to me. It has been beneficial for me to work through what decolonization might look like within my teaching context. Most of the music that

we teach in our home studio has been western classical music. However, before we take on a student, we always ask what style or genre they want to learn. Most often, they want to learn classical western notation. This genre of music cannot be ignored, especially when learning piano because it gives goal oriented students a means of tracking their progress in learning notes and sounds on the piano. I do believe it would be beneficial for us to introduce styles that students may not be aware of, in order to present them something new and give them the option as to whether or not they would like to learn a new style.

Decolonizing music in the church is a far more complex topic. Church music has been put on a pedestal, and although my efforts have been to dismantle that pedestal by using different styles, the response has not been overly positive. This will take more significant planning and careful action in order to help teach the congregation that no particular musical style is “God’s music”, and that we can worship God using any style of music.

There is a lot of work ahead of us as music educators. We are in a unique position to create a space where all students are welcome in the learning and growing process. This requires us to be understanding of all backgrounds, beliefs, and sexualities, while also working toward varying curriculum in the areas of style, genre, and culture. The last two weeks have caused me to think more philosophically at what classes and lessons can look like in order to further commit myself to the students I teach in order to better equip them for a lifetime of music-making.

## References

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