Voices of Diversity in Music Education: Perspectives of Inclusion from the California State University System

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The California State University (CSU) system, the largest affordable university system in the United States, is California’s primary institution for undergraduate education and reflects a unique demographic across its 23 campuses. More than half of all CSU students self-identify as a student of color and one-third of the undergraduates in the student body are first generation college students. Additionally, of the 23 campuses in the CSU system, 21 of these campuses are considered Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) and 14 campuses are considered Asian American-Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISI). As outlined by the Higher Education Act (2008), individual campuses comprised of at least 25% full-time Hispanic undergraduate students with a high enrollment of students in need can acquire HSI status; whereas, institutions having a minimum of 10% full-time Asian-Pacific Islander students with 50% of these students receiving federal assistance can acquire AANAPISI status. Because the CSU system welcomes this diverse population focused on inclusive excellence, students represent the most ethnically, economically and academically diverse student population in the United States. (https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/about-the-csu/facts-about-the-csu/Documents/facts2018.pdf).

Asian-Pacific Islander populations have surpassed Hispanic as the fastest growing population in the United States. However, an increased Asian-Pacific Islander or Hispanic student population does not guarantee that university personnel will be responsive to these students’ particular needs or identities.
For these reasons, exploring culturally responsive teaching offers insights into meaningful experiences for students in AANAPISI- and HSI-identified institutions.

To that end, the purpose of this research is to explore the intersection of culturally responsive teaching and HSI/AANAPISI in music education as it currently exists in the California State University system. Specifically, we will examine the research questions: 1) How do students perceive their education through the lenses of being Hispanic, Asian American, or Native American Pacific Islander? 2) How does being identified as an HSI or AANAPISI impact music teacher educators when making curricular decisions? 3) In what ways do music faculty in the CSU System address the HSI/AANAPISI identifier when creating teaching and learning experiences? Using descriptive statistics to examine the CSU system in relation to its status as HSI/AANAPISI and music education as a foundation, we further explore the meaning of HSI and AANAPISI through the lens of a pre-service music educator focus group and music educators teaching in these institutions.