We Share a World: A New Perspective on Cultural Responsiveness in Music Education

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After the past several decades of discussion in education, it might be trite to bring up diversity or multiculturalism. Still, these topics are being discussed in many places as a universal concern, and educators and researchers consistently look for a better environment to support diverse culture. Music education is no exception. Several music educators have studied diversity and multiculturalism to offer better guidance for music teachers (Abraham, 1962; Anderson, 1991; Elliott, 1995; McCarthy, 1997). These researchers in fact had reported evidence of an inadequate learning environment for diverse students, and proposed providing more support to them over at least the past four to five decades in the United States. Unsurprisingly, music educators still advocate for the importance of cultural responses and cultural diversity these days (Bowman, 2007; Campbell, 2004; Howard, 2018; Kelly, 2016; Lind & Mckoy, 2016).

In retrospect, it seems that merely acknowledging diversity and multiculturalism did not constitute a solution. Rather, the responsibility of music teachers to support diverse students in their teaching remains ambiguous. To illustrate, while curriculum policies such as the U.S. National Core Music Standards (MENC, 1994; NAfME, 2014) and State Music Standards in the United States have mandated multicultural curricula in the music classroom, there is no direction on how to achieve such goals or how music teachers can acquire relevant experience (Kang, 2016). Furthermore, the National Core Music Standards emphasize “standard notation” (Richerme, 2016), which would appear to conflict with supporting multicultural and diverse music. Such unclear direction creates unease among current music teachers and challenges for those who wish to support diverse students in their teaching.
The purpose of this study is to examine past and current music education in the United States using a *cosmopolitanism* framework, and to establish a new scheme for music educators, with a view to fostering an optimal teaching environment, not only in the United States, but also in the rest of the world. “*Cosmopolitanism*” refers to the idea that human beings are citizens of the world, sharing a single community and a common morality in modern society, based on the coexistence of diverse cultures for which there should exist a mutual respect (Appiah, 2006). It is logical to assume that education shares a common morality and that we comprise a single community within music. Therefore, I would like to suggest making use of the concept of cosmopolitanism as a specific form of cultural response and diversity in boundary crossing and music education, so that music teachers can have better guidance in their teaching. In this study, I will offer an overview of cosmopolitanism and discuss how cosmopolitanism aligns with Dewey’s insight. Finally, I will explain how we, as citizens of world and citizens of music, can usefully apply cosmopolitanism to support a culturally diverse classroom.