

The Ethic of Care in Music Education
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The need for understanding students in education and their needs in the classroom has been and continues to be a priority for many educators and administrators within the field of music education. Often, educators and administrators go into the field of music education because they care about the students and/or the subject material. In other words, teachers and administrators seek a career in the field of music education because they care. This research explores different settings and seeks answers to the role of caring in music and music pedagogy. The interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships inherent in music-making are reflections of the relational nature of human beings. These interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships that are arguably inherent to music call into question the methodology of teaching music.

The purpose of this research is to critically examine the pedagogical practices of care in music education in the view of a care ethic. I will follow the cultural influences and the practical implications of a caring culture in music and the musical classroom. The purpose of this autoethnographic research is to critically examine the pedagogical practices of music education in the view of a care ethic.

The research pulls from community/elective musical environments in the United States and Viet Nam. I will follow the cultural influences and the practical implications of implementing a caring culture in music and the musical classroom. The guiding research questions include:

1. What does an ethic of care look like in a collegiate Orff ensemble, a high school marching band, and a Vietnamese orphanage?
2. How do those involved in the teaching and learning of music generate a culture of care in these settings?
3. How can this information help teachers engage in reflective practice, create a healthy music-learning environment, and overtly plan and implement caring pedagogy?

Through music, many transferable skills are often argued for—various aesthetic and utilitarian skills are developed. Among those transferable skills is teaching the student to care, which will then transfer to them receiving care, or vice versa. We saw the transferability of care through music from the collaborative projects in the Orff ensemble course.

In music classrooms, teachers have the ability to show that they care with every student interaction and lesson plan. However, in some cases, it is not that the teacher or the students are not caring, it is that they do not know how to communicate it. One crucial aspect of caring is the ability to be empathetic. Many music educators argue that their classrooms teach emotional skills, such as how to connect to music and emote through music, that working together to create music in a group setting fosters community. A necessary component of a caring and empathetic classroom is the ability to be self-reflective. By evaluating oneself, tacit patterns come to the forefront of one's teaching and everyday practice.

As a result of this thesis, there are several ideas to implement into practice regarding the ethic of care. There are numerous ways to engage in a mindful practice of the ethic of care.

- From this research, a Caring Curriculum was drafted. This curriculum is intended to be used on top of whatever subject material currently employed in a classroom at any grade level. The Caring Curriculum was drafted after a course in the caring culture of music education, and was also pulled from experiences in the collegiate Orff ensemble.
- Teachers could invite students to engage in student-led or teacher-generated projects revolving around music and care for others or self.
- Students could create a “buddy system” with which to practice, where they find a time to meet and practice together in order to help the other and build community. This could be in a mentor/mentee fashion, where one student is older and more experienced than the other, but this does not have to be the case.
- Students could also be given a framework in which to create an engaging community event revolving around music, such as a dinner dance at a local retirement home, or organizing a small pep band to play at an elementary basketball game.
- Teachers and students could employ a regular, reflective practice of actions and intentions and how they relate to his/her self and their learning community.