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## The Oxford Handbook of Care in Music Education: A Review Essay

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As a mid-career music teacher educator, I often have reflected on the evolution of our profession. From early multicultural movements; to stronger assessment strategies; to the emergence of musical and social identities; to teacher- and student-centered learning; to informal music-making; and to socially-just music teaching, generations of music educators have grappled with how best to approach music instruction. Ultimately, what binds these movements together is the concept (and act) of care. Karin Hendricks's work in *compassionate* (Hendricks, 2018) and *authentic* (Hendricks, 2021) connections in music education has culminated in a volume that beautifully reflects care and caring relationships in music teaching. Hendricks's ideas combine with those of Buber (1970), Noddings (1981, 2013), and an impressive company of expert scholars to reveal the crux of what constitutes good teaching. There are, however, opposing forces in music education that we sense but often have difficulty naming. In *The Oxford Handbook of Care in Music Education*, Hendricks and her adept contributors name and claim the issues that can impact our relationships with others. They trouble philosophical assumptions that are left unexamined and provide guidance on how to navigate new and recurring discussions in music education. This volume is a tremendous resource for music educators and arts teachers alike.

Hendricks defines care as “demonstrations of benevolence, concern, compassion, or even love in relation to others” (p. 7) and situates care as a key principle in responsive music teaching. She acknowledges that even though care is an imprecise term with variegated meanings and interpretations, care and caring relationships are essential for positive learning experiences in music. Still, Hendricks asks, “How do we learn to care? Can care be taught? Does everyone care to care?” (xviii). Over the course of 48 chapters, Hendricks and her co-authors skillfully confront these and other aspects of care as they relate to music education. Each chapter provides compelling evidence—both theoretical and practical—through examinations, stories, and interrogations of how care undergirds our connection to music teaching and learning. Hendricks and her colleagues approach the work of care in new and unexpected ways, often turning what appears to be a positive concept into one that, indeed, possesses a shadow side that must be reconciled. In fact, in the initial foreword to the volume, Lucy Green references the “Pandora's box” that care in music education affords (xv). This handbook aptly unpacks from that box sundry yet masterfully connected notions of care and stands as a seminal work in music education.

*The Oxford Handbook of Care in Music Education* is divided into four sections, each of which focuses on an overarching category of care: (a) philosophical perspectives on care, (b) co-creating caring relationships, (c) wellbeing and human flourishing, and (d) social activism and critical consciousness. The purpose of each section is established clearly through insightful forewords and draws readers forward through an enlightening sequence of chapters, frameworks, and reflections. Highlights from each section are outlined below.

### **Section 1: Philosophical Perspectives on Care and Music Education**

The first section of the book (Chapters 1–12) grounds readers in the philosophical tenets of care and their inextricable ties to music education. Given that music teachers' decision-making is based—knowingly or unknowingly—on philosophical assumptions, Section 1 provides informative backdrops to how music teachers can be more reliable stewards of care in their classrooms and communities. In his section foreword, Panagiotis Kanellopoulos rightly notes that some readers “may find [these descriptions] unsettling, even dangerous” (p. 3). These are but the first elements of the figurative Pandora's box that Hendricks and her colleagues release to encourage critical thinking on perspectives that may be unrealized at best or disregarded at worst.

In the opening chapter, Hendricks presents an incontrovertible argument that ongoing societal forces worldwide have hastened the need for caring, responsive music classrooms. Because of injustice, civil discord, a global pandemic, systemic racism, and environmental concerns, among other social maladies, Hendricks calls for music educators to see, use, and examine care in their work. Hendricks outlines the chapters in Section 1, providing a table with clear themes and connections across the handbook. She offers an elegant primer of the volume and establishes a distinct need for ethics of care in music education.

The next two chapters center on the philosophical foundations of caring for music education in troubled times (Chapter 2) and the ways in which caring and empathy can be displayed in music teaching and learning (Chapter 3). The following two chapters shift to philosophical perspectives of musical development and performance, including the tension between virtual performances and the ethic of expectation (Chapter 4) and compassionate musical engagement with young children (Chapter 5). With hints of social activism and critical consciousness, the next chapters address *convivencias*, or the mindfulness of presence with others (Chapter 6), and the philosophy of wonder and its connection to music education (Chapter 7). Writings about musical engagement with regard to disability (Chapter 8), the dialogic relations to community music settings (Chapter 9), and children gifted in music (Chapter 10) encapsulate a life-wide depiction of care and ethics across populations. The final two chapters in Section 1 address care as viewed through Confucianism and Daoism (Chapter 11) as well as through environmental, biological, social, and musical ecosystems (Chapter 12).

Authors for each of the twelve chapters in Section 1 convincingly present the philosophical and historical foundations associated with their topic. In sum, these opening chapters reveal a clear landscape of care, particularly as it relates to change and tradition in music teaching and learning. Readers who may not be familiar with the contextual intricacies of care will find a wealth of information here, along with both answers and (new) questions.

## **Section 2: Co-creating Caring Relationships**

Section 2 (Chapters 13–24) begins with a foreword from Liora Bresler, who acknowledges that the backbone of this section is comprised of “complex, real settings of music education” that are delivered with “sensitivity and insight” (p. 154). While each chapter holds philosophical premises, they focus squarely on the importance of constructing caring relationships among and between teachers and learners. In these chapters, theoretical and practical elements combine to address issues such as creating safe spaces for music learning, fostering a positive musical environment, meeting the needs of multiple learning styles, supporting vulnerable populations, and expanding inclusive teaching practices.

The first chapter of Section 2 sets the tone for caring relationship by outlining the musical circle of care as a pedagogical framework for opening, working within, and closing music teaching segments with students (Chapter 13). The next five chapters focus on cultivating positive learning environments for a variety of learners, including intersectionality in learning spaces (Chapter 14), ways to support LGBTQIA+ music students (Chapter 15), social emotional learning (Chapter 16), empathy and communication in jazz improvisation (Chapter 17), and trust and connection in music-making (Chapter 18). Four chapters highlight caring relationships in ensemble settings and feature data from community music leaders’ experiences of care during a time of crisis (Chapter 19), empathy and care in inclusive ensembles (Chapter 20), reciprocity and responsiveness in a youth instrumental ensemble (Chapter 21), and caring relationships in singing (Chapter 22). The final two chapters in Section 2 depict the presence or absence of caring relationships through peer mentoring and compassionate learning environments (Chapter 23) and bullying and psychological safety in school music classrooms (Chapter 24).

Authors for each of the twelve chapters in Section 2 examine relational aspects that are both promising and painful, and they do so with great compassion. The complexities of “belonging” to music-making endeavors is essential for relationships to grow. Section 2 provides descriptive maps for navigating inclusive, co-created relationships in music.

## **Section 3: Caring for Wellbeing and Human Flourishing**

In her forward to Section 3 (Chapters 25–36), Susan O’Neill frames the notion of meaningful music engagement as an “entanglement of caring, wellbeing, and flourishing” (p. 304). The authors in Section 3 provide pertinent commentary on these and other “entanglements” through investigations on how self-care, mental health, and overall wellbeing can shape music experiences. A key principle across these chapters is how caring relationships and reflexive thinking can lead to satisfaction and positive, fulfilling musical lives.

The first two chapters of Section 3 address supporting singers through vulnerability and voice shame (Chapter 25) and establishing a climate of trust that fosters mental wellness among students and adults (Chapter 26). Three chapters encompass wellness practices and focus on mindfulness, compassion, and gratitude in music education (Chapter 27); universal self-care considerations for music teachers (Chapter 28); and somatic self-care practices among music teachers (Chapter 29). Subsequent chapters feature caring connections between music therapy and music education (Chapter 30), students with exceptionalities (Chapter 31), trauma-informed teaching practices (Chapter 32), and older adults' music participation (Chapter 33). Finally, musical development as it relates to diversity and implicit bias (Chapter 34), enhancing students' musical wellbeing through acts of care (Chapter 35), and using core reflection to cultivate care in the music classroom (Chapter 36) punctuate Section 3 with theoretical and practical ways to increase wellbeing.

Authors for each of the twelve chapters in Section 3 approach wellbeing from a variety of compelling perspectives. These timely viewpoints serve as extensions of previous chapters on care and reinforce for readers the power of restorative practices in music teaching. Section 3 also complements Hendricks' exploration of the ways in which our profession "cares for" and "cares with" others.

#### **Section 4: Care, Social Activism, and Critical Consciousness**

Cathy Benedict writes in her foreword to Section 4 (Chapters 37–48) that the ensuing content pushes readers "toward liberatory purposes by uncovering systemic mechanisms of oppression" (p. 446). The authors in Section 4 expertly confront challenging social issues head on. As the culminating section in this volume, the material acts as an urgent crescendo to how care can (and should) be enacted explicitly, so that expressions of activism, justice, and restoration endure. The concepts in Section 4 also serve as a response to Hendricks' earlier call (Chapter 1) for repairing societal ills through caring and thoughtful music practices.

The first three chapters present robust information on musical equity, abolitionist pedagogy, and compassionate music teaching (Chapter 37); critical race theory (Chapter 38); and intercultural sensitivity (Chapter 39). Additional connections to care are examined further through critical listening and authorial agency (Chapter 40) and authors' personal reflections on love, care, revolution, and justice in music teaching (Chapter 41). The next four chapters contain the theoretical and practical elements of anti-racist music education practices (Chapter 42); relationships and music-making in prisons and schools (Chapter 43); gender, power, and popular music education dynamics in Hungary (Chapter 44); and culturally responsive music teaching in the Deaf community (Chapter 45). The final three chapters of Section 4 begin to pan back out, returning to an emphasis on societal repair. Topics include music's role in a

more just and joyful society (Chapter 46), cultural humility and integrative diversity (Chapter 47), and care-based policy practices (Chapter 48).

Authors for each of the twelve chapters in Section 4 critically examine how music teachers and students engage with each other and the world, and how such relationships should be grounded in self-awareness and critical consciousness. As in other section chapters, authors responsibly tackle the inherent risks of caring within and outside of systemic boundaries, although they offer persuasive evidence that the rewards of establishing caring relationships are paramount to the human condition. These chapters provide a glimpse of a future in music education that is rooted in care and justice.

### **Final Thoughts**

Music educators will see themselves in any number of chapters in *The Oxford Handbook of Care in Music Education*. Over their careers, music teachers have been both the administrators and recipients of music instruction and likely will identify with the aspects of caring and uncaring relationships that are presented in this handbook. Hendricks and her co-authors take a “simple” concept like care and problematize it to reveal nuances and viewpoints that previously were unimagined in our profession. The compilation of chapters represents a careful yet deliberate unboxing of elements that is both troubling and liberating. Authors’ collective voices remind readers that music teaching and learning is a human act that must be based on caring relationships with and for others.

Hendricks’s handbook is essential for any college or university library and would be an invaluable resource for faculty and graduate students whose scholarly work centers on positive music teaching. Individual chapters could be assigned as readings in undergraduate and graduate music courses, especially as they relate to music teachers’ expanding worldviews. Inservice music teachers also would find connections to relevant issues and student populations they encounter daily and would discover refreshing approaches for their own classrooms. Hendricks’s work and that of her colleagues is ground-breaking. Together, this volume holds tremendous potential to soften edges that harm and to rectify injustices that perplex. Such transformation is vital for our current world, where caring relationships are needed desperately.

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