**Gathering Perspectives Through Ratatouille, Memes, And Readings: A Reflection of Week #1 of Music Education In Inclusive Contexts**

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**Abstract**

Reflecting on the Ansdell (2002), Baldwin (2002), Davis (2016), Mitchell (2019), Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017), Treweek (2019), and the Pixar animated film Ratatouille by Lewis (2007), this paper examines how my biggest take away from this week are the elements of perspective. This paper starts by examining perspective in Ratatouille and how this relates to the meanings and actualities of perspective in my practice, experience, and wonderings during this course. I argue that by taking on perspectives outside of my own understanding and experiences in regards to privilege, labels, and the therapeutic power of music education for individuals with exceptionalities, we end up growing into a more inclusive society that recognizes the needs of the whole rather than the comfortability of the few. This paper finishes with a connection to a picture (or meme) that was circulating regarding perspective taking.

*Keywords:* privilege, disability, stereotypes, biases, exceptionalities

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There is a 2007 Pixar animated film called Ratatouille about a rat, named Remy, whose dream is to become a famous chef. There are two antagonists in the film, but I wish to focus on the second man, named Anton Ego. Ego is a very renowned food critic in France and he comes to the fine dining restaurant to review Remy’s work, which has gained notoriety for being excellent. As Ego is seated and asked for his order, he browses the menu and, in the end, settles on a dish of perspective. While this comment in itself is Ego stroking his own ego (no pun intended) and sense of power he holds over these chefs, he ends up served with a peasant dish of ratatouille. This dish, firstly, is delicious, and secondly, takes Ego back to his childhood memories of his mother. This serves as his metaphorical and literal fresh perspective. Firstly, a peasant dish being served in a classic restaurant challenges his ideals that there are many facets of the world that maybe he is being too critical of and does not see clearly. Secondly, the onus on the chef to create a dish for a customer that elicits both a physical and emotional reaction shows him that once you get to know the person and address their experiences and perspectives, you can leave creating something wonderful for everyone rather than just very good for some. Similar to Ego’s realization, after re-reading the articles, reflecting on group discussion, viewing my notes, and pondering my own ideas and philosophies when it comes to music education and teaching in general, I have come to the conclusion that what I have taken away from this week on the whole is perspective.

I have spent a significant part of this week addressing my own thoughts, biases, privileges, and preconceived notions when it comes to working with students with exceptionalities. Beginning with the Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017), I put into words my own understanding that, even though there are many areas in my life where I am not as privileged as my peers, I still have had some experiences in my life that have not been impeded by my personal privileges. I can empathize with those who argue that they have worked for everything they have because I have worked hard as well, but just acknowledging that privileges like my skin colour and anglicized name have not been barriers to my achievements addresses concerns that our society’s construction heavily relies on discriminatory practices.

In the Davis (2016) and Treweek (2019) articles, I began to think how labels in a variety of forms create stereotypes, biases, and a series of preconceived notions and restrains that keep marginalized individuals in areas of oppression. These labels also have negative connotations on their self esteem, job prospects, and how they are perceived by others. I will admit, I still do think there are areas in our societal construct where I think having a label for an ability or disability is helpful, usually when it comes to understanding how to work best with individuals with this exceptionality. But assuming the status and abilities of an individual, or necessitating a label to access social services simply serves to provide additional barriers while holding on to our own neurotypical and ableistic understanding of the world and how it best suits our wants and needs.

The Baldwin (2017), Mitchell (2019), and Ansdell (2002) articles focused on two elements: community music and music therapy. I think these articles were the ones I ended up getting the most out of when it came to reflecting on my own professional practice. I do not currently work in a system that has a music class for students within a contained class setting, but based on my own personal philosophies and an understanding that there are experts out there in the world who know more than I do and have done the integrative steps necessary, I see this as a great disservice. I mentioned in one of my group discussions "If we are arguing that music is a fundamental aspect of humanity, expression, community, mental wellness, and culture, why are we then excluding students who, arguably, could use more of that type of integration based on their exceptionalities and how they are treated in society?” I will admit that I have had some negative experiences with individuals with exceptionalities in the past when it comes to physical outbursts and violence, and I do honestly try to keep that out of my teaching. My philosophy changed once I took on the perspectives of the individual with the exceptionality and of the scholars who took the time to integrate and work with students in a community and therapeutic setting. I feel very strongly that these are the types of programs that we should be funding and creating within our school system.

To conclude, I am reminded of a picture/meme that was circulating social media within the last year, Figure 1. While it originally circulated as a picture simply about perspective taking, later edits to the picture add another layer of consideration, which I think really lends itself to my own discoveries and wonderings this past week. Just because those in the majority are content with the way things are currently, does not mean that everyone else is having the same experience. Taking in the scenery, orienting yourself, and engaging in the physical and emotional aspect of perspective taking, opens up one’s understanding of the necessary changes to barriers currently experienced by marginalized groups in our society. If you would like to read or engage more with my or my group’s wonderings and discussions, please feel welcome to view our webpage at [https://miicgroup5.weebly.com](https://miicgroup5.weebly.com/).

Figure 1.

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