Examining the Nature and Function of Rules in the Music Classroom

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Abstract

Rules are often a taken-for-granted norm in education. In many schools, rules have become synonymous with behavior management systems, such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom. In this paper, we draw upon Foucault's conceptions of governmentality and discourse as well as notions of hidden curriculum to examine rules. We consider the ways in which self-governing subjects are assumed to regulate themselves by making the "right" choices in a given situation, thus producing subjects prepared to operate within neoliberal societies. We explore how, despite claims to the contrary, these systems still often enact sovereign power toward individuals who may fail to self-govern in accordance with agreed upon expectations, in turn drawing a line between the "good" students who embrace emotional control by following the rules and others. We then reframe rules as a process for learning, suggesting that recasting rules in this manner can support the development of relationships and an understanding of how learning might operate in particular contexts.

Examining the Nature and Function of Rules in the Music Classroom

Rules are often a taken-for-granted norm in education. According to Boostrom (1991), they are "a familiar part of the classroom—probably too familiar" (214). Indeed, most individuals could rattle off a list of common music classroom rules with little variance amongst their examples: "Be respectful," "Raise your hand to speak," "Cooperate with others," "Use correct posture," "Don't touch the instruments without permission," and "Sing or play to the best of your ability." This pervasiveness of rules has led scholars to wonder whether rules have become so taken-for-granted that educators no longer question their role and function in classrooms (Boostrom 1991, Haberman et al. 2017, Kohn 2006).

In many schools, rules have become synonymous with behavior management systems. Two examples of these systems that are often used in U.S. schools are Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) and Responsive Classroom (RC). Program creators initially aimed to proactively prevent discipline issues by encouraging prosocial behaviors within and amongst students (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012). These systems are often purported to be democratic and inclusive alternatives to top-down zero tolerance behavior policies. In reality, these systems typically operate in a manner that promotes emotional suppression in the classroom (Stearns 2015). Such codes of conduct result in school rules that control "everything from how students walk down the hall to how they are supposed to raise their hand to request permission to use the restroom" (Center for Inspired Teaching 2018). Teachers praise students for demonstrating emotional control and, in particular, for demonstrating "joy" in their language and actions. As of this writing, PBIS is enacted in over 25,000 schools (Center on PBIS 2025) in all 50 states, and over 120,000 educators have been trained in RC in all 50 states and 29 countries (Center for Responsive Schools 2025).

While students may feel the impact of programs like PBIS and RC in all classrooms, such a focus on emotional control can be particularly impactful in music classrooms. The music classroom has been framed as a space for students to experience a full breadth of emotions, using music as a catalyst to explore the complexities of one's self and experiences, as well as the experiences of others (Bylica 2023, Maas 2021, Parker and Hutton 2023, Perkins 2021), though this has not always been the case (e.g., Gustafson 2009, Karvelis 2024, Vaugeois 2013). In

particular, scholars have highlighted the words of young people who point to ensemble settings as opportunities to feel, express, and experience multilayered emotions (Adderley et al. 2003, Parker 2011). Within schools that fully embrace these behavior management systems, a discourse of mandated joy and emotional control potentially thwarts such opportunities, requiring emotional experience to be placed in a box and treated as a functional skill in order to serve the repertoire and performance. As such, emotions are seen as part of a learning goal, but the actual expression of such emotions as part of one's human nature may not actually manifest in everyday interaction. Furthermore, Raby (2005) stated, "young people are seen to be incomplete, at risk, and in need of guidance, a position that legitimizes school rules and their enforcement," thus leading to a focus on rules as a source of safety and "protection" over empowerment (73).

In this inquiry, we examine the nature of behavior management systems in the music classroom, paying particular attention to the function of rules within these systems and the ways they may oppose the emotional expression often associated with and celebrated in such spaces. We draw upon the concepts of governmentality and discourse (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1991) as well as hidden curriculum (Anyon 1981, Apple 1990, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) to consider the ways in which self-governing subjects are assumed to regulate themselves by making the "right" choices in a given situation, thus producing subjects prepared to operate within neoliberal societies. We explore how, despite claims to the contrary, these systems still often enact sovereign power toward individuals who may fail to self-govern in accordance with agreed upon expectations, thus drawing a line between the "good" students who embrace emotional control by following the rules and others (Ball et al. 2012, Petrie 2015). Throughout this manuscript, we provide examples of PBIS and RC through composite sketches (Leavy 2020) based on our own personal and professional observations and experiences in the field of music education.

Governmentality

Governmentality emerged between Foucault's early work on the self and disciplinary societies and his later work on economic liberalism (Besley 2010). Though Foucault never contributed a sole published work dedicated to governmentality, his use of this neologism for government rationality was connected to his oeuvre of work. Governmentality, according to Foucault (1991), is based on the various strategies, actions, and policies that shape individual conduct;

in other words, it is the "conduct of conduct" (220–21). Besley (2010) argued that governmentality focuses on notions of "how"—considering both how the state is governed and how individuals govern themselves. Through laws, policies, programs such as PBIS and RC within government-supported institutions (e.g., public schools), the state governs subjects and constructs the citizens it desires (Besley 2010).

By its nature, governmentality is contradictory in that it can be used to both individualize and totalize people and populations (Besley 2010). More explicitly, governmentality can be understood as "endeavors to shape, guide and direct the conduct of others" (Rose 1999, 3) wherein individuals are seen as "subjects of responsibility, autonomy and choice" (54). Therefore, governmentality focuses, in part, on the self-governing subject who is expected to make decisions that are fitting to the society in which she lives, thus producing a responsible, capable citizen (Raby 2005), or in Foucault's (1977) terms, a "docile body" (135). According to Foucault (1977), if individuals cannot or will not make decisions that serve the state, they are no longer useful, thus rendering the need for the state to step in and administer a series of reactions. Within the context of schooling, the school and classroom operate as extensions of the state, and reactions take the form of prescribed steps within classroom management systems.

Importantly, however, Foucault (1977) argued that in order for governmentality to take hold, it must operate among multiple levels and domains of society. Within classroom management, individual disciplinary problems are not the sole focus of governmentality, as these issues are "aleatory and unpredictable" (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012, 201). Rather, discipline is "reorganized, redefined, [and] rearticulated" (201) to be addressed at the *collective* level wherein problems are "easy, or at least possible, to establish" (Foucault 2003, 46). As a result, the focus turns from the individual to the collective, where the population is seen as "a political problem," and the "mechanisms" that deal with collective problems of population become less interested with matters of control of bodies and behaviors than with the organization of the field in which actions take place (Foucault 2003, 245). In this way, power is positioned as a productive force, shaping people's lives and ideas (Foucault 1977).

Within education, Hayward (1998, 2000) argued that the focus need not be on individuals and their actions, nor on structures or organizations and their actions, but rather on socialized norms and expectations that underpin the possibility of

action. She suggested that power (noticeably distinctive from control) "shapes fields of action by helping delimit, and circumscribe, the 'world' that teachers and other actors experience themselves as inhabiting" (Hayward 2000, 160). Schools are prime sites for governmentality because the practices and policies (including behavior management systems) shape young people's minds, bodies, and behaviors (e.g., Koza 2009, 2010). These management systems promote surveillance, norm-setting, and categorization, thus encouraging students to monitor their emotions and reinforce social norms. From the perspective of governmentality, these management systems can be understood as examples of soft power in that they shape individual behavior through incentives and social pressure rather than through coercion or overt force, thus further encouraging self-regulation. Hayward (1998) stated that "power defines possibility" (12), and when the field of possibility is controlled through the development of rules set to govern at the collective level, opportunities to freely exercise power within such a setting are severely limited. In other words, power is not wielded by those in power to prevent individuals from acting freely, but rather as a social boundary that defines what is desirable in a given field.

Discourse

Foucault's (1977) conception of governmentality illustrates how power is interwoven within social institutions. He argued that individuals are situated within power relations in response to and as a result of discursive formations that promote particular regimes of truth. Discourses provide insight into "the fundamental codes of a culture" (Surber 1998, 211). Discourse, in this sense, refers to "how things are said and why" (217). Discourses send normalizing messages as to how and where individuals fit within power hierarchies and offer a view into the construction of a social system.

More specifically, discursive practices within schools contribute to students' perceptions of the role and purpose of school knowledge. When students enter school, they are introduced to norms and procedures, and they quickly discern their place within the system (Apple 1990). In particular, they are introduced to what Apple and King (1977) referred to as "legitimate knowledge," that is the ideas and practices of the dominant culture needed to succeed in a socially stratified world (342). For students who enter school with an intimate understanding of the "legitimate" discourse around rules, school is a vehicle used for the attainment of

certification that will solidify their place in society (Apple and King 1977, Apple 1990).

As discursive practices inform habits and behaviors they also become technical and behavioristic. Foucault (1980) stated that discursive practices are "embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them" (200). Through governmentality and discursive practices, individuals—including students—come to implicitly understand messages of authority by navigating the fields of action within a school setting.

Hidden Curriculum

One way to conceive of messages of authority is through the concept of hidden curriculum; that is, the subliminal dissemination of values related to power that occur through schooling (Anyon 1981, Apple 1990, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Teachers communicate these implicit values through Behavior Management Systems, where the use of codes of conduct that are "top-down and hinge on mute obedience" send a message of whose voice matters in the school setting (Raby 2008, 77). In particular, Behavior Management Systems "work to produce idealized notions" of how to regulate, act, and be within educational assemblages (Drew 2020, 47). These notions, Apple and King (1977) argued, are transmitted as early as Kindergarten.

While Behavior Management Systems represent clear examples of hidden curriculum, they also maintain layers of both overt and covert complexity. Despite being labeled "hidden," the messaging embedded in behavior management systems often occurs through obvious signs, symbols, and agents, such as school charts, posted rules, and token economies (Drew 2020). These elements communicate explicit goals (Bradley 2015, Knapp 2021) related to punctuality, time management, task completion, class participation, and other norms that structure students' expected functions within the classroom. Simultaneously, however, these systems convey more implicit messages: namely, that there exists a singular "right" way to behave, one rooted in white, middle class social expectations (Keddie 2007, Morris 2005). Thus, while students may appear as simply complying with a clear set of rules, the underlying origins and cultural assumptions of those expectations often remain obscured.

Behavior Management Systems, Governmentality, and Music Education

As noted, we aim to examine PBIS and RC within music education contexts. In U.S. K-8 schools, music educators frequently utilize both of these whole-school approaches to "behavior management". Social media data further highlights the widespread presence of PBIS and RC in music education settings. Data from social media highlights the prevalence of both PBIS and RC in music education settings. Over 2000 individuals are members of an RC-focused music teachers Facebook groups and discussion topics related to PBIS and RC are prevalent on the platform.[1] YouTube channels are dedicated to music education PBIS videos, with some videos receiving upwards of 45,000 views, and several versions of RC "active listener" songs can also be found.[2]

PBIS

PBIS developers define the program as "the application of positive behavioural interventions and systems to achieve socially important behaviour change" (Sugai et al. 2000, 133). According to the PBIS website, the system is an "evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health," These advocates have also suggested that PBIS can improve teacher mental health and wellbeing by creating "positive, predictable, equitable, and safe learning environments where everyone thrives" (Center on PBIS 2025, para 1).

PBIS was initially developed to protect the rights and safety of children and as an alternative to harsh interventions for young people with developmental disabilities (Netzel and Eber 2003). More recently, PBIS has expanded to be used for "regularizing the school population" in response to "exaggerated discourses about … undisciplined youth" (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012, 203). In particular, program creators have promoted PBIS as an alternative to zero tolerance policies (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012), many of which have specifically been targeted at students of color, resulting in inequitable practices (Raby 2005).

Central to whole-school PBIS is a continuum of positive behavior supports (Center on PBIS 2025). The model has three tiers: Tier 1 consists of supports offered to the full classroom or school; Tier 2 consists of more focused supports for students who may have "greater needs;" and Tier 3 consists of targeted supports for a small group of students (generally less than 5% of the population). The PBIS

website is replete with resources, exemplars, and rubrics for teachers, administrators, and PBIS "coaches" (individuals identified in a small community to serve as resources for students and teachers), and annual conferences and workshops are available for stakeholders to develop professionally (Center on PBIS 2025).

The phrases "be respectful, be responsible, and be safe" are common parlance in PBIS schools. These "3B's" are manifested throughout the school and in individual classrooms via posters, behavioral acronyms, reward coupons, and sung chants. In some schools, students generate posters that line school hallways proclaiming the 3B's, as illustrated in Figure 1 below.[3]
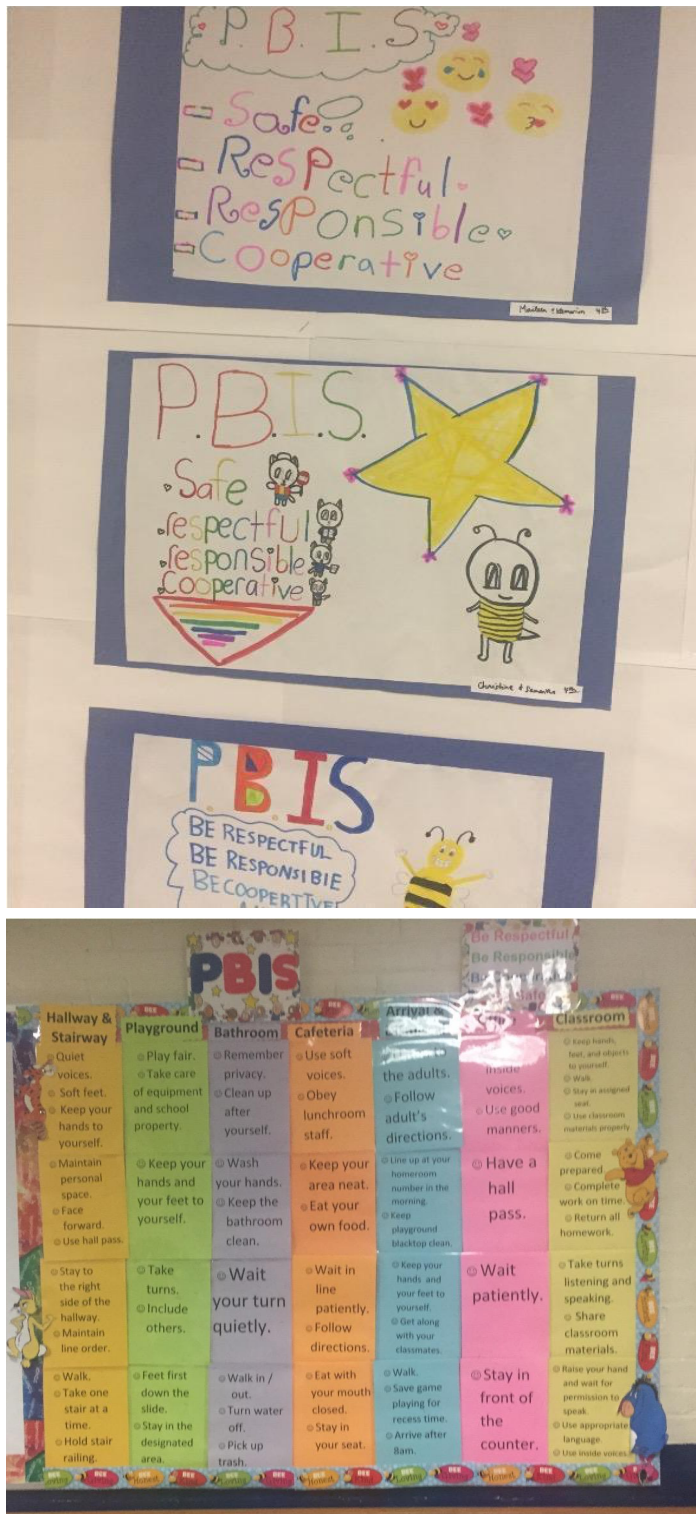
Figure 1: Visuals of student-generated PBIS art and rules.

Additionally, schools may adopt a school song, often composed by a music teacher, with lyrics referencing the "3B's":

Be respectful
Of everyone you meet
Be responsible
For all you say and do
And be safe with
Your body and your words
Here at [name of school]
That's what we do.[4]

Figure 2. Example of a *PBIS School Song*

Further, websites such as TeachersPayTeachers offer examples of Rules Charts, PBIS Incentive Posters, and PBIS behavior clip charts that specifically consider how the 3B's can be made manifest in the music classroom (Teacherspayteachers 2024).[5]

Despite the focus on the 3B phrases, Robbins and Kovalchuk (2012) noted that the behaviors typically introduced to students also include "order, complicity, obedience," among others (206). In order to enforce these behaviors, Sugai and Horner (2002) argued that "teachers must engage in active supervision" at all times, resulting in a culture wherein "students learn that teachers are monitoring and evaluating their social behaviours" (34). In the elementary music classroom, this may manifest as a music teacher who has a traffic light poster with red, yellow, and green for each class. Students' names are written on clothespins and adorned on the green light. The moment a student breaks or acts in opposition to one of the 3B's, the teacher—without saying a word—moves said student's clothespin from the green light to the yellow, signaling that they have not followed the class directions. The class observes this movement, and each student immediately becomes more attentive, checking to make sure that they are on their spot on the rug—showing that they are paying attention—to ensure that their clothespin does not get moved from the green light. The process reinforces order, compliance, and obedience.

Though only a small part of online resources, token economy is often presented as a key practice within the PBIS system. Token economy, in this case, refers to students receiving rewards for abiding by particular rules or expectations. Students who abide by the 3 B's in the music classroom (and elsewhere) by making

"good choices" may be "rewarded" with tokens that can be traded in for prizes, homework passes, school supplies, or "free" time. In the music classroom, these rewards might consist of "free listening days," where students choose the music that the class listens to, or opportunities to select a favorite game or song to sing, play, or perform. Furthermore, a host of music education bloggers present ticket-based PBIS reward systems, where students can turn in a ticket for trinkets, pencils, and stickers, as solutions to control "disruptive behavior."[6]

PBIS as Foucauldian Governmentality

In PBIS people and populations are totalized, akin to Foucault's (1991) conception of governmentality. In its entirety, the emphasis on collective behaviors frames the whole school as the "unit of analysis," thus resulting in the "targeting, molding, and controlling [of] the whole school population, not particular individuals and not through a mere focus on basic behavior and classroom management" (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012, 206). This sense of group targeting can be seen in the focus on whole-school rules and expectations, all of which is intended to map onto daily practices in individual classrooms. Additionally, though PBIS does not dictate specific behavioral expectations, instead leaving these expectations up to each school to fit the context, the similarity of expectations across schools suggests the production of individuals with the same, or similar, skill sets. We argue that when schools adopt systems such as PBIS, which focus on the collective, they inadvertently essentialize students (Koutselini 2002) based on their categorization within the system's components. Thus, in accordance with Foucault's (1991, 2003) conception of governmentality, the focus is on the mechanisms that control the organization of the field (or, in this case, the school), rather than on the individual student.

We find it important to note the particular relevance of the focus on the field-level of organization for music educators. Given the ubiquitous nature of PBIS in school settings, music educators often cannot simply "opt out" of participating in these systems. The very existence of the system within the school mandates an impact of said system within the arts, regardless of whether music educators "buy-in" to the PBIS process. As Hayward (2000) argued, power impacts and shapes the field within which students and teachers operate. In other words, though music educators may choose to actively resist PBIS by not implementing elements of the program, like the ticket-system, in their classrooms, they still navigate a field (the

school) where daily practices revolve around the implementation of the 3B's (and other behaviors that often accompany them). This then creates a school-wide mentality based on expectations of surveillance and the control of the field, which, in turn, becomes a hidden curriculum (Apple 1990) in plain sight.

Foucault (2003) was careful to identify how governmentality emerges and develops within particular contexts, noting that it must interact with particular discourses. PBIS centers on "appropriate" behavior, which frames students as needing monitoring, aiming to produce conformity through a one-size-fits-all approach to "appropriate" behavioral characteristics that ignores context and individual experience. These behavioral characteristics, including responsibility, complicity, obedience, and accountability, among others, form the basis for both a "compliant worker and politically passive citizen, and, on the other hand, an active consumer" (Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012, 206–207). Such a framing may lead to a further bifurcation of those students who behave "appropriately"—both in school settings and those in the neoliberal order more broadly—and those who "cannot".

Within music education, this bifurcation often manifests around school performances. Music educators welcome those students who "do the right thing" behaviorally by following the PBIS notion of "Be Respectful, Be Responsible," including by listening to the teacher during rehearsals following directions, and singing/playing and responding when asked, into the concert setting, whereas they may not allow students who operate outside of this predetermined respectful/responsible norm (e.g., moving or standing in non-teacher approved ways, talking, not wearing the required concert dress, or arriving late) to perform in a concert, removing them from the situation.

The duality present in this example reinforces a focus on the individual as both the problem and the solution, thus ignoring societal conditions that may have created the problem in the first place. The teacher understands the student's actions as either serving the collective by "being respectful" and "being responsible," and therefore supporting the ensemble, or in opposition to the collective by not "being respectful" and "being responsible," and therefore neglecting the ensemble. As such, though teachers expect individual students to remedy the situation, students' needs go unconsidered.

Further, in this example (and more broadly within PBIS), educators practicing PBIS may decontextualize students from their own contexts, including their emotions, experiences, and conditions. This is particularly problematic in music

education, where children are deliberately invited to consider context and draw upon their emotions and experiences in order to create meaningful musical experiences. However, within a PBIS environment, educators often selectively encourage emotional expression and personal experience only when they align with specific behavioral or instructional goals. In this context, educators embrace students' emotions and experiences when they enhance the collective musical experience. However, on concert day—when emotions may be heightened and external challenges may interfere—educators may marginalize those same emotions and experiences, as they conflict with rigid expectations to "be responsible" and "be ready."

Discourse

When we interpret PBIS through a Foucauldian lens of discourse, practices surrounding PBIS outline "fundamental codes of a culture" (Surber 1998, 211); over time, as the rules are shared and reinforced institutionally, the practices become commonplace, habitual, and unquestioned. One discourse that pervades PBIS is that of the "good student." Though PBIS literature highlights the importance of designing safe environments, forming relationships with students, creating predictable routines, planning relevant instruction, and providing specific feedback–in reality, Robbins and Kovalchuk (2012) suggested that the actual discourse of PBIS is predicated on a "spectacle of 'good' behaviors ... around public acknowledgement and celebration of "appropriate" behaviors exhibited by 'good' students" (207). While, in theory, these "good" behaviors are intended to demonstrate students' abilities to be responsible, respectful, and safe, in practice the focus lies on students' showing that they comply with the overarching rules.

Importantly, teachers typically do not develop the "good behavior" discourse collaboratively with students. Rather, large-scale classroom management systems often depoliticize the rights of students, who rarely, if ever, receive space to share their opinions on what constitutes a "good" citizen (Raby 2010, Robbins and Kovalchuk 2012). Further, students may also feel—consciously or subconsciously— that the "good behavior" discourse is at odds with the goals of the music classroom, as articulated in the example in the previous section.

In PBIS, the "good student" discourse is developed and maintained through reward systems, such as the token economy. For example, in a middle school

chorus the teacher gives whole school reward tokens to students who remembered their pencils for class and can hold them in the air as proof of their ability to "be responsible." They compliment those who have brought their pencil, praising them as models for the other students. The teacher reminds the students that only when the whole class remembers to bring a pencil will they "earn" ten minutes of "free listening" at the end of the period. The students look around to see who among them does not have their pencil, thus creating a culture of mistrust in the choral classroom. While this scenario might seem typical of a classroom, Haberman and colleagues (2017) noted that these "clever rewards" are "largely meaningless" and do not work toward intrinsic motivation or supportive communities (27). Koutselini further articulates this point (2002), arguing that clever rewards ignore student needs, including: "the need for attainment and success, curiosity, authenticity and the desire for self-expression, children's interpersonal relationships and their need to influence one another" (358). Furthermore, these forms of reinforcement can promote a sense of dependency on others' approval and do "not help [students] develop an internal locus of control and an ability to take responsibility for the behavioural choices made *and the impact these choices have on others*" (Hopkins 2004, 150, italics added). Finally, framing musical experiences as "rewards" despite long-held attempts by the music education community to legitimize musical experiences as a foundational—not superfluous—element of the school curriculum. Thus, attention is given to "supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result, and it is according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement" (Foucault 1977, 181).

Responsive Classroom

Responsive Classroom was developed as a social emotional learning program grounded in developmental psychology. Founded in 1982, for over forty years the program has centered around teachers and students creating procedures, making choices, and ensuring student responsibility. There are seven principles of RC: the idea that the social curriculum has equal import to the academic one; that process and content are interrelated in learning; that social growth begets cognitive development; that specific, predetermined social skills are what help children succeed academically and socially; that teachers are responsible for knowing children well; that teachers are responsible for knowing families well; and that

adults in a school community must work collaboratively. There are six basic teaching strategies central to enacting these principles: the daily, routinized morning meeting; an approach to discipline based on rules and "logical consequences"; guided discovery as a format for introducing materials; academic choice as an underlying principle for learning; specific and targeted strategies for classroom organization; and involvement of families in children's education via particular communication strategies. These strategies are often accompanied by specific scripted teacher and student language and behavior that is used throughout the classrooms. RC has reported that, as a result of these strategies, students have improved results on state tests (Responsive Classroom 2015).

Responsive Classroom touts that it "offers teachers tools and techniques for creating a learning community that reflects all that we value in a democracy," highlighting in particular the development of social skills (Gimbert 2002, as cited in Stearns 2016). Interestingly, the authors of RC documents never fully define social skills, though there is a general sense that they are culturally biased toward a dominant white, middle-class discourse (Stearns 2016). In music education, this may manifest as children being told that listening to their peers perform a musical excerpt means that they have to remain still with their "listening ears on," rather than moving their bodies to the music. Stearns (2016) notes that while RC has always highlighted the importance of a classroom environment that appears "managed," over time the program has focused more concretely on scripted curricula that teachers are supposed to use in order to adhere with RC principles.

Surrounding such a community is a discourse of cheeriness, where students can name and create their "hopes and dreams for what they will learn during the school year" (Responsive Classroom n.d.-a). In order to create a social and academic space that allows for hopes and dreams to manifest, Responsive Classroom encourages teachers to create rules and to help students "build investment" in those rules (Responsive Classroom n.d.-a), connecting them to concrete behaviors, such as "Being prepared for class," "Listening quietly while others are talking," and "Speaking with a calm tone" (Responsive Classroom n.d.-b). Educators cultivate such dispositions through schoolwide and classroom-based practices, such as morning meetings, prescribed teacher language, prescribed modeling, and the setting of specific goals connected to concrete behaviors (Responsive Classroom n.d. -c).

Resources that offer advice for enacting RC specifically within arts classrooms are also available (Responsive Classroom 2016). For example, teachers can easily find YouTube videos offering ninety-minute "courses" that present Responsive Classroom in connection with Orff (Stensrud 2021) and books presenting planners and charts through a "go-to guide for busy special area teachers" (Responsive Classroom 2016). The Responsive Classroom organization also offers examples of how to generate rules specific to music class, again utilizing hopes and dreams as well as other positivity-based language as the foundation for such practices (Responsive Classroom 2015).

Responsive Classroom as Foucauldian Discourse and Governmentality

Situating hopes and dreams specifically within positivity-specific language, however, might come with unanticipated consequences for a student, particularly in the music classroom, where students often learn to explore, express, and connect with a full range of human emotions—from joy to sorrow to tension to exuberance—through sound and creativity. For example, consider elementary student A who articulates that their hope and dream for music class as making friends. During one class, student B leaves student A out of a chasing game. According to RC, there must be a "logical consequence" of this action, one that ensures that students will "make amends" and "restore harmony" in the environment (Responsive Classroom 2016). This might result in student B working with student A to arrange a short ostinato about their friendship, essentially negating the option for student B to maintain agency over their friendships within class. The ostinato, in this case, represents the resolution of a conflict and focuses on moving forward without addressing the complex feelings or past history that may exist between students A and B. Consequences that lead to resolutions have the potential to create a forced friendship, while ignoring the underlying conflict in favor of an often superficial "solution" that prioritizes a happy ending. Stearns (2016) noted that RC "basically mandates joy and positivity, implying that these things can be constructed by individual teachers via faithful adherence to a set of predetermined principles and procedures" (58). As such, complex feelings—or discourses—that exist outside of the sphere of joy and positivity are deemed unwelcome in the school or classroom setting, thus potentially creating a problematic tension with the emotion-rich music classroom.

As we interpret through governmentality (Foucault 1977, 2003), children who "choose" not to "follow the rules" in RC are called upon to "fix" both physical and emotional messes. In this respect, choice is a façade, one that can only exist when it operates within the predetermined field of joy. Further, there is an overemphasis on the happy ending when children are called upon to "fix" non-joy-producing choices. This creates a series of norms and expectations that may be of little benefit to the individual but of perceived benefit to the collective (Foucault 1991, Hayward 2000). As such, teachers expect measured or controlled behaviors and outcomes from everyone; and power emerges as the illusion of choice providing alternatives within a narrow vision for both teachers and students. Such practices can send mixed messages to students when they are invited to feel and express with emotional breadth and depth while making and creating music but are then expected to display emotional restraint or detachment elsewhere in their school experience.

Following Foucault (1980, 1982), when power is understood as productive, that is when power is seen as "constitutive in the shaping of people's lives and ideas" (Besley 2010, 532), governmentality can both "individualize and … totalize people" in the collective (Besley 2010, 532). For example, when a child shares a feeling or experience in a classroom setting, their teacher and peers may see them as an individual and, perhaps, even an individual capable of choice. Later, however, when such actions become datafied as part of a larger schoolwide plan, the same individuals are totalized as administrators and educators compare their experiences with those of others and against a predetermined norm. Such an example might be the music teacher using students A and B's ostinato as a form of data to be used in the school's overall record of student improvement. Through this process of power, young people's conceptions of what is and what is not "allowed" to be shared or felt within a school setting is shaped. Over time, these power relations merge with formal school rules—both written and unwritten—teaching students which emotions, ideas, and forms of expression are deemed appropriate or inappropriate within the institutional order. Dutro (2008) suggests, "If wounds are not welcome, children will correctly sense that what school wishes to hear is the banal, the safe, the bland, and they will leave what matters most muted beneath a sterile, clean bandage" (18).

Responsive Classroom, Governmentality, and "Good" Students

Responsive Classroom, though often framed as progressive alternative to punitive discipline models, still often follows a white, middle-class, expectation of society. According to McManus (2021), programs, such as RC, that favor choice and freedom "often frame young children, and young Black, Indigenous, and Children of Color and children of immigrants especially, as egocentric beings who must be explicitly taught basic skills such as empathy, self-regulation, and problem solving" (178). Therefore, despite being framed as a more positive alternative to zero-tolerance policies, many of which targeted young people from marginalized groups (Raby 2005), RC's focus on the "right" choice and the "right" way to express joy has the potential to still render these same children as subjects in need of reform.

One prevalent example of governmentality in action within the RC classroom is through emotions hidden within a veneer of choice. This might be illustrated through the "rest and restore" chair. Unlike the notion of a "time out" chair, the rest and restore chair present in each classroom provides a physical space for a student to remove themselves from the larger group to take a breath, reflect, and restore themselves amidst high emotions or overstimulation, and then return to the class. In the ensemble classroom, a student may become frustrated with the other members of their section as they struggle to improve a musical passage. As they feel their frustrations rise, they move themselves to the rest and restore chair—not necessarily to process their emotions authentically, but to preemptively control them in a manner deemed acceptable before returning to their section when they appear more even-keeled. While one might interpret this situation as the student learning to regulate emotions, we interpret this as an example of self-surveillance through governmentality and self-governance. Removing oneself from situations when they anticipate they are going to feel an emotion—particularly an emotion that is not positive—becomes an act of self-surveillance, controlling their behaviors before they draw a consequence. Youdell (2006) elaborated that when students recognize that predetermined norms of rules yield accepted and unaccepted behaviors, that there is a "rise to the 'self-surveillance' of the observed, examined and judged 'individual' whose activity is controlled and who is distributed across functional sites—the student acts the good student, the teacher acts the good teacher, the school acts the good school as accountability mechanisms render all visible and open to assessment and correction" (36). The student who utilizes the rest and restore chair, then, is read and rendered as a

"good student"—one who is compliant and well-behaved in a manner that aligns with "appropriate" gendered, raced, and classed expectations (Drew 2020). But, again, interpreting through Foucault (1977), the student's decision to use the rest and restore chair is merely aligning with predetermined behaviors of what is deemed acceptable—following procedures and being quiet. This focus on choice and good/bad places at the center a supervision of "the processes of the activity rather than its result, and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as possible time, space, movement" (181).

As noted earlier, governmentality is also inextricably connected to neoliberalism, according to Foucault (1977). Stearns (2016) argued that programs like RC "purport to emphasize choice and the necessity of priming individuals for competition and compliance" (335). Such practices emphasize a neoliberal meritocracy and highlight a "winner takes all" attitude that will inevitably leave some students behind. Further, this focus on working toward "choice" and competition masks larger, culturally systemic issues related to power by placing emphasis on discrete units that need assistance and remediation (i.e., students), thus ignoring structural concerns (Castagno 2015, McManus 2021, Stearns 2016).

Meritocratic framing is particularly problematic in the music classroom, where students are encouraged to explore deep emotional experiences through musical expression. Within the RC framework, however, they are only invited or encouraged to express emotions deemed palatable. Besley (2010) notes that children, like adults, experience complex and wide-ranging emotions, many of which are shaped by structural conditions and interpersonal interactions. However, when children from marginalized group express emotions that fall outside of the narrow range of what is "palatable," they are often framed as needing to be "fixed"—or to "fix" themselves—in order to align with a prescriptive norm that will make them "useful docile bodies" within a neoliberal society (Foucault 1977).

In music education, an emphasis on emotional positivity can thwart or silence critical engagement with difficult topics and reduce students' abilities to process the complexities of the worlds in which they live through music. Scholars including Smith (2021), Bradley and Hess (2021) as well as our own work (Bylica 2022) have noted that this unrelenting focus on the positive, the cheery, and the bright can undermine the music classroom's potential as a site for emotional connection and mutual understanding. When emotions are tightly regulated— especially in the

music classroom where students should be free to express the full range of the human experience—the classroom becomes centered on conformity rather than growth; and, in turn, conformity itself becomes a hidden curriculum (Apple 1990).

Imagining Alternatives

The concern presented in this paper is that the behavior management discourses examined have become so embedded in educational practice that educators and stakeholders no longer see the totalizing impact of such programs. We have argued that PBIS and RC are lacking in criticality, and enactment of these programs can reinforce compliance-oriented approaches to music education that promote emotional restraint and suppression, particularly when framed within the contexts of governmentality (Foucault 1977, 1980, 1991, 2008) and hidden curriculum (Anyon 1981, Apple 1990, Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Furthermore, we contend that such programs reinforce a specific narrative of "legitimate knowledge" (Apple and King 1977), wherein students must follow a particular discourse of behavior in order to both learn and be successful, and this discourse often works at odds with the aims and purposes of the music classroom.

While we believe that the dissolution of prefabricated programs like PBIS and RC would be ideal, we also recognize that music educators may be beholden to a larger school initiative supporting these programs. However, we also believe that music educators can still create classroom-level change. Such practices might align with Foucault's (2007) conception of "counter-conduct," a form of resistance that arises within a system of power through subtle, strategic disruptions (260). Rather than stepping entirely outside of the dominant discourse (which Foucault argued is impossible, as discourse—like rules—are inescapable), counter-conduct involves navigating subversively within a discourse in order to reshape how it functions by challenging its norms from the inside. In this way, counter-conduct is relational, working in tension with the dominant discourse in order to reinterpret expectations to serve alternative values.

Within the context of music education and behavior management systems, counter-conduct might look like using "rules" language in a way that honors individuality and the marriage of that individuality with the goals of collective, rather than enforcing uniform compliance. When teachers frame interactions at the individual level, the student who continues dancing after the music stops, the

saxophone player who noodles on their instrument when the room is quiet, the child who forgets their pencil in their excitement over arriving to class to sing, and the alto section that cannot contain their laughter about a humorous passage can be understood as moments of humanity rather than non-compliance.

In RC schools, this might involve encouraging students to recognize, acknowledge, and live with ambivalence. For example, music educators could frame rule-making processes not as opportunities to standardize behavior, but as spaces for dialogue about the various emotional and embodied experiences students bring to the music classroom. In PBIS schools, music educators might encourage students to think about the multiple ways in which one might "be ready" in various contexts, focusing not on a token economy but on the multitude of ways each of us responds to and through the complex world. Instead of "being ready" with a pencil and music in hand, being ready might mean preparing oneself to be musically open to collaboration and improvisation. Instead of highlighting clever rewards, schools may prioritize professional development opportunities that help music educators (and others) support interpersonal student relationships that have both expectations and boundaries. Such professional development might also help educators work with students to realize that relationships can be messy and do not always result in a happy ending of shared friendship. These curricular and pedagogical shifts require a counter-narrative that reinterprets the language of PBIS and RC to fit a music classroom context that prioritizes spontaneity and individual moments of human expression as sites of humanity rather than disruption.

In his examination of what a Foucauldian education might look like "in practice," Ball (2019) recognized the importance in cultivating an attitude to both recognize and critique one's current condition within the historical moment. To do so, Ball (2019) and others argued that "students must be recognised as ethical beings capable of reflection, decision-making and responsibility for their identity and social relations" (139). In this way, education is not about gaining the "skill" of self-regulation, but rather it is about the "formation of moral subjectivity … a struggle to be self-governing" (139).

Framing music education as the formation of moral subjectivity, rather than as the acquisition of self regulation "skills," means that educators come to understand themselves ethically within the context of their work, particularly as they navigate policy demands, institutional pressures, and personal values (Ball

2003). Thus, music educators can move beyond surveillant rule enforcement and toward cultivating students' capacities for ethical decision-making. When students are treated as ethical and musical humans, classroom interactions such as responding to musical tension, embracing and expressing discomfort with improvisation, embodying physical responses to music become opportunities for reflection and growth. This approach does not embrace a lawless society; Foucault (1977) argued that there is no ruleless action, as such a path would render life too chaotic and incomprehensible. Rather, such a process invites students to be part of a social contract in the music classroom that allows them to be seen and heard, an issue of particular importance in a classroom based on sound and movement. This approach does, however, acknowledge that conflict does not need to be easily resolved, that safety is complex and emotionally laden, that learning can be risky and uncomfortable, and that the music classroom is grounded in a multitude of opportunities for collective and individual experience. The purpose of music education involves trusting teachers and students as reflective individuals capable of musically engaging with one another, thus reclaiming the music classroom where being human is not only allowed, but essential to the learning process.

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Notes

[1] https://www.facebook.com/share/g/15uw6coX3w/; https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1BnFsnM2Rt/

[2] https://youtube.com/shorts/bhgAr1aDf2E?si=xgr_i4r6vGzaxgV0; https://youtu.be/6RcR1WsxYpA?si=rf-zIGRr-5Ob8NQx; https://youtu.be/lg4EkHAbSi4?si=ZNWBL57TYct7h2xI; https://youtu.be/hhIo5ShyWP4?si=YMG3H9TkTZq4kT6q

[3] Visuals used with permission.

4 Audio and lyrics used with permission.

5 Some examples of teacher resources include:
https://www.madebyteachers.com/products/music-room-rules-for-classroom-management-poster/; https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Five-PBIS-Incentives-for-Music-Room-4025172; https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Behavior-Clip-Chart-Monthly-Calendars-and-More-Rockstar-Theme-Editable-371425

6 Examples include https://www.victoriaboler.com/podcast/responsive-classroom-for-the-beginning-of-the-music-year-matthew-stensrud; https://beccasmusicroom.com/positive-reinforcements/; https://www.mrhenrysmusicworld.com/547be59c-3883-4702-8e40-89f857fe7525; http://matthewstensrud.com/orff/responsive-classroom-in-the-music-room-a-beginning-of-the-year-primer/