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Exploring the Sociology of Music Education

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Exploring the Sociology of Music Education

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We would like to thank the Mayday Group and, in particular, Vincent Bates, editor of *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, for inviting us to guest edit this special issue and for helping refine it for publication. We present here, original peer-reviewed articles based on selected papers given at the *8th International Symposium on the Sociology of Music Education* held at Hedmark University College, Hamar, Norway from June 16 to 19 2013.

Although it has deep roots (Paul and Ballantine 2002), the sociology of music education, as a specialized field of study, is comparatively young. Eight international symposia on the sociology of music education have been held since 1995 (Rideout 1997; Rideout and Paul 2000; Froehlich, Coan, and Rideout 2003; Regelski 2004; Roberts 2008; O'Flynn 2011). The *International Sociology of Music Education Symposia* are dedicated to the exclusive and explicit application of sociological constructs and theories to music teaching and learning in social contexts that range from the formality of compulsory schooling to efforts by individuals of all ages to engage in music making and listening.

Each successive symposium has witnessed an increasing clarity in the definition of the field and application of sociological concepts in wide-ranging contexts. We applaud the work of our colleagues as they apply and expand theories and methodologies to highlight the centrality of questions in which music making

and listening, learning and teaching are connected to sociological concepts, insights and understandings.

Ruth Wright begins the issue, as she opened the symposium, by presenting a broad overview of the origins and development of sociology as a field. Her article is entitled “The Fourth Sociology and Music Education: Towards a Sociology of Integration”. She discusses the three main sociologies that have emerged to date, as described by former President of the International Sociological Association, Piotr Sztompka (2012). After clarifying the relationship between sociology as a parent discipline and the sociology of music education, Wright proposes a ‘fourth sociology’ for music education, which she terms a sociology of integration. Such sociology combines perspectives from within sociology itself but also adds additional analytical lenses drawn from complementary fields such as cultural studies, philosophy, anthropology, musicology, psychology and educational studies. The fourth sociology is then demonstrated in action by presenting data from a recent study on informal music learning in two Canadian schools. The analysis is conducted using an integrated sociological framework as discussed above. This includes Bernstein’s (2000) concept of discursive gaps (gaps in social control of knowledge) in combination with philosopher Biesta’s (2010, 88) concept of ‘pedagogies of interruption’, (pedagogies that permit engagement with the ‘other’). She discusses data that show students exercising agency and independence from preformed educational subject knowledge. Wright then develops a model of discourse production by students. She suggests that informal learning provides opportunities for the disruption of previously rationalised musical knowledges. This allows the equal/unequal relationship balance between teacher and student to be rebalanced and permits students to create new discourse. This, of course, speaks to important issues of democracy and inclusion in music education and demonstrates the explanatory power of the fourth sociology.

Petter Dyndahl, Sidsel Karlsen, Siw Graabræk Nielsen and Odd Skårberg have entitled their article “Cultural Omnivorousness and Musical Gentrification: An Outline of a Sociological Framework and Its Applications for Music Education Research”. The authors aim to develop a theoretical model to understand what they refer to as ‘musical gentrification’ and to explore how this

model might be applied to and inform music education research. The article starts from a Bourdieusian point of view, elaborating on the connections between social class and cultural capital, and then moves on to discuss more recent sociological contributions. Here the authors present Peterson's concept of cultural omnivorousness (Peterson 1992, Peterson and Kern 1996, Peterson and Simkus 1992), in addition to discussing it in the light of recent studies based on Bourdieu's cultural sociology (Bennett et al. 2009, Faber et al. 2012). On this basis, the notion of musical gentrification is launched, which involves an attempt to capture some important trends and patterns in music education, as detected in and through social, cultural and political perspectives. The article is, as such, a theoretical outcome of the research project *Musical Gentrification and Socio-Cultural Diversities*, which is funded by the Norwegian Research Council from 2013 to 2016. This project aims to focus on and examine music's impact on social change and inclusion/exclusion processes, and hence, also, its tendency to exclude some people and groups when others are included, to hold some people back while it helps others' social mobility, and to make taboo certain forms of music while others are gentrified. Through describing the ongoing research project, the article also points out how the notion of musical gentrification can be utilised in music education empirical research, as well as discussing its possible applications in future efforts of mapping and understanding the present-day complexity of the cultural-musical landscape.

Geir Johansen has written the article "Sociology, Music Education, and Social Change: The Prospect of Addressing Their Relations by Combining Some Central, Expanded Concepts". The author's point of departure is an increasing interest in several relations between sociology and music education, which, among other things, have been demonstrated in the symposia on the sociology of music education. Moreover, he aims to discuss this phenomenon in the light of what he sees as a growing trend in music education, namely the concern with social change. In this context, he understands music education in a broad perspective that includes informal as well as formal learning and that encompasses different ages and communities. The fundamental question which Johansen raises in this article, is what music education is *for*. Thus he lays the foundation for discussing how music and music education can make differences in people's lives, at the individual as well

as the social level. Hereby the author is forced to navigate his text in both normative and analytical waters, which may be challenging as well as rewarding. By drawing on a wide range of relevant literature—from music education, cultural and social theory to philosophy—he presents a number of conceptual expansions pertaining to a variety of music education practices and their impact on social change.

Articles by **Sigrid Røyseng and Øivind Varkøy** and **Deanna Yerichuk** examine issues of technical and ritual rationality in theoretical and empirical respects. **Sigrid Røyseng and Øivind Varkøy's** article “The Good Music: A Dialogue on Technical and Ritual Rationality” is written in a dialogical way. The authors engage in a critical conversation concerning the well-known discourse that music education represents a benefit because of its positive impact on students in terms of general development as well as achievement and progress in other disciplines. Through this dialogue, the authors debate whether these tendencies are best understood as examples of technical or ritual rationality respectively, and in doing so they also position themselves in relation to the concepts at stake. Furthermore, they explore what emerges when the two competing interpretations encounter and are confronted with each other, instead of advocating a univocal argument for just one side. Laying out a profound theoretical basis for their discussion, Røyseng and Varkøy employ philosophical and theoretical contributions from authors such as, on the one hand, Heidegger (1954, 1962), Weber (2011), Lasch (2006), Taylor (1998) and von Wright (2009), and, on the other hand, Gennep (1960) and Turner (1970, 1974). As a conclusive offer, the article ends with the authors identifying an approach that keeps the door open for both paradoxes and ambiguities when it comes to legitimising music education.

Deanna Yerichuk implicitly touches on the matter of technical and ritual rationality in her article “‘Socialized Music’: Historical Formations of Community Music through Social Rationales”. Tracing the formation of community music through professional and scholarly articles over the last century in North America, she argues that community music has mainly been discursively formed through social rationales, although which specific rationales have been employed has shifted throughout this period. Yerichuk analyzes the usage and contexts of the community music term through a Foucault-inspired archaeological framework, and concludes

that community music's social rationales have discursively produced a social rationality, which has largely overdetermined community music as an educational enterprise, while at the same time underdetermining what constitutes the 'community' of community music.

Guillermo Rosabal-Coto and **Roberta Lamb**, in contrast to the overview of beneficial music-related rationalities that have been described and discussed in the two previous articles, remind us that music can be used for (or at least be part of) oppression and discrimination. In the article "‘I Did It My Way’: A Case Study of Resistance to Coloniality in Music Learning and Socialization" **Guillermo Rosabal-Coto** describes and discusses how one particular music teacher in a Costa Rican postcolonial context has addressed and resisted colonialist practices in music education/socialization processes. Through a case study built on preliminary findings stemming from an ethnographic investigation of the social organization of music learning from the standpoint of music teachers, the author performs a sociologically informed analysis and constructs a narrative that reveals the tensions between one teacher's experiences of learning and the surrounding macro social forces. Critically reflecting on the musical meanings, values, and practices that sustain a non-Euro American sociocultural order, Rosabal-Coto contributes greatly to widening the present understanding of the formation and socialization of music teachers and shows how professional identities and self-conceptions can come into being and also be negotiated through resisting and even counter-acting dominant societal discourses.

Roberta Lamb's article "Where are the women? And Other Questions, Asked Within an Historical Analysis of Sociology of Music Education Research Publications: Being a Self-Reflective Ethnographic Path" serves a double purpose in that it portrays reflections on the author's three decades as a music education researcher as well as presenting a meta-analysis of a range of refereed scholarly articles written from 1933 onwards. The initial questions, which evoked the reflections as well as the meta-analysis, focused on the presence (or absence) of women and 'others' within the history of sociology of music education and on where concerns had been raised about social values. Working through the articles chronologically, making a division between contributions written before and after

1960, the author identifies how the investigated field, in certain respects and on certain occasions, has been marked by sexism, racism, homophobia and misogyny, but also how it gradually has opened itself up towards welcoming diversity and exploring music education contexts, situations and practices through, among other things, lenses of social theory and social justice. Envisioning the future of the sociology of music education, Lamb concludes with a hope that “more of every sort of person” should arrive and participate in this discourse.

Athena Lill and **Ingeborg Lunde Vestad** present empirical investigations of sociological issues as they apply to children’s everyday musical lives and related lived musical experiences and learning. In the article “An Analytical Lens for Studying Informal Learning in Music: Subversion, Embodied Learning and Participatory Performance”, **Athena Lill** gives us a new way to examine informal learning by interrogating such music learning practices as acts of subversion, embodied learning and participatory performance. In data drawn from a larger ethnographic study involving both primary and secondary schools in the UK and Australia, Lill discusses informal learning in one UK and one Australian primary school. Focussing on three themes drawn from a meta-synthesis of literature about informal learning, Lill relates her enquiry to the lived musical worlds of children, attempting to avoid a top down approach and instead preferring to conceptualise children’s learning experiences as ‘informal learnings’ to acknowledge their complexity and diversity. She reveals the positive potential of subversion as a strong social consolidating force and advocates for us to recognise its creativity. Similarly, she presents embodied learning as valid and important and without the negative connotations seen in some of the literature. Finally, she looks at spontaneous performances as democratising music education and consolidating peer cultures. She concludes that informal learnings are far more complex than previous literature suggests and that we need to question them, prioritising children and young people’s lived musical experiences in the process.

Ingeborg Lunde Vestad’s article “Children’s Subject Positions in Discourses of Music in Everyday Life: Rethinking Conceptions of the Child In and For Music Education” presents findings from a research project addressing how children between three and six years of age use recorded music in their everyday

lives. Children participate in music in a number of ways, according to subject positions that are discursively mediated, for instance in kindergartens and at home. Vestad builds on recent theoretical contributions to the sociology of childhood, particularly James and Prout (2007), when she strives to regard children as beings rather than as becomings. This perspective also involves ethical aspects of how we construct the child (cf. Wyness 2006), in research and in pedagogy. The author presents selected subject positions, from which she constructs and discusses two distinctly different ways of viewing children's engagement with music; i.e. the child as competent versus the child as gifted, respectively. As a third possible position, she launches the notion of the *musicking* child, with reference to Small (1998).

Edward McClellan's article "Undergraduate Music Education Major Identity Formation in the University Music Department" deals with one of the topics most prevalent throughout the sociology of music education literature: that of identity. In this case, the subject of investigation is the relationship between student music educators' social identities, the value they attached to music education, their orientation towards self-perception as musician or teacher and selected demographic actors. In a predominantly qualitative collection of articles, this quantitative article is an important contribution. McClellan's 968 United States participants tell us important things about the role of enthusiasm for teaching, a strong social identity, active involvement in real life teaching situations, and community encouragement and expertise in influencing young music educators' nascent identities as music teachers.

Vincent C. Bates discusses the issues concerning cosmopolitan music education in his article "Reconsidering Cosmopolitanism in Music Education". In particular, he reexamines a standard definition of cosmopolitanism as our common duty to others without reference to social group (race, gender, et cetera). Bates claims that modern music education presents an extension of Immanuel Kant's imperialist, Euro-centric cosmopolitanism. He suggests that even though it may *feel* right as a 'universal moral philosophy' some caution is required in applying this educational philosophy to music education. Bates cites examples of cosmopolitanism in music education that he considers worrying. These include the spread of Western art music programs such as *El Sistema*, promotion of multicultural music, and uncritical

reliance on digital technology. He criticizes these as respectively enacting repression of the local, lacking depth and being only variably available to people, thus differentiating between rich and poor. He advocates for a reconceptualization of cosmopolitanism in music education that does not focus on outward spiraling associations but instead features a series of intersecting circles focused on local community interactions that spiral inwards. Circles may venture away from home but eventually return. By deepening children's understandings of their own cultures first and foremost, their interactions with the other when they meet may arise from and be shaped by a solid sense of love and care within community. Bates suggests this may prepare children better to meet the unknown.

There are strong themes running through this issue that speak to an increasingly coherent series of research agenda within the sociology of music education. First, we note the interdisciplinarity of the work presented here. By nature of its title, the sociology of music education bridges three worlds: those of sociology, music and education. We have papers in this issue presenting work at the interfaces of sociology and a plethora of other disciplines however, including but not excluded to educational studies, cultural studies, women's studies, psychology and philosophy. This is an exciting development and one we hope to see continue. It can only strengthen the academic rigour of our field to learn from work in other disciplines.

Next is the theme of social justice, inclusion/exclusion and democracy. This theme is examined as it relates to music education in schools, in the community, in teacher education and in the academic world. In time honored sociological fashion, researchers attempt to 'make the familiar strange' by applying various sociological lenses to their analyses of past and present music education practices. Such work serves to remind us of past errors, present dilemmas and successes and future potential within our field. These are important voices within a profession so frequently consumed by advocacy efforts that time for reflection and introspection is scant.

A related research concern is with the potential of music education to effect social change, whether positive or negative, and the need to map the field effectively to locate and understand such changes. This is allied to a strong interest in the

question ‘what is music education for?’ not as an abstract, philosophical query but in very practical terms of its role in the formation, maintenance and functioning of human societies. Music education can be a powerful social force for good and/or evil. We therefore need to keep at the forefront of our minds the fundamental question ‘what is this for?’ ‘Big picture’ thinking such as this can be endangered when governments focus increasingly on ‘evidence-based practice’ to improve educational effectiveness scores in global rankings, requiring researchers to produce the evidence on which to base practice. Time is inevitably diverted from the big questions towards ‘what works’. The efforts of scholars engaged in exploring the sociology of music education to draw attention back to fundamental questions are, therefore, vital.

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