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"Poetry is Not a Luxury": Considering Affect in Antiracist Pedagogy

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Abstract

White hegemony is pervasive in and through music education, demanding that teachers and scholars take deliberate social and political actions in order to address racial injustice. Such actions are often built upon propositional knowledge or knowledge that can be evaluated by conceptual reason and verified as true or false (Perry and Shotwell 2009; Shotwell 2011). The purpose of this philosophical inquiry is two-fold: to problematize the prioritization of propositional knowledge when engaging in antiracist efforts and to suggest the need for more holistic accounts of antiracism that combine propositional knowledge with affective understandings. I argue that solely propositional approaches can foster disingenuous antiracism rather than substantive action and dialogue. Poet Audre Lorde emphasized the importance of synthesized understandings, and poetry and literary works such as Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* engage with both propositional concepts and affective experiences, which can lead to deeper understandings for the reader. I suggest that synthesized understandings are also possible in music education. Using preparing for a performance of Joel Thompson's choral work *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* as an example, I offer sharing multiple narratives, recognizing the importance of affect, and taking actions based on synthesized understandings as considerations for antiracist pedagogy. These considerations may encourage the affective depth characteristic of substantive antiracism.

Keywords

antiracism, antiracist pedagogy, affect, and choral music education

Vignette

In 2015, while teaching in a Bronx neighborhood, I distributed lyric sheets for John Legend's "Glory." The students and I discussed the rich historical context surrounding the film *Selma*, music as a vehicle for freedom movements, and analyzed social media reactions to the song's performance on the Academy Awards. I began rehearsal by asking students questions about the overall tone of the song in terms of the melody, accompaniment, and text and by teaching repeating phrases by rote. One student shouted, "You're making us sing this because a Black singer made it famous. You don't actually care about us. None of you actually care," and the other students nodded in agreement. While I worked to incorporate antiracist practices into my teaching throughout my time at the high school, it seemed students ultimately felt these efforts were more about me than about them. For these students, without affective components, such as concern and care, my actions would not achieve their intended outcomes.

My internal response was one of failure and shame, which encouraged me to distance myself from the experience. At the time, I assumed such internal responses were likely a version of white[1] guilt, or affective responses that spring "from the juxtaposition of [ill-gotten advantage] with the inevitable gratitude one feels for being white rather than Black in America" (Steele 1990, 499). Moreover, I tried hard to minimize these affective responses because I was aware that focusing on them would likely recenter my whiteness (Bonilla-Silva 2006). Despite the complexity of such responses associated with racial thinking, as seen from both a white teacher's and a Black student's perspective, I wondered: Might affective responses be entangled with an epistemic and sociopolitical saliency that could serve a purpose in further guiding antiracism in music classrooms?

Initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion are essential in academic and professional settings, but they might also obscure the deep and collective responsibility that such work entails. As Chico (2021) explains, "'diversity and inclusion,' … have become familiar keywords everywhere from corporate marketing to university administration" (para. 1). For Chico, "diversity and inclusion" are conjoined concepts that imagine tackling the legacies of racism by making room for underrepresented individuals, without necessarily changing much of anything else. Antiracism implies a more active position (Dei 2000; Kendi 2019).

Scholarly writings in music education have carefully considered classroom conditions that might foreground antiracist actions while avoiding prescription

(Bradley 2006; Hess 2015; McCall 2021). Communication across racial and cultural differences remains critical to the manifestation of sociopolitical actions. In order to ensure antiracist actions are meaningful, such as acknowledging positionality or decentering Western classical thinking, educators might curate classroom environments that allow for frank discussions about race without using coded language, euphemisms, or superficial discussion of similarities and differences (Hess 2015; Bradley 2006). Such discussion about race may necessitate the reception of "other forms of knowledge" (Bedard 2000, 56).

Yet, if educators overemphasize certain outcomes, they might risk suggesting a particular way of knowing and seeing the world as most valued. Propositional knowledge, as defined in sociological scholarship, is the "knowledge that can be expressed in and received by words and evaluated by conceptual reason" (Perry and Shotwell 2009, 34). It suggests verifiable claims about the world, positions individuals as rational beings, and values the attainment of more or different information. The acquisition of propositional knowledge can help one learn more about racism, how they might conceptualize of it, and how it functions in today's societies.

As the opening vignette illustrates, antiracist pedagogies that exclusively rely on gestures built upon propositional logic might represent too narrow of a view. Thus, the purpose of this philosophical inquiry is to problematize an overreliance on antiracist gestures aligned to propositional knowledge when engaging in sociopolitical change. First, I explore the importance of *praxis* within antiracism. I then explore how certain praxial approaches might lead to a disingenuous version of antiracism. Next, I suggest the importance of holistic accounts of antiracism, including affective understandings. To conclude, I propose an antiracist pedagogy that synthesizes both propositional knowledge and affective understanding.

Antiracist Praxis

Praxis, or practical engagement dialectically informed by critical and theoretical reflection, might play an important role for sociopolitical considerations in music classrooms. Different from technical know-how (e.g., *techne*), praxis foregrounds experiential knowledge. As Bowman (2002) indicates, "praxis is not just at home with the possibility of surprise; its comfort with the unexpected is central to effective guidance within fluid, here-and-now circumstances" (70). While educators are likely to teach music in ways that emphasize mastery and expertise, praxis might

be considered more contingent. In other words, praxis highlights that approaches respond to changing information and circumstances. The contextual nature of praxis warrants a richer discussion about possible intersections with antiracist pedagogy.

Freire (1970) describes praxis as having the potential to enact liberatory pursuits. He describes the need for the coexistence of "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (36). Further, for Freire, "transformational or liberatory practice cannot be separated from an engagement with *and* an objective distance from our culture" (Allsup 2003, 158). In other words, praxial engagement includes both action-based activities (e.g., rehearsing and performing in choir) and epistemological activities (e.g., connecting, perceiving, and recognizing during discussions or performance of sung texts) (Allsup 2003).

Epistemological activities may have a greater impact on shifting racial consciousness than one might acknowledge. For Perry and Shotwell (2009), "In order for white racial consciousness and praxis to shift toward an antiracist praxis, a relational understanding of racism, the 'self,' and society is necessary" (33). It is important that such assertions remain in dialogue with other antiracist approaches and definitions in order to avoid recentering whiteness. As a result of Perry and Shotwell's assertion, however, one might wonder how antiracist praxes address relationality, or the notion that meanings and practices are not only derived from formal, prescribed rules, but also from one's relationship with oneself, their learning community, and beyond (Lejano and Kan 2022).

While the need to develop contextual and relational awareness has been addressed in antiracist music education scholarship, Perry and Shotwell (2009) further suggest that such development likely takes place through a whole constellation of understandings. They explain, "such [understandings] of self and other … [arise] from a confluence of propositional, affective, and tacit forms of knowledge about racism and one's own situatedness within it" (34). In other words, such suggestions might encourage educators and students to challenge the liberal, rational conception of self as necessary to open up relationality and honor the different forms of knowledge that may be circulating within music classrooms.

In her book *Knowing Otherwise*, Alexis Shotwell (2011) begins with the observation that there is no adequate epistemology of the implicit, but that such an epistemology may have potential to challenge structures of racism and other forms of oppression. Shotwell (2011) explains, "The epistemic salience of the implicit

becomes particularly clear … when we examine racial and gender formation with an eye toward the epistemic work involved in stabilizing them as political categories" (xv). Given that epistemologies rely on political assumptions, it follows that changing the way one comes to know and to understand race, racism, and antiracism might also serve as grounds for sociopolitical transformation.

While an educator will likely interact with many different knowledges and understandings when situating antiracist praxis, propositional knowledge and affective understandings "interpenetrate and may be co-constituted in ways that are most visible when we concern ourselves with the political" (Shotwell 2011, xi). In other words, rather than focusing on how propositional and affective understandings differ, which may point to how these categories themselves are inadequate, one might consider how affects uniquely inform propositional knowledge in pursuit of antiracist music education.

As such, Shotwell (2011) establishes "implicit understanding" as an umbrella term for knowledge that is nonpropositional in nature. Specifically, she avoids the false dichotomy of what can and cannot be said through coherent sentences and instead examines the "twined salience" of propositional and implicit understandings (xi). An implicit understanding, on which she focuses, is affective understanding; she explains, "Discursive situations that carry political content are always freighted with an affective, embodied, and unspoken charge" (xix–xx). Returning to the Bronx classroom where I described my previous experience teaching "Glory," the aforementioned student's response could have halted the discussion in its tracks. Yet, the discussion that followed might have also generated a productive sense of discomfort (Hess 2018; hooks 2003). Critical reflection on the moments of anger and frustration felt by a Black, Brown, Indigenous or Asian/Pacific Islander (BBIA)[2] student and the shame of a white teacher "may affectively disrupt stuck habits in the sedimented background of the familiar" (Guilmette 2016, 138). As such, affective responses might also help to contribute to new perspectives on how race has structured material conditions, including sociopolitical ones, of the present.

Disingenuous Antiracism

By not fully considering epistemological strands like affective understandings as part of antiracist praxis, the Bronx classroom demonstrates how such efforts might be perceived as disingenuous. As a descriptive term, disingenuous is used to signify

when affective qualities that might be expressed through certain actions are absent. Returning to the opening vignette, the student asserted, "You don't actually care about us. None of you actually care." When gestures intended to be antiracist lack concern or care, they may appear artificial or disingenuous. Accordingly, disingenuous might be useful for considering how affects in antiracist praxis might otherwise be *felt* by individuals.

Even if they are not always clearly legible, affective understandings may be important to consider in epistemic work. Shotwell (2011) suggests queer theory as one possible source to provide a more comprehensive understanding of affect's twined political and epistemic implications. She notes that, through such lenses, affect is seen as both personal and collaborative, extending beyond speech while remaining linked to the potential for expression. Further, Gould's (2009) philosophical position about affect illustrates that it is only communicated and stabilized through emotion (e.g., classic emotions such as anger, love, or sadness), thus rendering it linguistically inarticulate. Yet, when these distinctions are not immediately clear, Gould refers to the in-between affect and emotion occurrence as *feeling*. In line with Gould's assertions, Shotwell suggests that feeling is perhaps a more useful conception for social movements as the term indicates "the loosening of the articulateness distinction between affect and emotions" through highlighting bodily experience as part of a vocabulary of sensation (23).

Consequently, I argue that disingenuous antiracism ignores feelings and forecloses on the possibility to reflect on them. The opening vignette illustrated how a lack of feelings might communicate gestures meant to destabilize racist structures as ones that ultimately reinforce whiteness. A paradoxical relationship then can arise between the felt experiences of antiracist gestures and the behaviors themselves, thereby making it necessary to closely consider the epistemological assumptions undergirding their definition of antiracist praxis.

Such paradoxes may be most evident in a phenomenon knowing as box-checking, which is common in large businesses and institutions. Box-checking might be used by employers to demonstrate an antiracist "commitment," such as the use of images that include BBIA individuals in marketing materials. When organizations (e.g., large businesses and institutions) introduce surface-level diversity actions or policies, as represented through box-checking, they ultimately delay substantial change by diverting attention to small, optical changes that convince audiences they are making progress. Although representation might broadly align with some

antiracist goals, merely including more BBIA people in photographs, for instance, does not also mean acknowledging and discussing concerns for tokenizing and otherizing marginalized populations.

Hook (2011) explores such paradoxes and identifies four interlinked modes of disingenuous antiracism. He explains one such mode as "ostentatious forms of antiracism that function as means of self-promotion, as paradoxical means of white love" (19). Such modes of disingenuous antiracism could serve as a means for converting praxis intended to be antiracist into social capital. Meaning, praxis can be reported upon and disseminated in ways that publicize proofs of change without substantial change. Hook's description might evoke both the phenomenon of box-checking as well as my role in the opening vignette, insofar as some students interpreted my actions as intended to portray myself in a certain light.

Disingenuous antiracism presents itself in other music education settings, as well. Hook (2011) explores other modes of disingenuous antiracism, such as a preoccupation with disproving one's racism. Consider, for example, Shaw's (2020) discussion on attending a professional development session on concert programming. To conclude their concerts, choral music educators attending the session were encouraged to program a "dessert" piece. Following further questions from session participants, the presenter flippantly stated that examples of dessert pieces would include "any multicultural piece" (Shaw 2020, 95). The implication here is that a piece such as Rollo Dilworth's (1992) gospel-style arrangement of "I Sing Because I'm Happy" should be chosen for closing a choral concert because it has a catchy rhythm and melody, is light in nature, and demonstrates that educators have included a piece that references Black culture. Further, some music educators might suggest a commitment to antiracist work by including "I Sing Because I'm Happy" and verify that such actions are an example of antiracist practice. One might argue that music educators participating in such practices are attempting to prove they are antiracist.

Thus, an overreliance on the liberal, rational self may lead to disingenuous antiracism. While the accounts mentioned regarding sociopolitical actions (e.g., representing BBIA culture, acknowledging positionality, and decentering Western classical repertoire) point to how structures lead to racialized hierarchies, their overemphasis may also enable rational, self-interested engagement. As a result, implicit understandings between such racialized structures and subjectivities may remain unexplored. Thus, an underlying premise of a liberal, rational self who will

shift as a result of reasoned cognition may overestimate the role propositional knowledge plays in shifting racial consciousness.

Affective Understandings

While inextricably enmeshed with propositional knowledge, affective understanding is not propositional in nature (Shotwell 2011). Affective experiences connected to anger, joy, and shame, for instance, are not verifiably right and wrong. Consider the example of learning to sing a phrase more musically in Joel Thompson's 2015 piece *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. The choral work sets music to the final words of unarmed Black men and boys including Kenneth Chamberlain, Amadou Diallo, Eric Garner, and Trayvon Martin. During the opening of the third movement, long, extended phrases are sung at a slow tempo, requiring mastery of breath management related to vocal production. A developing singer might take shallower breaths than necessary, pace their breathing too quickly, hold notes longer or shorter than their notated duration, or sing out-of-tune.

Yet, when the text, based on the last words of victim Amadou Diallo, "Mom, I'm going to college" is linked to the musical phrases, such lyrics help to clarify how musicality informs the propositional elements of such passages. In this instance, musicality might refer to a felt quality in musical expression (Perret 2004). This description suggests a singer might draw on an inner world of affective understanding to sing long, extended phrases more musically. As such, affective understandings, which might involve connecting to a range of emotions such as despair or hopefulness, help infuse the passage with energy and feeling as well as open new understandings that go beyond specific rational understandings of one's musical performance. These qualitative aspects of music-making contribute to meaningful musical experiences and might highlight the importance of considering feeling in and through antiracist work.

It is important to note that affective understandings are carefully considered not as ends in and of themselves, but as essential components of sensemaking. Affective understandings are always circulating, even if they are inadvertently avoided; they help to form the backdrop that underlies and surrounds one's expressive behavior and perception (Shotwell 2011). It might be important to consider how feelings could integrate with propositional knowledge, but not solely for the sake of affect or for maximizing the "magical," euphoric experiences affect can sometimes offer (Bradley 2009). Moreover, when investigating such prospects

within the arts and humanities, one must remain vigilant to ensure that antiracism is still understood propositionally, rather than only as an affective experience. For example, literature chosen for its affective potential can also have negative connotations for social movements. Rather, the prospect of considering affects might express feelings in ways that remain tethered to propositional knowledge (and vice versa) to open up possibilities across epistemological strands.

The previous scenario of rehearsing *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* might indicate that propositional musical elements can also be understood through feelings rather than reason alone. Through propositional conceptualization, for example, singers may achieve the desired musicality through learning about the notated *piano* dynamic of "Mom, I'm going to college." This could be accomplished with students identifying the *p* as an abbreviation for *piano*, the Italian translation of *piano* as soft, and learning how to place the *p* dynamic within a dynamic range of *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*. Yet, recall that musicality—as a term—suggests the importance of exploring felt qualities while musicking. In other words, it might be that a deeper understanding of musicality could also be reached through considering and embracing the affective experiences associated with the subtext of the phrase's lyrics (e.g., contemplative, forlorn, hopeful, and so forth).

Poetry as Illumination

Such potential may evoke Poet Audre Lorde's (1984) notion of "the erotic." For Lorde, the term goes beyond sex or sensuality and beyond poetry as spoken or written verse. She explains the erotic as "firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling" (53). Thus, when unlocked and integrated with other epistemological strands, affect helps to provide a "fullness" and "depth" that, once experienced, asks one to "require no less of [oneself]" (54). Consequently, regarding this aspect of the erotic, affect functions as a key for memory and recall, suggesting that the inception of propositional concepts may be further internalized or grasped more fully through their felt meanings.

Further, considering how a propositional concept feels could open new understandings about the world by allowing interaction between affective understandings of self and others. Richerme (2020) highlights such possibilities when discussing the experience of reading a vivid novel. Readers might be dispelled from the belief that their own thoughts and feelings are completely unique when they come across descriptions of friendship, loss, or love that relate to their own

experiences. In other words, by reading descriptions of another's inner world, one might better understand and feel their own.

Lorde (2020) describes how such notions form the basis of "poetry as illumination" (3). Similar to Richerme's (2020) discussion about how literature offers ways to help make sense of hard-to-articulate affective experiences, for Lorde, poetry gives one's affective experience a language so it can be expressed and shared. In her words, poetry "names those ideas which are—until the poem—nameless and formless, about to be birthed, but already felt" (Lorde 2020, 4). It is through reading and writing poetry that affective experiences become communicable. Since reading and writing poetry may bring out or free internal affects, Lorde considers poetry a vital and inherently liberatory pursuit. In Lorde's view, it is only through fusing propositional knowledge with affective understandings that "lasting action comes" (4).

The following examples illustrate how affective understanding and propositional knowledge can co-constitute in illuminating ways. However, they are not meant to suggest a monolithic approach to fusing the two. A number of approaches might be used to illuminate, including current events, films, visual art, and a variety of musics. However, in following Lorde's (2020) original conception, I first consider illumination in poetic descriptions of literature.

Literature as Illumination

One example of such synthesis might be Toni Morrison's (2007) novel *The Bluest Eye*. The novel tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, a young Black girl living under the white gaze of 1940s American society. As Kendi (2021) describes, the white gaze involves centering "white people and their looks, their ways, their perspectives, and their actions" (para. 6). Morrison (2007) includes propositional notions about the white gaze while also exploring its emotional impact on the lives of her characters.

The Bluest Eye provides a more complete account of the white gaze by coupling Pecola's internal, affective experience of the white gaze with passages that suggest propositional knowledge. Morrison (2007) describes, "It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear" (39). Recall that Kendi (2021) defines the white gaze as an oppressive force that centers whiteness at every turn, which would include aesthetic standards. Such standards are influenced by a white-controlled media and beauty industry (hooks 1992;

Kendi 2019), and the Breedloves have come to understand their "ugliness" through this lens.[3]

In this novel, the reader is also provided with a glimpse into Pecola's affective experience of the white gaze. For example, a third-person omniscient narrator describes how Pecola "fervently" prays for blue eyes (Morrison 2007, 46) and goes on to articulate her feelings toward her race in the following manner: "All things in her are in flux and anticipation. But her blackness is static and dread" (49). Pecola's affective, internal experience of the white gaze is illuminated through words like "fervently," "static," and "dread." Poetry and poetic descriptions found in literature, and likely in other places in the arts such as song lyrics, relay personal experiences with evocative and rich wording and thus more strongly captures how one experiences feelings.

The Uses of Affect

To turn toward affect, however, will likely require facing both the positive and negative, which Lorde (2020) considers critical. In "The Uses of Anger," Lorde (2020) writes, "Everything can be used / except what is wasteful / (you will need / to remember this when you are accused of destruction)" (57). For Lorde, all forms of affective response provide information about the present moment's nondiscursive and/or unconscious operations. She further explains, "Anger is loaded with information and energy" (57). Turning toward affect may also involve including expressions such as grief, guilt, or shame, and if teachers and students closely examine the circulation of affects, it might require assuming that these affective expressions are not destructive, regardless of how uncomfortable they might feel.

Music educators building pedagogical goals on affective understandings might consider their unique qualities as related to antiracist work. In comparison with propositional knowledge, it may be more difficult for teachers and students to distance themselves from affective understandings. When presented and learned about as a propositional topic that can be proven true or false in particular circumstances, one can easily distance themselves from the white gaze and minimize their engagement with it. However, including affective descriptions, as Morrison does, can help move away from a propositional mode of *knowing that* something happened to a mode that "causes these circumstances to come alive in the theater of the mind" (Bartky 2002, 85). The integration of affects may offer a deeper way to understand propositional knowledge by invoking one's senses alongside it.

Further, affective understandings can elicit felt recognitions that assist in newer or deeper understandings. Perry and Shotwell (2009) highlight felt recognitions as crucial to shifting racial consciousness. They explain: "The power of these feelings lie in their ability to produce a felt sense of one's interdependent, relational, and social-political connections with others" (Perry and Shotwell 2009, 42). If teachers and students can read about affective experiences such as loneliness and isolation, they might learn that others also experience them. Thus, one could come to recognize certain affective experiences as shared and even common, allowing for a point of connection that propositional knowledge alone cannot provide.

The arts may be ideal grounds for considering the synthesis of propositional knowledge and affective understandings. Poetry and literature describe propositional concepts and their affective experiences, which can lead to deep, holistic meanings for readers. Morrison (2007) is able to provide such insight into the white gaze as a result. Lorde (2020) similarly suggests propositional and affective capabilities are combined to varying degrees through the language of poetry. I now propose that such potential is also present in music-making and music education, particularly in paradigms that use text, such as choir.

A Synthesized Antiracist Pedagogy

Prior to discussing pedagogical considerations, I first clarify that I am not attempting to prescribe, but rather to provide students with one way of communicating their affective experiences while critically reflecting on them. In other words, there are many ways scholars and practitioners might conceive of this synthesis between propositional knowledge and affective experiences. I expand on *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* for the explicit reason that the multimovement work likely evokes a complexity of useful positive and negative affects that enable multivalent and robust affective investigations in the classroom.

I also want to clarify that in such proposed pedagogies, the teacher does not simply control affects, but also feels and learns with students. In other words, teachers might become affective co-learners alongside students. Since the conjunction of affects and antiracism is complex, guaranteeing specific outcomes is difficult; however, if such approaches are to be useful, they would require teachers and students to assume similar roles during affective explorations.

Part of a more critical educational experience might involve a choral director choosing to program *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*. Perkins (2022) discusses a choir performing this piece during a Black History Month concert at a predominantly white institution (PWI), and he explains that rehearsal and performance approaches closely considered the body as a source for implicit epistemology. Given this embodied nature of singing, a turn toward students' affective experiences as a part of an antiracist pedagogy might closely consider the role of the body.

The prospects of *programming* this piece with such epistemology in mind are not without risks. Singing musical material that portrays certain individual or collective experiences can bring students in closer emotional proximity to those experiences. As singers of this piece are vicariously exposed to violence against Black individuals, secondary or retraumatization concerns may arise.

Yet, Perkins (2022) also suggests that *avoiding* this piece, alongside embodied experiences, may also carry risks. He explains that avoiding sociopolitical pieces because of their potential to bubble up a range of affective responses may inadvertently neglect the systemic factors that cause such responses. In line with this view, Shotwell (2011) writes, "The purpose of life is [not] to be endlessly comfortable and at ease" (80), and decisions to advance such positions in the choral classroom may directly undermine some implicit understandings already circulating on such topics. In relation to the piece, I offer the following considerations for antiracist pedagogy: sharing multiple narratives, recognizing the importance of affective understandings, working toward synthesized understandings, and taking actions based on them.

First, educators and students might view sharing narratives as sources of and tools for understanding. In addition to acquiring knowledge from established sources such as edited books and research, educators can recognize that legitimate ways of knowing can also be produced through personal narratives. Such narratives help provide a further understanding of how verifiable concepts, such as laws, policies, and systems, shape one's life, particularly as related to race. While the importance of listening to BBIA voices cannot be overstated, such students do not owe their teachers or peers their stories. As such, in preparation for rehearsals of *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed*, students might view *Love, Life & Loss*, which is a short documentary that explains Thompson's impetus for writing the piece and what the programming decision means to him.[4]

An educator's lived experience might also be considered when sharing multiple narratives. As hooks (1994) reminds us, "I do not expect students to take any risks that I would not take, to share in any way I would not share" (21). When pursuing the sharing of multiple narratives, educators—as members of the learning community—might also communicate their experiences, which could include bias or privilege (hooks 1994). In other words, students are not the only ones responsible for illuminating their thoughts and feelings in response to the documentary.

For instance, within the first two minutes of the documentary, choral conductor Eugene Rogers describes the piece as musicalizing the last words of Black men and boys "who've lost their lives before their time." As educators and students sit with such narrative, they may begin to experience the bubbling up of a range of affective experiences. Shame, for instance, might move in an important way. Rogers' narrative might "inspire shame in white Americans who benefit from the 'security' of police surveillance, let alone shame in the police officers who committed these acts" (Guilmette 2016, 140). Yet, the absence of shame in response to Rogers' narrative might be interrogated, as well. The lack of shame might contribute directly to the oppressive status quo.

Second, educators and students might recognize affective experiences as a crucial component to understanding. After viewing the documentary, a choral director might plan to facilitate or co-facilitate discussions, based around propositional knowledge, that include coverage of data about police violence and race and the historic roots of authoritarian violence toward BBIA individuals (Stockdill, Rogers, and Schlanger n.d.). Such discussions emphasize a need for understanding structures and systems of oppression rather than attributing racism solely to individual acts (Bonilla-Silva 2006).

Yet, Shotwell (2011) suggests that these discussions offer a partial understanding. If racialized experiences are also comprised of "feelings, implicit prejudices, and bodily responses," then empirical discussions "will only indirectly point toward or approximate the web of understanding abstracted in such scholarship" (xx). Further, she explains the difference between hearing someone talk about the fear and shame white people might experience when they discuss whiteness and individually experiencing that fear and shame. Combined with the previous point about realizing one's lack of shame, these embodied experiences may accurately reflect the previously described "felt recognitions," evoking Perry and Shotwell's constellated types of knowing.

Thus, a synthesized approach where students can bring together consequential affective understandings with propositional knowledge is necessary. A discussion of *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* focused only on relaying propositional information about race might be viewed as insufficient to encourage substantive antiracism. In addition to the profound impact on families, the killing of unarmed Black men also affects local communities on a variety of emotional, financial, social, and spiritual levels. After revisiting the cases presented in the piece, choral students could work in small groups to consider what affective responses bubble up for them as well as have an opportunity to reflect on their sociopolitical implications. As an affective state, confusion might indicate that the student has never had to examine systems fully because they have consistently provided for them. In responding with attention to affective understandings, students synthesize propositional understandings (e.g., statistics of police violence toward BBIA men) with the personal circumstances of the Black lives referenced in the piece. Therefore, small group discussions may help to synthesize understandings by more specifically considering the direct impact of propositional information on Black individuals.

For discussions about the piece to be productive in a classroom, educators might take several steps beforehand. A choral director might communicate concerns about a specific topic ahead of time to school leadership or administration as well as to students. As needed, support staff might be alerted to a topic that may trigger students (Stockdill, Rogers, and Schlanger n.d.). A well-planned discussion protocol might include establishing norms and a positive purpose, such as how to listen productively, how to disagree respectfully, or how to manage equitable talk time (Stockdill, Rogers, and Schlanger n.d.). A teacher might also have scripted redirections to move smoothly onto another part of the lesson if small group discussions become hostile or unproductive.

Third, singers might use affective understandings entwined with lyrical subtext to navigate rehearsal and performance decisions. Returning to the previous example regarding the third movement, "Amadou Diallo," the educator and students might explore singing the phrase "Mom, I'm going to college" at various dynamic levels. The students might then participate in small group discussions about their embodied experiences while singing the phrases and whether such dynamic reinterpretations opened new insights into the phrase's subtextual meanings. For example, a student might notice that singing the phrase more loudly invokes a

certain pride or joy that may not be familiar to them, since pursuing higher education is normalized and an unspoken expectation in their family and local community. In such discussions, students can reflect on why people feel the way they do, which may directly reflect systemic injustices, and how to communicate a subtextual understanding of lyrics by choosing a dynamic to communicate certain perceived or experienced feelings.

Finally, by pursuing synthesized understandings, new antiracist actions might be possible. As Lorde (2020) reminds, once one begins to address affective understandings, they "become a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence" (34). By considering both affects and propositional knowledge, choral students gain a deeper understanding of the impact of these losses, even if only through imagination. Given a greater awareness of the affective gravity of the harm to the BBIA community, they might conclude that a concomitant action should more directly benefit those individuals. For example, they might decide to perform the piece in the community in order to raise more awareness about the inequity of police violence against Black people. Such action is one example of how students and educators might approach achieving substantive antiracism through synthesizing propositional and affective understandings.

Conclusion

A synthesized antiracist pedagogy provides a profound means to develop affective understandings alongside propositional knowledge. As Shotwell (2011) contends, "If we are to do justice to this living, we must take into account its affective and embodied aspects and pay attention to implicit understanding as a measure for multifaceted, complex transformation" (155). An antiracist pedagogy that closely considers affects involves a number of practices, which often begin by acknowledging that feelings have the potential to support conceptual understanding and might even reach individuals in ways propositional knowledge alone cannot.

The decision to program *Seven Last Words of the Unarmed* for the purpose of bringing out implicit understandings is not without risks. As previously discussed, such approaches raise concerns of triggering Black trauma. Some white students might also react aggressively to the prospect of embodying such narratives. They might contend that they have "no place singing music of Black oppression" and consider it to be a type of appropriation (Perkins 2022, 128). Yet, given the ways in which whiteness manifests, often in maintaining what is comfortable and

avoiding what is uncomfortable, such defenses might highlight the need for further investigation of the affective reactions to the piece.

Such defenses may also suggest an aversion to embrace the at times messy aspects that propel social justice efforts. In the final section, I proposed an antiracist pedagogy for music education in which affects might be discussed and integrated, connections could be built, and "right" answers are rarely offered, which can circumvent the uncomfortable, deep work associated with substantive antiracism. By doing so, students and teachers might have an opportunity to both recognize and feel aspects of racial problems—or to recognize their lack of feeling—thereby strengthening the kind of commitment required to engage in substantive antiracist work.

Feelings "and the honest exploration of them become sanctuaries and spawning grounds for the most radical and daring of ideas" (Lorde 2020, 5). If implicit understandings lie in the background supporting reasoned cognition, then it is important to consider approaches that also involve digging in the dirt and getting one's hands dirty in order to touch the roots where such understandings of racism and antiracism might also lie. Considering that substantive antiracism requires some type of commitment, teachers and students may benefit from focusing on the affective dimension in addition to the propositional one in order to gain a different or even new understanding of its significance. As such, propositional and affective understandings must both be explored in antiracist music classrooms to spawn and sustain substantive sociopolitical change.

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Notes

[1] Both "white" and "whiteness" will not be capitalized throughout this article except for quoted material in which the terms are capitalized by the authors. This decision was made because such capitalization has been associated with white supremacy. More information is available at https://blog.ap.org/announcements/why-we-will-lowercase-white.

[2] Lorelei Batislaong proposed BBIA as a replacement for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) in Decolonizing the Music Room, a nonprofit organization dedicated to decolonizing music education.

[3] For a more detailed discussion of racialized aesthetics, see *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race* (2017) by George Yancy.

[4] The documentary is available for view at https://vimeo.com/164442643.