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“I did it my way!” A case study of resistance to coloniality in music learning and socialization

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"I did it my way!" A case study of resistance to coloniality in music learning and socialization

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Abstract

In this article I discuss a case study of how a music teacher in a postcolonial context has addressed and resisted colonialist practices in education/socialization processes. The case study addresses preliminary findings from a broader ethnography on the social organization of music learning from the standpoint of music teachers. The ethnography is based in Costa Rica—a Central American nation that struggles with colonial-based relationships¹, and also the native country of the researcher. The analysis is framed sociologically, in terms of micro and macro social relations, as I scrutinize tensions between individual learning and macro social forces. By critically reflecting on musical meanings, values, and practices that sustain a non-Euro-American sociocultural order, from a theoretical perspective little explored by music education, this work articulates the first through sixth MayDay Group ideals. Keywords: coloniality, postcolonialism, music education, socialization, Costa Rica

Theoretical and methodological considerations

In this article, I discuss a case study of how a music teacher in a postcolonial context has addressed and resisted colonialist practices in education/socialization processes. I specifically analyze the dilemmas and contradictions in everyday music learning and teaching, as gleaned from three sequences representative of different socialization stages or *pathways*. The latter is a term coined by anthropologist Ruth Finnegan ([1989] 2007) in her micro-sociological study of amateur music-making in an English town. It denotes interactional routes through which people enter and

leave, in which they make choices to learn, perform, and organize music. In doing so “relationships could be forged, interests shared, and a continuity of meaning achieved” (306).

Recent scholarship from Scandinavia (e.g., Bladh 2004; Bouij 2004, 2000; Johansen 2008), North America (e.g. Bernard 2012, Dawe 2007, Dolloff 2007a, 2007b, 2006, 1999a, 1999b, MacArthur 2005, Mark 1998, Roberts 1991a,1991b) and Latin America (Feichas 2011) explores how music teachers’ identities are shaped through learning and socialization within pathways. Teachers’ identities do not exist as unitary subjectivities, “but in multiple layers, in webs, or as multi-faceted” (Dolhoff 2007a, 3) within socialization processes that include “both formal and informal learning as well as unconscious influence from the collectivity” (Bouij 2004, 2; see also Froehlich 2007). Socialization occurs through the interplay of many actors, within a broad institutional context (Johansen 2008).

I made an epistemological decision to focus specifically on tensions and discords that intersect learning and socialization in the pathways of an individual teacher. This is owed to my own local experiences as a Costa Rican teacher and social researcher that have shaped my research framework, as well as my questions and approaches (Bresler 2008, Henry 2001). For instance, in a self-narrative study (Rosabal-Coto 2006) drawing from feminist epistemology (Butler 1999; Lamb 1995, 1994), I reflected on the tensions and discords in my own body as a music learner and teacher from the standpoint of my sexuality. I explored the dislocation experienced in balancing the standards of art music learning and my own informal music engagements. I made this dislocation a site for free-flowing thought “to let us move beyond the restricted confines of a familiar social order” (hooks 2003, 2).

The ethnographic procedures that I apply in this case study involve simultaneous narrative interviews, participant observation, and artifact content analysis. Narratives are a natural way that humans construct and share meanings (Bowman 2006). I start from the premise that people’s involvement in music as social beings is intertwined “with the comings and goings of their interpersonal, family, and collective relationships” (Sunderland and Arthurs 2010, 210). Narratives

help to make “audible the voices, experiences, and meanings of individuals and communities engaged in music, and to raise those questions that are often left unasked” (Barrett and Stauffer 2010, 19). Such “questions often left unasked” may refer to taken-for-granted experiences that “articulate massive structural and systemic imbalance and discrimination” (Niederer and Winter 2010, 209) between the personal meanings of people, music and learning, and the institutional practices that regulate our musical interactions. I return to participant observation of “social life in its natural habitat” (Adler and Adler 1994, 377) for a more complete understanding of ‘the other’ (Prus 1996). In addition, artifact analysis allows access to “invaluable vantage points for appreciating certain aspects of particular life-worlds” (19).²

In this case study, the intersubjective nature of musical learning is understood through the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer 1969; Froehlich 2009, 2007; Mead 1934; Prus 1996). Symbolic interactionism is concerned with the geo-cultural question “Who are we?”—an inquiry pertinent to our self-perception within social interactions. This question can be broken down into two, more penetrating questions: 1) Who is constructing what image? and 2) How does one construct a self-image in the face of one’s definition or identification by others (whether by other people or by institutions)?

More specific and integral to this case study is the sociological category *webs of interaction*, first used in music education by Froehlich (2009). This term encompasses the dynamics of the many roles we play at several contextual levels of interaction, called *empirical selves*. The first level includes “each individual’s own different empirical selves,” while the second is formed by “the many empirical selves in those groups that make up a particular school” (or institution), and the third comprises “networks of empirical selves in groups that make up a specific “public” (or community). According to this notion, “[e]ach network connects with any of the others on an ongoing basis, shaping the context not only of the school environment in which one works but also one’s own personal space and relationship to each individual’s own different empirical selves” (92).

The notion of “webs of interaction” allows researchers and educators to become aware of multiple micro and macro relationships that we may take for granted, and that emerge between what, how, why, and with whom we teach. They represent “webs of interconnectedness even between seemingly disparate universes of discourse” (Froehlich 2013, 28). Froehlich encourages us to use this ontological resource for self-reflection and self-critical identification, rather than for the mere prescription of music teacher practices: How can we visualize that our own self is impacted by interactions far removed from where we are but still connecting with us in unknown ways?³

In addition, this ethnographic analysis intersects ideas and institutions, knowledge and power, in a particular history of colonization (Holmes and Crossley 2004) mediated by institutional practices in a postcolonial context. For this reason I embrace postcolonial theory (e.g. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 1995; Fanon 1984, 1968) as a general theoretical framework. Postcolonial thinking entails relocating “the colonial and imperial imaginary constructions allocated by colonial and imperial powers” in developing nations during an era starting in the sixteenth century when Europe was able to exercised colonial power over 80% of the world’s population. It further looks at imperialistic processes that continue to “shape most of our contemporary discourses and institutions—politically, culturally and economically” (Rizvi, Lingard, and Lavia 2006, 250) through political, linguistic, literary and other imaginary constructions (Mignolo 2007).

The postcolonial perspective is interested in modes of meanings that have been historically marginalized, such as the local, the undervalued, and underdeveloped (Mignolo 1995). In order to be consistent with my geocultural location as a researcher, in my work I draw extensively from Latin American postcolonial thinking (e.g. Anzaldúa 1987; Quijano 2007a, 2007b, 2000; Dussel 2011, 2009; Mignolo 2010, 2007, 2000, 1995).⁴ According to Latin American postcolonial thinking, “colonialism” refers to the imperialistic project of colonization guised by Christianity and the monarchic Spanish Empire in the 16th and 17th centuries. In order to address later forms of imperial domination in the Latin

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American region, the term can also be applied to the secularism and empires of nation-states (England, United States, Soviet Union), vested as civilizing mission, socialism, proletariat dictatorship, or market democracy in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Colonialism follows the logic of domination termed “coloniality.” Coloniality operates in four domains of human experience: 1) large-scale land possession, workforce exploitation and financial control, 2) political control of authority, 3) control of gender and sexuality, and 4) control of knowledge and subjectivity (Mignolo 2007, Quijano 2007a). According to postcolonial semiologist Mignolo (2007), even though the imperial control of economy and politics in the Atlantic has shifted hands and altered the shape of the colonies, the underlying logic has been exactly the same as five centuries ago. Coloniality has been responsible for the establishment and perpetuation of hierarchical systems in many social domains. This produces a power differential also known as “the colonial difference” (Mignolo 2007).

The matrix of colonial power which has historically supported the colonial difference is often explained and justified through the rhetoric of modernity and progress, assuring that the situation can be corrected with economic development or democracy. As an education scholar, I am aware of the influence of such phenomena in my own education and upbringing, and am at present wrestling to embrace theoretical and methodological frameworks more responsive to my context and research interests. This does not, of course, mean that I disregard theories from the Euro-American mainstream that have the potential to interrogate colonialist and oppressive practices.

Feminist epistemology (e.g. DeVault 1996, Smith 1987), in particular, strengthens my postcolonial understanding of how social interactions and institutional processes shape one’s self-perception and socialization in musical learning. I specifically rely on the feminist theory premise that “the body” becomes a site for discursive “trouble” in one’s self-narrative (see Butler 1999). According to Pineau (2000), the body is also a site for knowledge, as in and through it we “learn

about self, others, and culture through analyzing the performances of our bodies in the world.” The performing body “is a pool of data, a collector of data, and the interpreter of data in knowledge creation, in the process of epistemology” (160). In this light, coloniality subjugates being, listening, and seeing; it silences differences between ways to be in the world and, therefore, silences identities (Asher 2009).

Finally, in my analysis I use the notion of *texts* as an analytical tool. Texts, as explained by Canadian feminist sociologist Dorothy E. Smith (2005, [1999] 2004, 1987),⁵ are materials “in a form that enable replication” (2005, 228), such as paper, print, film, electronic media, and so on, that can produce the stability and replicability of the organization of an institution. People are connected with other people into translocal social relations in time and space through texts that are present in everyday life. Institutional hierarchies produce series of actions through rules, norms, and discourses⁶ embedded in texts that organize people’s doings and thus coordinate their social life in pre-determined ways. People learn to participate in a textually-mediated world without necessarily being aware of it or meeting the other actors involved (Campbell and Gregor 2002).

Analysis

In this section I analyze colonialist relations mediated by texts within the learning/socialization process. My intent is to establish relationships between how these texts are operationalised within macro structures and processes at the micro level. To this end, I will refer to sources where social history, historiography, sociology, and ethnomusicology intersect, featuring sources from the ethnographic contexts that might be unfamiliar in Euro-American music education.

Sequence One: “I felt no connection whatsoever with school music.”

Sitting in front of me on a bench, surrounded by uninterested passers-by in a central but quiet shopping mall near our university in San José⁷ is Rodrigo.⁸ He is a 31-year-old, white, middle class Costa Rican music teacher from a small rural town in a province bordering the country’s capital city to the North. He is both a songwriter

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and rock band leader and a committed music teacher at an institution that caters to young people with disabilities and illnesses. Although at first sight he would appear quiet and shy, he agrees to share his pathways over several interviews with me. I invite Rodrigo to place himself in the position of an expert of his own doings in relation to music. As we start the first interview Rodrigo enthusiastically recalls his earliest musical memory, at age 8, in the following time sequence:

After window shopping toy instruments at a store ... my neighborhood pals and I played the trendy (radio) pop songs on our toy instruments: spoons, pans and pots... We couldn't afford to buy records, but we were able to tape record the songs and share the cassettes among us.

The affordances associated with “were able”, “share”, and “among us” stand out in this time sequence of free, self-directed, group musical engagement in daily life socialization. But Rodrigo would shortly take me into a very contrasting system of social relations when invited to move on to music class experiences in the schooling system:

It was just another school subject. I felt no connection whatsoever with what happened in music class. It was tremendously boring ... to sing the national and civic anthems. What happened ... was a full disconnection with the students ... I felt a big apathy towards school music.

Rodrigo evokes distinct states of mind and attitudes in reference to what it took him to engage in learning national and civic anthems. Let us pay particular attention to states of mind like “boredom”, “apathy”, and “disconnection.” Anthem singing brings tension into Rodrigo’s construction of the music learning experience, in contrast with the enjoyment and freedom in his previous account of out-of-school music socialization with his peers.

Anthems can be powerful tools to instill values (e.g. patriotism, nationalism, citizenry, devotion) to sustain ideologies (e.g. social consensus within a collective, cultural identity) not necessarily generated through consensual processes. By virtue of their capacity to replicate the organization of an institution, they become texts. Texts are embedded in people’s work—what they do—and coordinate and organize

their courses of action, while in turn the work reproduces institutional texts, and so on. Often texts insulate the subjects' consciousness from particularity (Smith 2005, 21), namely their way to be and know in the world, by imposing what, how, and when it is to be done.

Hebert and Kertz-Welzel (2012) contend that the issues and challenges associated with the use of music and music education for patriotic purposes may often go entirely undetected. Patriotism "tends to be widely promoted as an essentially desirable and unproblematic, even heroic, virtue" (177) so that music may function as mere ideological tool in educational settings.

Let us now put Rodrigo's school music experience into the macro perspective of his geocultural context: School music was established within Costa Rican public education in 1849. It was one of the fundamental means through which the State attempted to instill and disseminate an "imagined" national identity (see Anderson 1991), along with journalism, philosophical and political writings, historiography, literature, and visual arts (see Carvajal 2011). This took place almost three decades after Costa Rica was granted its independence by Spain, after more than three centuries of colonialism.⁹

This national identity was "created" by an intellectual elite associated with a liberal government. It was established as the basis of a discourse aimed at generating social consensus and avoiding class struggle within the dispersed and culturally heterogeneous population of a recently independent territory.¹⁰ It is worth noting here that this territory was very poor and quite isolated from the Modern world after undergoing the violent conquest under the Spanish Empire.¹¹ The core of this identity was a mystified narrative of a colonial-based white, European, rural democracy of landowners, gathered under liberal and bourgeois values (Álvarez 2006). This narrative of common ethnic and cultural roots deliberately denied the autochthonous pre-Hispanic Amerindian indigenous and Afro-Caribbean culture and legacy, including, of course, music practices (Rosabal-Coto in press).

According to Quijano (2007a, 2007b) the category "race" was constructed within the modern colonization project to justify the construction of new identities

and social roles based on supposed differential phenotypic and biological structures between conqueror and conquered, beyond the category “geographic origin.” This artifice cleansed the sociocultural differences resulting from the previous three centuries of colonial occupation, enslavement, and exploitation. At the service of the “national identity project”, public school music focused largely on the singing of national songs and anthems to instill moral and civic feelings associated with the trendy humanistic and democratic values of the French ideal of “the republic”. School music was also a space for the preparation of “cultural acts”—civic and religious celebrations and entertainment at school (Vargas Cullell 2004). Such practices mirrored the formerly colonial imposition of foreign musics and practices from the 16th to 19th centuries, because during that period the Spanish Crown used military and religious music to instill its authority and religious control.

Foreign enculturation and local cultural exclusion were reinforced—especially in historiography, literature, state-legitimated musical practices and educational curricula—in the early 20th century, through a government-mandated “quest for the national music.” This was undertaken by a group of influential, male (mostly European-conservatory educated) Costa Rican composers, performers and music teachers who toured the Costa Rican territory in the late 1920s. They engaged in the search for music that best reflected the spirit and nostalgia of the Costa Rican people (Vargas Cullell 2004). They followed a trend for the quest for national roots already taking place in other Latin American countries. They finally claimed that the Amerindian, indigenous music did not reflect the nature and feelings of the Costa Rican people, and instead decided that the national music *was* the traditional dance music of the northern province of Guanacaste, which was of notable Spanish influence (Vargas Cullell 2004).

Semiologist Mignolo (1995), following Fanon (1968), precursor to postcolonial thinking, explains the above process as a *re-colonization from the inside*. After the independence in postcolonial territories, the local elite established new connections and dependencies with the metropolitan centers. Fanon (1968, discussed in Rizvi, Lingard, and Lavia 2006) posits that independence from colonial structures “does

not mean liberation,” and that “‘national consciousness’ often fails to achieve freedom, because the colonized bourgeoisie impose their own aspirations over the vast majority of the people, replacing the colonial rule with their own form of dominance, surveillance and coercion” (251). During most of the 20th century, the above colonial-based and state-endorsed discourse has permeated the composition and study of popular and art music in terms of the representation of “the national (music)” and “the Costa Ricans.” Such discourse has also endured in the development of school music curricula, university instrumental and music education programs, and overall educational practices in school music and instrumental instruction (Rosabal-Coto in press, 2013, see also Campos Fonseca 2011).

How does the web of institutionalized music education, in its attempt to coordinate musical doings through texts, bring tension to Rodrigo’s musical pathway and alienate him? Students—citizens in the making—are prescribed specific doings in order to make nationalistic and civic music “properly”: they participate in controlled unison singing of military march-like vocal music written many decades ago by intellectuals and art music composers, whose lyrics talk about “peace” and “readiness to fight for the motherland.” Such music-making requires a series of regulated corporeal behaviors, such as standing still, putting arms by the side, looking to the front, and bearing an attitude of respect. Such singing is supposed to connect other countrymen in different times and locations around an imagined self-perception and way to be in the world and therefore regulate mental and emotional behaviors, too.

National anthems and civic songs became texts to direct students’ music learning practices towards instilling a hegemonic and fallacious social ontology, in the way of a habitus, to use Bourdieu’s term (2012). Leaning on Smith (2005), I contend that texts—such as norms, rules, materials of music, music genres, music standards—make universalities possible. Anthems, as texts, failed to connect Rodrigo’s local world, choices, production and organization of music (his musical empirical selves) with the selves of other citizens of the institution “national community” (a translocal world). He would find it pointless to learn, by rote, vocal

military songs, the music and lyrics of which had very little to do with the enjoyment, sharing, and play that he accomplished in informally situated music making.

However, as a subject of knowledge Rodrigo was able to exercise independence in music making and fulfilling pleasure in informal social encounters beyond indoctrinatory schooling goals and, in doing so, resisted being colonized—a form of inequality allocated by public music schooling. He resisted being colonized in his body and social interactions in music. Recalling that according to critical pedagogy (e.g. Freire 2009, [1971] 2005, Barreiro et al. 1977) and feminist epistemology (Butler 1999) the body is a site for awareness, we can see how Rodrigo problematizes a degree of oppression that does not let himself be, in his visceral, bodily being.

The conflict between macro forces (e.g. the governmental mandate through educational practices towards a political goal), located in tensions in everyday doings (school music), mediated by texts (anthems), in Rodrigo's account, illustrate how local worlds—thinking, feeling and being—cannot only be coordinated, but also subjugated by macro social forces. These may be relations that silence one's identity, that colonize who one is, and control what and how one learns. I contend that public school music curricula and the above pedagogical practice in Costa Rica have historically served the function of colonizing by providing a site of stability, security, and commonality directed at social control through an epistemology of music rooted in foreign colonial culture and practices (Gould 2012, Rosabal-Coto in press, 2013).

Sequence Two: "Are you dyslexic or what?"

The next sequence is placed much later in Rodrigo's account of his pathways. His interactions with school music were fruitless, according to his account. His interactions with social control mechanisms in the broader schooling web were not more meaningful than school music, to the extent that Rodrigo dropped secondary school and finished his studies through distance education. During that process, he reconnected with childhood friends and these webs led him to enroll (and succeed) in voice and instrumental lessons at a municipal conservatory. This experience was

relevant enough to Rodrigo's identity-making as a learner and rewarding enough to his personal identity needs that he decided to apply for admission to a college music education program. He was accepted by two universities. However, it would prove very difficult for him to reconcile his learner empirical self's expectations and goals with the norms and practices of the establishment where he enrolled:

Given my motivation to dedicate my life to music and the (richness of) previous interactions with teachers and peers, it was very shocking (for me) to encounter a different kind of treatment from the teachers in college. Some were actually mean. For instance, if they noticed that you were shy (like I was) they would eat you alive.

In fact, there is one teacher Rodrigo will never forget:

(This person) is acknowledged as a great pianist and composer, but lacks many human values. I was a freshman and enrolled in his piano class. At the beginning of the course he left us a fingering exercise for homework. I practiced it and played it in class the way I thought I should. He said to me: "It's deplorable. Are you dyslexic, or what?" He said this in front of all the other classmates, none of whom I knew. I had to go to the washroom (and pull myself together). I dropped the course and waited a couple years until my GPA was high enough to allow me to choose another class piano teacher (for the remaining five class piano courses).

This performing artist saw Rodrigo with the eyes of a very specific empirical self: a conservatory piano professor. This teacher caters to a select group of piano majors (besides Rodrigo's group piano class) and expects that the many music education students assigned to him as part of his university full-time workload are able to develop technical proficiency as if they were piano majors. Most of them had no previous keyboard studies. As said earlier, a text can regulate the social interactions in people's everyday doings. There is a cultural stereotype based on ableism that mediates in weighing the qualifications of a student. It conveys a norm that supports a broader political economy of knowledge based on the values of innate talent, excellence, and productivity. Individual student musical background, expectations and learning pace simply do not matter much. The goal of artistry, on the other hand, certainly is everything.

Rodrigo's response ("he needed to pull himself together in the washroom") is his activation of the text conveyed by the piano teacher's gesture. His overwhelming reaction shows his corporeal epistemology of a particular teaching situation in education for future music teachers. The degree of the experienced "split of consciousness" lies in the contradictions between how the educational system sees Rodrigo, and how he sees himself. This is an example of discords that would be understood in the body in music learning, according to feminist epistemology as posed by Lamb (1995).

The widely accepted notion of ableism in instrumental performance is a text that can be traced back to the 1890s, when the first systematic, instrumental music instruction began in Costa Rica as a government-funded project, with the aim to instruct performers of European art music. This was largely the outcome of many years of private instrumental music instruction and consumption of high Western art culture by a wealthy elite (Molina and Palmer 2004), as the country was incorporated into the world trade market as a producer and exporter of coffee beans to Europe. Wealthy citizens and their offspring had access to music scores of European dance and chamber music, pianos and other musical instruments, and other forms of European bourgeois entertainment.

Often music teachers-to-be, like Rodrigo (or just music learners), undergo contradictions, dilemmas, uncertainty, and even physical and emotional pain when attempting to meet with the requirements and comply with practices that the institution of teacher education has put in place under the guise of control discourses. Getting a sense of themselves as learners through their perception of how the establishment sees them in and through texts is certainly a potential site for colonization. When they are forbidden to act, "when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, people suffer" (Freire [1971] 2005, 78).¹² The depth of such suffering may even cause a fear of liberty such that the oppressed stay bound to the status quo and lead individuals to become oppressors, thus becoming agents who reproduce coloniality, not different from the 're-colonization from within' asserted by Fanon (1968).

Fortunately, as can be gleaned from other sequences in the broader ethnographic study (not discussed in this article), what motivates Rodrigo to go on is his desire to pursue his own sense of music making and learning. His personal discourse for survival and success in university education is to pass the courses no matter what. He mentally blocks unpleasant experiences and people, and tries to make the most out of the curricular content. The split of consciousness is the site where he constructs his self-perception into a resilient and more independent learner—an empirical self the educational establishment does not seem to care for—despite the alienation that he suffers (Freire 2009). In spite of the fact that he had trouble engaging fully and making full use of his faculties, Rodrigo does not “feel a victim where someone else is in control ... and does not chose to blame others, but to be in control” (Anzaldúa 1987, 21): *I had to embrace who I was and grow up considerably. I had to get stronger and toughen up.*

Sequence Three: “I did it my way!”

After finally graduating as a music teacher, Rodrigo was employed at an urban, private secondary school for almost two years. It was his first teaching job. Private schools in Costa Rica often operate as companies with shareholders and rely entirely on elevated tuition fees. Their services are aimed at households with a particular socioeconomic status. It is common that private schools hold a religious affiliation that overtly articulates a moral discourse for the regulation of curricular and pedagogical actions and the social life outside of the school. Such elite institutions offer instruction in English or another second (e.g. French)¹³, or (more recently) third language (e.g. Chinese)¹⁴ and other subjects to endow students/clients with qualifications sought by employers, especially in the transnational market (Molina and Palmer 2007). Also, many schools profess evangelical Protestantism, which is gradually displacing the old, Catholic tradition from colonial times. The above trends need to be understood within the broader cultural globalization in Costa Rica since the 1980s, a phenomenon resulting from the “tourist boom, by greater access to products from other countries made available by liberalized trade policies” and, in

the case of education, to an extent assisted by the expansion of Protestantism (Molina and Palmer 2007, 169). Privatization has increasingly penetrated health and other local services and markets besides education in the last two decades. By its drift to the transnational market and cultural globalization interests, education perpetuates social class inequality. Economic globalization processes in Latin America have been built on less state intervention, more trade and market freedoms, and subordination of social goals to economic criteria. The outcome has been “[l]ess growth, deindustrialization, income concentration and precarious employments” (Ibarra 2011, 238).

Even though private schools are not subsidized by the government, there are some guidelines from the Ministry of Public Education that they are expected to follow. There is, however, a fair degree of curricular freedom, but Rodrigo’s school principal is a very strong advocate of anthem learning as public institutional education dictates, perhaps due to her own previous socialization in schooling and family webs around the role of anthems in the construction of students’ citizenry. She also warns that non-artistic music should be banned from the school, unless it is studied to understand “the bad in it.” But Rodrigo draws from his learner empirical self’s identity forged in his schooling socialization years and feels deep inside that learning anthems and stigmatizing student’s everyday musics harms their identity-making.

Rodrigo is aware that he must attend to the norms dictated by the hierarchy. The latter bears the responsibility for upholding socialization values associated with the socioeconomic status of students and the institution’s religious principles, which guarantee the school’s good standing in the market. But religion was not a web of socialization in Rodrigo’s upbringing, and the socialization around the “national identity” construct caused him a split of consciousness. Rodrigo negotiates with his students the extent to which anthems will be taught, practiced, and assessed. His students agree to practice anthems, as long as the corresponding assessment is not of much weight. This agreement is not supposed to be shared out of the classroom.

But Rodrigo was called to the principal's office on several occasions to be censored, because rumor is out that he does things differently from the way he was told. Rodrigo's new struggle manifests in his own corporeal epistemology. He dropped weight considerably during that last semester and began feeling depressed. The conflict between who he wants to be as a teacher, and the norms his employers' use to regulate the interactions in music class and socialize students into education led to a new rupture: A bunch of tenth graders enthusiastically responded to a group vocal-instrumental performance project on Costa Rican folk music¹⁵ by choosing to perform their own version of the Costa Rican folk song *De la caña se hace el guaro* ("Booze is made from cane"). The waltz-like song evokes an idealistic peasant life within the narrative of national identity. It speaks of how the spirits of sugar cane liquor cheer up someone's spirit when 'head over heels'. Rodrigo managed to stimulate learning and fun with music from the "national identity" canon, at first glance detached from young people's interests and identity.

The school principal called him in again. She made clear that at such young age students liked to socialize at techno parties where they drink alcohol. She did not want Rodrigo to "induce them to such lifestyle through activities in the music classroom." The principal's (and the institutional) religious ontology and her own idea of the phenomenon of teenage alcoholism did not give room for the students to self-direct their learning in music class using "national music." Whether or not this was a judicious practice or not, if the students felt some connection with the song lyrics and not with its "national" character, this would be problematic as to the value and relevance of the national canon. Rodrigo's apparent inadequacy is finally punished by being fired without any explanation, but the motives could not be clearer.

Rodrigo decided to leave his bachelor's apartment near his former workplace and moved back into his parent's house in his hometown, out of the capital city. Not too long after he was dismissed by his former employer, Rodrigo was recruited by a public health care institution back in the capital city, fully equipped and staffed to cater to patients under age 13, where music education is available to the patients.

Rodrigo was welcomed at the job interview by the health center director, who openly valued him as a candidate who perhaps was not quite academically qualified, but had the necessary youth and desire to learn on the job. An institutional culture centered on the patients' health needs beyond financial and cultural interests managed by institutions like religion, state, and market became Rodrigo's new institutional work web or interaction.

I can see Rodrigo's previous tensions and dissonances in formal music learning pathways as a site where he becomes a sensitive and strong teacher who is able to relate and embrace the challenge to deal with students who are ill or experience physical handicaps, even though teacher college education did not prepare him for the kind of population he is now attending to. His resistance to being colonized informs his desire to touch the lives of the young people at the health center, considering the oppressive potential of diseases and illnesses. Rodrigo develops a new empirical-teacher self in interactions with the healthcare profession and embraces concepts, principles, and techniques that make him work with confidence. Rodrigo feels that the interactions with staff and patients within the hospital school are very fluent and productive.

The absence of hierarchy, socioeconomic status, patriotism, or religious affiliation-based impositions and the articulation of an institutional discourse based on trust, responsibility, and collaboration among the staff members for the well-being of patients, bolster Rodrigo's capacities and productivity as a music educator. This seems to be an institution that embraces his previous webs of interaction and who he is becoming as a teacher. Rodrigo seems to finally have gained institutional legitimacy as a teacher. This is how Rodrigo shares the joy of his current teaching:

When I actually get (the children) to make music they acquire so much motivation ... and I succeed in getting them out of their little minds. This means a lot to me.

Rodrigo struggled to stimulate his music learner self despite the stress in previous teaching webs of interaction and re-entered the informal web of music making. Lately, he did this in online webs. This pathway allowed him to relate to practices he

would have never suspected to learn in formal schooling webs before, like electric guitar and rock singing. Quite recently, Rodrigo recruited fellow musicians through interaction in online forums, to start a punk rock band. In his own words, Rodrigo goes against the consumption patterns associated with private schools' clients' socioeconomic status for the sake of pursuing his own meanings of music making:

While some people might borrow money to buy a house or a car, I decided to borrow money from the bank to be able to fund my own album.

He wrote the lyrics and music for the album, and is the vocalist and guitarist of his band.

Rodrigo rekindled the flame for music in self-directed informally-situated experiences. He recovered meanings of music he had when he was 8 years old and played pots and spoons with neighborhood pals. Rodrigo now controls his own epistemology through music. Rodrigo allowed me to include a literal translation of the Spanish lyrics (and a drawing with the Spanish text) of the main song in his new album:

I am the pillar industry of this nation.
I am foreign, I always offer the best
at the expense of my underpaid employees
resigned to this prison.
I always insist that they give their best.
I almost forgot, but "Welcome to this big family of envy, grudge, and treason."
I hope you can deal with the pressure of my transnational agency
because we are on a deadline to export.

Chorus: Damn corporation! Don't cheat my people! Don't cheat this people !

And if I appoint you as manager, forget your people.
I pay you to be indifferent,
and if sometime you see something you can't stand,
you better shush, so I will pay you more.
If your country doesn't want me anymore, I don't care.
I'll go to another one where they will truly need me,
where they are willing to stand any atrocity ,
so they can have food for one more day.

Chorus: Damn corporation! Don't cheat my people! Don't cheat this people!

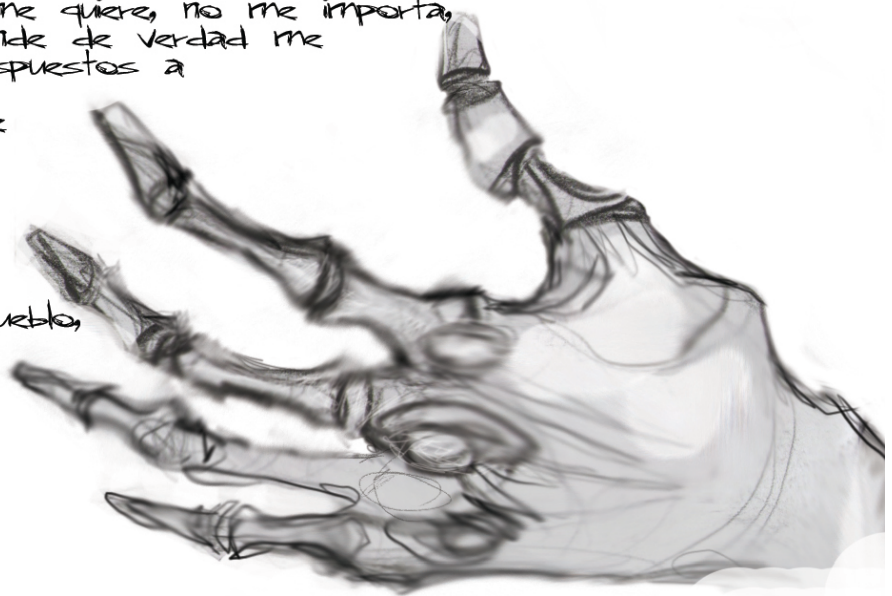
Maldita Corporación

Yo soy la industria el pilar de esta nación
soy extranjero siempre ofrezco lo mejor
a costa de mis empleados mal pagados
resignados en esta prisión,
siempre insto a que den de ellos lo mejor
se me olvidaba pero bienvenido a esta gran
familia de envidias rencores y traición
espero que pueda lidiar con la presión de
mi agencia transnacional
pues aquí hay un plazo para exportar

Maldita corporación
no enseñes a mi pueblo,
no enseñes a este pueblo

Y si lo pongo como gerente olvídense de su gente yo
le pago para que le sea indiferente y si en algún
momento vé algo que no puede soportar, mejor calle
así le pago un poco más
si su país ya no me quiere, no me importa,
me voy a otro donde de verdad me
necesiten y estén dispuestos a
soportar cualquier
atrocidad con tal de
comer un día más,
un día más

Maldita corporación
no enseñes a mi pueblo,
no enseñes a este
pueblo



Rodrigo controls his own musical expression and social ontology through this song. It is a contestation to a new macro form of colonization in our globalized world: neoliberalism. Within the Latin American postcolonial web, neoliberalism is a

neocolonial model of development based on open economies and global competition and considered a throwback to an earlier era when Latin American countries participated in the world economy on the basis of their differential advantages as producers of primary goods while importing manufacturers and technology from the industrialized world (Portes and Hoffman 2003).

Rodrigo speaks up against a kind of oppression by macro forces (transnational companies) on local bodies (the exploited Costa Rican workforce), not very different from the one he underwent in his own body and mind as a music student in formal schooling and in his first job. Rodrigo speaks against the logics of the same market that supports the organization of education in place at the private school that fired him. He criticizes and resists material and symbolic violence that result from the same kind of coloniality that Freire [1971] 2005 and Illich (1972, 1971) criticized in Latin American institutionalized education in their times. Rodrigo became the kind of music teacher he never had, and refused to be colonized: *“I did it my way!”*

Discussion

Schools often are “one of the primary social institutions at work in the reproduction of social inequalities, while simultaneously portraying a humanist vision of their redemptive and transformative power” (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2009, 433). Illich (1972) agrees, claiming that schooling’s institutionalized values are controlled by technocrats who exert a monopoly over the commodified social imagination, and set the standards of what is valuable and what is feasible. In fact, as contended by Smith (2000) “schools are an integral part of the institutional processes for the differential allocation of agency” (1148).

Colonial imaginary constructions are often allocated through curricular content and practices that reproduce ways to be in the body, and to know the world originally used by old colonial powers to instill ideologies that sustained and reproduced their economies (Mignolo 1995, see also Illich 1971). Music education, too, can operate within the logics of coloniality. The historical hegemony and socially-valued status of the Western canon genres, repertoire, ensembles and

educational practices, criticized by Small (1998, 1977), serve to perpetuate colonial views of the world, the body, knowledge, and cultural stereotypes imposed five centuries ago by European powers in their geopolitics of modernity. Also, the original cultures and music practices of what foreign imperial powers constructed as “the New World” (in the case of my study the locality of this New World is what was imagined as “Latin America”) are displaced from their context as “exotic”, or simply thrown into obscurity, while the institutional order makes claims for modernity, progress, or democracy.

Music-making practices can serve as political tools to domesticate ways of thinking and instilling particular class ideologies that silence or control marginal ways of being after countries become independent and locals take over political power. “El Sistema” scholar and critic Baker (2012) reminds us, for instance, that in several countries “one motivation behind the promotion of music education to the poor was the political protection of the upper and wealthy middle classes.” Music instruction “was seen as a way of keeping the workers out of taverns, hence increasing their productivity and decreasing their opportunities to discuss revolutionary ideas” (3). In the opinion of this author, nineteenth-century music education in several European countries and the United States promoted efficient capitalism through music education in this manner.

There is a recent worldwide trend espousing the belief that massive music instruction in the Western canon repertoire and ensembles “saves” socially disadvantaged children and young people. Under the logic of neoliberalism, music education becomes a massive platform to train future workers into social skills that are much needed for the success of the politics of the global market, itself a new form of colonization. In Costa Rica, a massive structure was set up in 2007, modeled after “El Sistema,” partly funded by the Inter-American Development Bank. According to Baker (2012), El Sistema “reconfirms time-honoured, orthodox cultural assumptions like the innate superiority and universality of the masterworks of the European canon and their civilizing effect on the masses” (6). This kind of educational project

educates “individuals by placing them in a disciplinary macro-structure” (9) claiming that a new, democratic society is being forged.

The relationships that perpetuate colonial difference in music education may often be overlooked by discursive institutional operation within the logic of coloniality. The advocacy of arts education, democratic values, intellectual and social development are only a few texts that organize music education around coloniality. Leaning on Freire ([1971] 2005) I contend that music education as an institution may impede people *to be*, thus they become oppressed. According to this Brazilian pedagogue, oppression “tries to deter the drive to search, the restlessness and the creative power which characterize life, it kills life” (60). And “[n]o oppressive order would permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why?” (86).

Latin American postcolonial thinking claims the need for an epistemic disobedience as a response to colonialism and coloniality. The term *epistemic* refers to the principles, conceptualization and norms of knowledge as they have been transmitted as “natural,” for instance, in social sciences and humanities in the last 500 years (Mignolo 2007). *Disobedience* calls for the decolonization of unjust and oppressive social structures arrayed in imperial processes. *Decolonization* can be understood as the process “of revealing and dismantling colonialist power in all its forms” (63). It involves challenging the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist power (Ashcroft et. al 1995). To Fanon (1984, 1968) decolonization was a way to un(learn) what has been instilled through colonization. Such enterprise entails individual and collective responsibility and involves invention, intervention, and action towards the awakening of a political consciousness (Walsh 2009).

Theorist and philosopher Mignolo (e.g. 2010, 2003) urges Latin American social praxis and scholarship, including education, to disobey the colonial ontology and epistemology in order to seek liberation from colonialism. This entails fully multi and intercultural communication of experiences and meanings by social agents as the basis for a rationality detached from capitalism (economic colonialism), towards *pluriversalistic* geopolitics and body politics (as opposed to universalistic).

As a postcolonial music educator, I also advocate that one way to decolonize pedagogy and curricula is to focus educational research on local and particular-situated, informal knowledge, especially on those on the verge of social and educational exclusion (Rosabal-Coto in press). Allowing the revealing of the local and particular in relation to exclusion, means that as researchers we could understand “historical and geographical contradictions and differences” as well as affirm “historical and geographical links, structural analogies and openings for agency and resistance” (Shohat 1992, 112). Such action could serve to locate and understand what Lavia (2006) calls the “Freireian project of hopefulness.”

It has repeatedly been emphasized that education can be a site for social justice and liberatory action (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 2009). But if the social role of music education often relies on the logics of coloniality, perhaps one relevant landmark in exploring music teacher learning and socialization is to seek deeper understanding of how coloniality is explored, affirmed and celebrated in the socialization/learning pathways of music teachers and how macro social forces coordinate relationships in the economic, political, social, epistemic, and subjective/personal domains of what music teachers learn and do.

The global economy, government policy, the market, cultural stereotypes, knowledge, and institutional education goals are some of a series of complex, social determinations that synchronize the micro world of all agents in educational processes of colonialist and exclusionary relationships, including music teachers. By looking at macro relations in the pathways of music teachers, music teacher education could better understand the complex “social organization in which we participate without much conscious thought” (Campbell and Gregor 2002). Music teacher education could become more aware of the sociopolitical implications of specific human/institutional interests that mobilize everyday life, professional practice and policy making in regard to music learning. More importantly, music teacher education research could attempt to decolonize oppressive values and practices by unveiling such relationships.

Conclusion

It is my hope that this case study of dislocation and resistance in Rodrigo's webs of interactions in pathways contributes to challenge long-time honored values and the sociopolitical legitimacy of curricula and practices in the Western-based music and education establishment, not only in postcolonial contexts, but in every context where coloniality is articulated. This case intends to affirm, explore, and celebrate specific relationships that emerge when we make, learn, and engage with music. They bring together the many selves that we are within the micro and macro. Such relationships often emerge through meanings that are often marginalized, ignored, silenced or colonized by institutional establishment interests. These meanings inevitably emerge when learners resist, and embark on the quest to decolonize education through epistemic disobedience. I am still on the quest to explore these meanings myself and accomplish my own decolonization as teacher and researcher.

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Notes

- ¹ I address colonial-based relationships in a forthcoming sociocultural analysis of music education in Costa Rica (Rosabal-Coto in press).
- ² Artifacts included recordings of songs written and performed by the participant and photos and publications on his life, job and music making on Facebook.
- ³ In a work that precedes this ethnography (Rosabal-Coto 2012) I use Froehlich's concept to identify relationships that university music educators should be aware of in regard to students' contexts, backgrounds and goals as shaped by the materiality of their lives.
- ⁴ Latin American postcolonial theory makes visible the history and legacy of European colonialism, understood as the imperial expansion in the Atlantic that began in the 16th century, built on the grounds of capitalist economy in the last 500 years, mainly by the Spanish, Dutch, British and later, US-Americans (Mignolo 2007).
- ⁵ Smith pioneered and developed the social research approach known as institutional ethnography.
- ⁶ The notion of discourse used here refers "to translocal relations coordinating the practices of definite individuals talking, writing, reading, watching, and so forth, in particular places at particular times" (Smith 2005, 224). People participate in a discourse and reproduce it.
- ⁷ Capital city of Costa Rica.

⁸ “Rodrigo” is only a pseudonym.

⁹ See Rosabal-Coto (in press) for an analysis of the colonization process in regard to music and culture in the territory of Costa Rica.

¹⁰ The population included Amerindian-borne indigenous, Afro-Caribbean immigrants and descendants, Afro-Amerindian descendants, Spanish-Afro and Spanish-Amerindian descendants, and Spanish-borne immigrants.

¹¹ The conquest of the Costa Rican territory (and most of what is now Latin America and a large part of the Caribbean) was undertaken through land invasion, natural resources and economic exploitation, massacres and enslavement of natives, and devastation of the social, political and religious organization of the Amerindian, Pre-Hispanic locals (Molina and Palmer 2007).

¹² My use and interpretation of Freire should be placed against the backdrop of the material realities of Latin America, where Freire conceived his work. Freire’s thinking is naturally associated with the postcolonial agenda in Latin America. So is the thinking of Illich, also quoted in this article.

¹³ This is a trend that can be traced to the 19th century influence of the French social and cultural organization.

¹⁴ China is increasingly becoming a financial partner to Costa Rica.

¹⁵ This activity is part of a newly implemented school music curriculum for secondary school. See Rosabal-Coto (2010) for a discussion of foundations, goals, and rationale. Rodrigo’s principal overtly opposed the pedagogical practices in this curriculum.

About the author

Guillermo Rosabal-Coto teaches undergraduate courses in music education foundations, methods, and research at Universidad de Costa Rica, where he served as Chair of the Music Education Department, and founded the research program “Observatory or Music Learning.” Rosabal-Coto has served as arts and music education consultant to the Costa Rican Ministries of Public Education and Culture, as well as to UNESCO, UNDP and UNICEF. At the time this article was submitted, Rosabal-Coto was a doctoral student at the University of the Arts Helsinki, Sibelius Academy.

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