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Music Educated and Uprooted: My Story of Rurality, Whiteness, Musicing, and Teaching

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Music Educated and Uprooted: My Story of Rurality, Whiteness, Musicing, and Teaching

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This article provides a glimpse into one person's subjective experiences of rurality, Whiteness, musicing, and teaching. Experiences are shared narratively around the central metaphor: roots. This autoethnography was guided by the question: how has the intersection of rurality, Whiteness, and poverty affected my attitudes, actions, and roles relative to music teaching and learning? Music education, a modern certainty that is usually portrayed as a universal good, is challenged as uprooting. This institution is inextricably linked to scarcity, transforming people into homo educandus musicae—s/he who believes that music education is a prerequisite to meaningful musicing. Homo educandus musicae, with more music education, emerges further and further uprooted from soil. A rerooting music praxis—in which students' local places are understood as valuable resources for school music and not places to be left behind in the search for better, more cultured musics—is recommended.

Keywords: music education, rural, roots, class, Whiteness, Ivan Illich, homo educandus, autoethnography

“Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.” He added, “Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear.” (Mk 4:3–9 NABRE)

December 1997: Withering

“We are not going to renew your contract at the end of this school year, Mr. Shevock.”

A salty, bitter taste emerged in my mouth. I hadn't expected this to happen at this meeting, at least not so soon and with so few opportunities to prove myself. Why not more than two observations before being labeled a failure?

It was a foggy December morning in suburban Maryland. Still uncomfortable in a conservative dress shirt, pants and tie, I was sitting at a short table in a drab cafeteria with two middle aged White men—the middle school principal and county music supervisor.

I'd expected to be observed in the elementary setting, where I felt I was doing better. Why was there no opportunity to grow as a middle school band director? Just graduated in August, I was the "student teacher of the year" last spring. Now I was withering. I knew I was struggling to connect with my students, but this was a punch in the gut.

Angry, hurt, and disillusioned, who could I confide in and vent with? I had made two friends since moving to Maryland, but 'leaves' are not the same as 'roots.' Maybe, I needed an authority figure I could trust, a mentor to confide in. My family was a four-hour drive; I doubt my old truck would survive many trips that distance. I spent my mornings teaching a 100-member seventh grade band, and then group lessons. During afternoons, I drove to the northern part of the county to teach an elementary band program. And then I drove past miles upon miles of cookie cutter housing developments and lackluster strip malls to my home.

Home?

"Home" is a word I'm uncomfortable using to describe that stark apartment. I lived alone and never met my neighbors. And I'd sit and pass the time eating Little Debbie snack cakes—the same ones I used to buy as a child on my walks to Warfield's family market.

Feeling disconnected and unhappy, feeling uprooted, alone in my tiny apartment, I asked myself, "Will it be okay?"

Introduction

Because musicing experiences occur in many places, and are affected by many people, and various conditions, in this autoethnography my reflections on rurality, Whiteness, musicing, and teaching may lead to understandings of what Elliott and Silverman (2015) identify as *musical contexts*:

By this we mean all possible musical spaces and places: classrooms and community settings; social, historical, political, economic, gendered, architectural; and situations in which musics are being made by students, amateurs and professional music makers. All these factors have a profound impact on the nature of musical understanding as it's conceived and applied in a specific form of Music, and on how it undergoes minor or radical changes. (211)

Bates (2011) concluded his self-reflective article by recognizing the limitations inherent in this type of research: “The themes I’ve discussed in this article are, of course, my own perspectives ... I recognize that this is a limited perspective, and, aside from what others have shared, I can only intuit that others may have had similar experiences” (124). The current article is limited in the same way, and provides a glimpse into my experiences as I subjectively experienced them. The stories shared here are not meant to be generalized, but rather should be read with other autoethnographies, case studies, phenomenologies, histories, and also theory (e.g., Elliot and Silverman, Illich, Prakash and Esteva). The musical contexts I consider in this autoethnography are rurality, Whiteness, musicing, and teaching, and are shared narratively around the central metaphor, *roots*. In context of this article, music education, as one of the “modern certainties” (Falbel 2002, 129), which is usually portrayed as a universal *good* in society (in music education, we hear it’s good ‘for every child’), will necessarily be challenged as *uprooting*. To do so, I draw on Illichian scholarship (the philosophy of Ivan Illich and those scholars who have used his ideas), which is uniquely radical:

The surprising and deeply radical aspect of what Illich has to say is that the danger stems not just from the obvious sources (say, the military, or the hegemony of multinational corporations) but more fundamentally from those elements of modernity that appear to most people as undeniable benefits: education, health care, transportation, equality of the sexes, communication, self-help, labor-saving machines, economic development, and so on. (Falbel 2002, 129)

In particular, Illichian critiques of education and economic development are pertinent to the current autoethnography.

Guiding Questions

It might be unusual for me, a music teacher, to critique music education as an uprooting social institution. I have, after all, made my career (put a roof over my

head and food on my family's table) in the institution of music education. As Bates (2015) observed:

Deconstructing the music education institutions to which we owe our own professional existence—the same houses we live in—could also be considered ironic. Our individual and collective professional identities are inextricable from the institutional vestiges of technical rationality (e.g., specialized courses of study, professional standards and degrees, hierarchical/bureaucratic organizations). (6)

Bates continues, “The MayDay Group, by centering sociologies of music education, has played and continues to play an important role in recontextualization” (8). Following this reasoning, the current paper challenges the music education field with my own experiences of being uprooted; *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*, an expression of The MayDay Group, is the space I choose to locate my story.

This autoethnography was guided by the question: how has the intersection of rurality, Whiteness, and poverty affected my attitudes, actions, and roles relative to music teaching and learning? To understand this intersection autoethnographically, I began telling stories (related to these constructs), that is, writing my memories in story form, in a journal and online (using Google Docs). I realized that the metaphor *roots* was important to me as I came to understand my experiences with rurality, Whiteness, and poverty. Therefore, as I began to interrogate my lived experiences with music teaching and learning in relation to these social constructs an additional question arose: how do the plant-life metaphors *soil* and *roots* guide the telling of my life-story as I come to understand my experiences with rurality, Whiteness, and poverty? This paper is constructed as an autoethnographic memoir around the theme *roots*.

Theory: Uprootedness and Soil

In Illichan theory, education can be understood as inextricably linked to scarcity. As Falbel (2002) states, “education is the generator or, more precisely, in automotive terms, the alternator of modern industrial society, keeping its scarcity-batteries charged through its own motions and operations” (134). In music education, this means being unable to be truly music educated in local, rural places, or by those not certified by universities. Further, education is viewed as a “universal human right,” that is “a universal genderless *good*; so good, indeed, as

to be declared a basic human *need*” (Prakash and Esteva 2008, 1; emphasis in original). As a result, education is an uprooting venture in which students are “wrenched and uprooted from their traditional spaces” (24). Education, therefore, changes what it means to be human because we come to conflate learning (something humans did long before creating schools) with education (we are uprooted, and according to the laws of scarcity, taught universalizables by certified teachers, and education is a universal right; music education for all!). And so, Illich writing on *Homo Educandus*¹ (how Illich labeled the change in what it means to be human) is pertinent to the current paper (Illich 1992; Prakash and Esteva 2008).

Method

Autoethnography

In recent years, especially since the 1970s, autoethnography has arisen as a vital research method in educational contexts, including music education (e.g. Bates 2011; de Vries 2007; Gouzouasis et al. 2014; Kruse 2012; Lamb 2014; Shevock 2015a). Gouzouasis et al. (2014) recommend “a 21st century ethos of music education research—an ethical, spiritual, and heartfelt future that embraces music making, and storied writing about music making, in all its uncontrolled, rebellious, and gloriously perfect imperfection” (18). Autoethnography is at the heart of that ethos. “Autoethnography refers to research, writing, stories, and methods that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis and Adams 2014, 254). Because of the *uncontrolled* nature of autoethnographic writing, *auto* (self) and *ethnography* (a research tradition) can be emphasized or deemphasized; some autoethnographies use previous literature heavily, and some use no references at all.²

As a way of inquiry and an “orientation to ... the living of life” (Ellis and Adams 2014, 270), autoethnography may be particularly well-suited for *The MayDay Group*, with its ideal of addressing “social issues surrounding equality and privilege that stem from *identity* constructions such as socioeconomic status, ability, race, sexual orientation, age, gender, sex, ethnicity, and religion.”³ In fact, autoethnographic techniques have been used in *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education*⁴ (ACT) (e.g., Bates 2011; Lamb 2014; Shevock 2015a). Ellis and

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Adams suggest a reason autoethnography has become important is because of “the heightened attention to *identity* politics” (259; emphasis added) in academia. Autoethnographies emphasize personal experience, use existing research, critique cultural experiences, use insider knowledge, add nuance, help people heal from painful experiences, and use accessible prose (Ellis and Adams 2014). Because of the important role ACT plays within the field of music education, the current autoethnography emphasizes *personal experience*, *existing research*, and *critique* to discuss theory.

Data Collection

Data for this autoethnography were originally collected as a collective autoethnography,⁵ research co-presented at the *International Society for the Sociology of Music Education* conference in New Orleans, Louisiana with Vincent Bates. Our collective research included his previously published research, Skype interviews, journaled personal reflections (based on prompts suggested by both researchers), and comments (by each other) on these reflections and literature brought in to understand these experiences on Google Docs.

Data Analysis

One way that Ellis and Adams (2014) recommend becoming an autoethnographer is to make a study of autobiography. To accomplish this, I studied and practiced exercises out of *Your Life as Story* (Rainer 1997). One of these exercises is shared in this research as data: “The Fairy Tale” (42) shared as *How a Boy Replanted His Roots*.

In the collaborative autoethnography presented with Vincent Bates, six themes arose: *church*, *music styles*, *environment*,⁶ *community*, *dominance of class*, and *feelings of uprootedness*. Though each of our experiences in rural places (mine in Pennsylvania and Vincent’s in Utah and Nevada) were unique in many ways, these themes were essential to both of our experiences. Because in the current autoethnography I am presenting my experience separate from Vincent’s, the weight of each theme is unique to my experiences. *Feelings of uprootedness*, through analysis in my personal journal, emerged as more dominant than the other themes, though each of the other themes related to this central theme. Further, for me, returning to Pennsylvania (to Western Pennsyl-

vania to teach, and then to Central Pennsylvania to attend graduate school) was a process of *rerooting* (replanting), rounding out the story structure. The central theme for this autoethnography is *roots*, with the sub-themes being *church*, *music styles*, and *dominance of class*.

Rainer's (1997) "essential elements of story structure" (65) also inspired this write-up, and is part of the analysis process. These are the "initiating incident, problem, desire line, struggle with adversary, interim pivotal events, precipitating event, crisis, climax, realization" (66–7). Rather than directly following this structure, because this write-up represents the autoethnographic tradition (and is primarily guided by a thematic structure, more familiar to readers of research), Rainer's elements played a more indirect inspiration. In particular, the element, *initiating incident*, inspired *December 1997: Withering*, the problem and desire line were identified also here, but more extensively in *How a Boy Replanted His Roots*. Struggle with adversity and interim pivotal events are shared also in *Rejecting Popular Musicing*, and *Singing at Mass*. These elements are interspersed with relevant literature from the music education, education, and other fields (philosophy, religious studies, etc.) to provide scholarly context to my story of rurality, Whiteness, musicing, and teaching. With these methodological choices in mind, I choose to write this paper primarily in first person to emphasize the subjective nature of my experiences (including the experience of writing this paper).

Finally, each theme was analyzed artistically through the composing of haiku (four in total: "*roots!*", "*one*", "*institutionalized*" and "*inequities*"). In music education research, poetry has been used to portray more than information: it helps portray emotion, elicits fervent responses, and engenders feelings of community (de Vries 2007). Haiku—which "are inherently fleeting and impressionistic" (Prendergast et al. 2009, 311)—have been used in music education scholarship, including in ACT (Shevock 2015a). Following the now century-old American haiku tradition, in which "the large majority ... ignore the [5–7–5] syllable count" (Collins 2013, xxix), haikus are, in beat poet Jack Kerouac's words, "short three line poems" (xxix) "simple and free of poetic trickery" (xxx). Each haiku is shared at the end of its respective section, providing a concise, impressionistic end-point for that theme.

Roots

Withering (continued)

Another thought popped into my mind: there was another Daniel I remember, the Karate Kid, who experienced becoming uprooted.

Daniel Larusso: [*tentatively*] Mr. Miyagi? [*holds up injured tree*]
 [*a crash of thunder strikes outside*]
 Mr. Kesuke Miyagi: [*seeing this drops broom in sad shock but calmly takes the tree and starts fixing it*]
 Daniel Larusso: [*worried sad*] Will it be okay?
 Mr. Kesuke Miyagi: Depend if root's strong.
 (from *The Karate Kid*, Part III 1989)

I had learned years ago that education was an uprooting venture. Four years before teaching in Maryland, I was sitting in my dorm room with tear-soaked eyes—lonely as most new college students are, and afraid of failure. This lonely feeling passed as I made new friendships at university. Sitting in my Maryland apartment, a short distance from the John Wilkes Booth home, I felt helpless and alienated. This was not my soil. My roots could not take here.⁷

Music education, the profession in which I work, is an economic venture. As such, it is infected by the same positives and negatives associated with the Neoliberal Global Economy as a whole; it is a part of that whole—it does not stand apart. Prakash and Esteva (2008) specifically discuss education: “Through their education, however, children learn to leave home, not to stay home” (3). This was true for me, as I became music educated and uprooted. As I have been educated to become a music teacher, I have found myself, oft-unreflectively, further and further uprooted from my soil. “The Western modernist individual emerges from the process alienated and disenchanting—the micro-individual was removed from the macrocosmos” (xx–xxi). Teachers can be viewed as uprooted, individual beings, but among some, “Localization or relocalization, taking root again, is being pioneered by those already awake to their marginalization by the global economy” (131). My rerooting occurred by moving from Maryland to Pittsburgh, only a two-hour car-drive to Patton (and family, traditions, etc.); and later studying for my PhD and lecturing at a university in Central, PA.

roots! sowed in soil
poisoned by industry
[in more routes than one]

How a Boy Replanted His Roots

Once upon a time there was a boy whose life seemed like it was tumbling in the wind. His family was always the same, and he was lucky to have a father, mother, and brothers and sisters who cared for him. And yet, as a family unit they did not stay in one place for long. No place became home. This was not abnormal to him. Because the boy's father was a carpenter who would spend a year here and a year there, it was the natural state of his family life to pick up and move. While the buildings his father built were sturdy and permanent, the family had no such permanent residence. The boy's older brother and sisters seemed to suffer quite a lot from all the moving, especially as they entered middle and high school. The boy wanted roots in soil, and he wanted that soil to cultivate stability. He discovered that while he was young, his roots were strong and could re-take many times. He made friends easily, and also forgot them quickly when it was time to move again. Looking back, unlike most children, he has few memories of early life. He supposes, maybe, places serve as markers for a person's memory.

One day, the boy's parents told him that his grandpa had "passed away." The boy wasn't surprised, since his grandpa was often bedridden with emphysema. The boy loved his grandpa, and the once red-haired, mostly gray man would roll cigarettes and sing "Danny Boy" to him in a comforting, scratchy baritone.

*"The summer's gone, and all the roses dying.
It's you, it's you, must go and I must bide."*⁸

His family was surprised at how well the boy took word that his grandpa had passed away, but in fact the boy did not know the difference between passed away and passed out. He thought, for sure, that the family would make another long trip into the Pennsylvania mountains, loaded dense in the station wagon, to see grandpa when he awoke. It wasn't until later that the boy learned passed away meant dead, which is quite different than passed out, and that he would never hear his grandpa's song again. This was sad, but since by this point his family thought he was brave and strong, the boy held back tears.

With grandma relatively young and alone, and with the boy's parents recognizing the negative consequences of the uprooted, modern way of living, the

family moved home to Patton. Now in the middle of 4th grade, the boy was used to changing schools (he had already attended four different schools), but now the boy could put down deeper roots. The boy made new friends—though he kept in the habit of changing friends every couple of years—and even attended the same church, St. Mary’s, for the next decade. With the help of speech therapists and special educators, he even went from being a low-performing student to managing a “B” average in high school, eventually leaving Patton to attend university: he was the first to do so in his family.

*Hidden among the roots
of grass I hear
a cuckoo*

(Hoffmann 1986, 254)

According to Hoffmann, Otsuin’s death poem, written in 1807, evokes the imagery of cuckoos to suggest nostalgia, and here “roots” alludes to burial. For me, it was my grandfather’s death that led to my rooting in the soils of Patton. It is death after all, which makes soil fertile for the nourishment of roots.

Discussing the uprooting nature of education, Prakash and Esteva (2008) contend:

The social majorities need no saviors, no conscientization, no empowerment. They are impressively skillful in saving their worlds. They have been able to do so for five hundred years. The newly minted expert as well as the established scholar have much to learn about living well from the uneducated and the illiterate—if they can give up the arrogance of their expertise. (xii)

When my family moved *home* to Patton (to this day, I think of Patton as my home), I was able to implant roots and join the social majorities (that is, the people whom the Neoliberal Global Economy generally wants to forget); where church, town, and community were very real places; real in the sense that people knew who each other were. Bates (2012) challenges music educators to “recognize the social forces (including those within schools) that perpetuate poverty” (36). He also problematizes poverty, suggesting, “the poor and rural can and do live musically rich lives!” (Bates 2011, 117). He recommends reconceptualizing poverty “in terms of needs fulfillment, rather than income” (117). I agree with this decoupling of economic poverty from social (musical) poverty.

However, in the Illichan tradition, the very concept *poverty* is irredeemable because it is a condition created by institutions (such as schools). *Poor* is not something people essentially are. School “serves to adapt, integrate, tame and dominate him [sic]” (Illich and Verne 1981, 9). And I was adapted, integrated, tamed, dominated and saved by music education (saved from poverty, and the rooted community so-called poverty provides communities). I have climbed the socio-economic ladder. I was a newly minted expert teaching in Maryland when I first began to question the benefit of such uprooting yearnings for my improved socio-economic status. I have since continued to music educate myself, voluntarily, in the hope of finding the type of happiness that comes, naturally, from living a rooted life. And it was only in reflection that I look back and realize my desire, to live a rooted life, existed even in my earliest experiences. But this is an imperfect realization, because, whether near home or not, I am caught in educational institutions—the ideal of permanent education—and continue to perpetuate its workforce.⁹

Church

Singing at Mass.

I don't remember if we had recently moved or if we were visiting family, but sitting in the pews with my family, I was the only one singing. The words of mass are the same throughout the Catholic Church—wherever you are in the Anglophone world at least—but there are many different “masses” musically. Naturally, different music composers compose the mass differently (melodically, harmonically, rhythmically, etc.). Despite the fact that I didn't know this particular mass, I knew the words and was guessing at the melodies. This was my first conscious music making experience because my mother made such a big deal out of it.

“How did you know these songs?”

I didn't have the words to tell her what I was doing, improvising melodies based on what I, in an entirely non-theoretical way, knew what to expect the melodies to do based on the harmonies, which I had heard throughout my life and into the womb; subconsciously absorbing the aural rules of the game.

This experience helped me to feel that I could do something, music, which was uniquely good. My parents, years later, made sure I sang with the choir for

the 9 o'clock "children's mass" in Patton. They supported me in joining the high school band in 7th grade. They paid for drum lessons, also, beginning in 7th grade, despite the economic hardships; it didn't hurt that the high school band director, knowing the economic situation in Patton and of my family in particular, only charged \$4 for after-school lessons. It was this type of music experience, expressed at church at a young age, which gave me a positive view of my musician-self, which led to me eventually seeking out formal musical learning experiences, and, later still, go to university to become a music teacher.

My earliest musical remembrance was of singing in church; I was educated in parochial schools, and the Catholic Church has guided my thinking and played a role in my life since. Even in the early 21st century (after 9/11) when I stopped attending Catholic mass, and studied Buddhism and then joined Neopagan groups, I was always aware that my thinking was, somehow, still rooted in Catholicism. When, years later, I returned to participation in the Catholic tradition, it was because Catholicism continued to make sense to me as a way to see the world, and, especially, a reason to care for people.

The church, through parochial schooling, experiences as an altar server, and singing weekly in the choir, provided me with a symbolic language (a theory) that has helped me make sense of my experiences since. That theory is often out of step with capitalist values; as Henri Nouwen wrote, "But these voices calling me to upward mobility are completely absent from the Gospel" and the "way of Jesus ... is the way toward the poor, the suffering, the marginal ... toward all who ask for compassion" (Jonas 2009, 114).

Like any theory, the insights of Catholic thinkers provide me a clear view of some things, but not others. According to Cornel West (1991), this happens by mediating "how I interpret my experiences, sufferings, joys, and undertakings" (xxix). My experiences and dedication to Catholicism is not dissimilar to West's dedication to what he calls *Prophetic Christianity*:

Prophetic Christianity has a distinctive, though not exclusive, capacity to highlight critical, historical, and universal consciousness that yields a vigilant disposition toward prevailing forms of individual and institutional evil, an unceasing suspicion of ossified and petrified forms of dogmatism, and a strong propensity to resist various types of cynicism and nihilism. (xxviii)

Also similar to West, Catholicism provided me with a particular set of "dynamic stories, symbols, interpretations, and insights bequeathed by communities that

came before” (xxix). And I was influenced by a particular group of Catholic scholars, including Thomas Merton, Leonardo Boff (both of whom I began to read in high school), Dorothy Day, Francis of Assisi, Thomas Berry, Henri Nouwen, Paulo Freire, and Ivan Illich. Many of these authors are Catholic anarchists and liberation theologians and they have led me to my interest in theory and guided the way I conceive of *flourishing* as a human and, consequently, as a music teacher.

Catholicism (through the two millennia of Catholic tradition) provided my young mind with a critical conception of history. Henri Nouwen¹⁰ described Christians as “those who unceasingly ask critical questions of the society in which we live, and who continuously stress the necessity for conversation, not only of the individual but also of the world” (Jonas 2009, 177). This dialogical historicism included a conception of human flourishing delinked (in a way many more recent Christian churches do not) from the dominant social ideology today—capitalism. Catholic tradition provided countless examples of pre-capitalist and anti-capitalist flourishing in the stories of saints. It also provided a particular universalism that helped me fight the racism embedded in American culture, and also America’s critical problems with nationalism and extreme patriotism. Many political systems have come and gone in the past 2000 years. Because the tradition I was most influenced by is critical, Catholic universalism is not viewed solely as “good” (Christopher Columbus and his genocidal tendencies are uniquely Catholic). But our society’s taken-for-granted universalism, learned in context with another universalism, Catholicism, did not lead me to a belief in two universalisms—rather, by my logic, if there are two universals that are at times at odds with each other, there are no universals.

Catholicism also provided me with a conception of meliorism that I continue to believe in (people are progressing, and despite our setbacks, through work, societies are getting better). This conception of meliorism led me to choose a service profession (music education), rather than one where I was likely to *get rich*. It also has led me to continually refine my praxis, through reflection and study.

*one universal
enabled wariness of
the TRAP of another*

Music Styles

Rejecting Popular Musicing.

On a Sunday afternoon, passing time in the dorm, Jardine¹¹ asked me if I wanted to come to the building where his latest band would be rehearsing. They had a drummer; I had told Jardine earlier that I needed to focus on learning classical percussion here at university (I learned quite a bit of music in high school, but none of the repertoire could be easily categorized as classical—most of the music my band director chose was popular or cross-genre). It was true that I needed to spend quite a bit of time practicing marimba (though snare drum and timpani were much easier for me), which I had only begun playing my senior year in high school. I wanted to improve as a marimbist, even though I knew of no out-of-school uses for the music I was learning. And mallet music in orchestra and concert band was already much easier than the repertoire I practiced for studio lessons.

Prior to university, Jardine and I formed a rock duo. Before Nirvana hit the radios when we were in 11th grade, we played Elvis Costello, the Beatles, and Led Zeppelin (with much reduced instrumentation); Jardine played guitar and sang, and I played drums and sang background vocals. Most of the music we performed was co-composed like Lennon-McCartney, though only our high school minds could have imagined our songs were as good. These were some of my most meaningful musicing experiences: I honed my ability to improvise, to think about musical forms, and to listen for areas of improvement. Looking back, these out-of-school musicing experiences are where I first began to build the skills I would later use to teach music. And yet, I felt the demands of school music—unlike the music I grew up listening to and learned to perform informally—demanding my time in the practice room. It was the music performed by my professors, and, therefore, of the music educated. If I wanted to move up in society, I felt I needed to give up my music and adopt classical music as my own.

“Maybe another time,” I told Jardine. Then I walked down the hill to the music building, its practice room where I would practice “far from natural” (Illich 1992, 117), institutionalized music.

Bates (2011) suggests there is a “hierarchy of musical engagements—school over outside-of-school, formal over informal, presentational over participatory, highbrow over lowbrow—as it is perpetuated in school music” (109). I feel this hierarchy was also present in my school music experiences, which played a role in my decision to reject popular musicing and to value school music.

Illich (1992) traced the history of the human-object of modern education, “the social construction of *homo educandus*” (113). For Illich, this historical development is typified by education as “a process of personal enrichment with values that are assumed to be scarce” (113), and as a basic human need. The problem arises with the institutionally constructed *homo educandus*, “The new man [sic] is a being who ought to be taught whatever he should know or do” (114). For *homo educandus*, “learning is a prerequisite” (115) for all human activities.

Homo Educandus Musicae.

My experience with performing personally fulfilling popular music on drum-set and my subsequent rejection of this type of musicing represents my evolution into a new being—s/he who believes music education is a basic human need (everybody ought to be music educated) and that music education is a prerequisite to meaningful musicing—*homo educandus musicae*. Such is the result of my music education that, despite all of my experience with meaningful non-schooled musicing, I still evolved into *homo educandus musicae*. I still gave up performing popular music so as to concentrate on classical percussion music (which I now think, in many ways, is far less sophisticated than popular drumming). This rejection of popular music for classical music can be understood as an “institutionalization of values,” which “leads inevitably to physical pollution,¹² social polarization, and psychological impotence: three dimensions in a process of global degradation and modernized misery” (Illich 1971, 1). *Homo educandus musicae*’s musicing values are institutionalized values. Not only does *homo educandus musicae* seek nourishment from the institution, music education, but s/he becomes a missionary, whose calling it is to music educate those s/he sees as the undeveloped masses, the under-music educated. Finally, *homo educandus musicae* understands the institution, music education, as the best (or at least one of the best) way(s) to save those undeveloped masses from mass poverty.

*institutionalized
musics. I coveted
the American Dream*

Dominance of Class

Wildwoods.

Patton, where I grew up, was not racially diverse ... unless you consider having English, Polish, Italian, German, Lithuanian and mixed European ancestry “diverse.” One of my close friends in high school, a clarinetist, had Central American ancestry. But the few students of color were often in Patton due to adoptions or lived in an institution that housed low-level juvenile offenders. If I had to guess, I would say 99% of my friends were White. In my third year at university, however, I began dating the woman (an African American) who would become my wife. A flutist, I met her in the university band.

Beginning in 1997, I joined my future wife’s family for their yearly summer vacation in Wildwood, New Jersey. This was one of my first experiences living with African Americans (one of my roommates at university was Nigerian), and with being in a place that was predominantly African American and Hispanic.¹³ I was surrounded by the sounds of hip-hop and R&B, though at the time I primarily listened to White, alternative music. My future wife’s family easily and quickly accepted me as family, even with my failings and our differences. I felt welcomed.

On that Sunday, I found a Catholic parish in the yellow pages; it was in North Wildwood. Only a few blocks away, my future wife and I drove to St. Ann church, and the racial divide was immediately clear. I recognized that we were in an Italian part of town; the priest had a strong Italian accent that I found unintelligible. Patton had never had such an obvious racial divide. Perhaps this was because Patton was almost entirely White—Whites of various ancestry lived beside one another and it seemed to me that students of color were accepted—Wildwood/North Wildwood seemed shockingly different.

Experiences like this prepared me for my future job, teaching in Pittsburgh. The Hill District and Southside may be geographically close, but they are culturally distant. In Pittsburgh, I thrived teaching in the so-called low-socio-

economic status schools, the schools that most teachers tried to transfer out of. Many of my schools were predominantly African American (though others were more racially mixed). Our band, orchestra, and choir concerts were well received in their communities. My students performed well, were passionate about learning music from me, and were active in All City music concerts.

More importantly to me, I felt a connection to my students I had never felt teaching in the Maryland suburbs. Certainly, teaching experience played some role in this—first year teachers seldom are good teachers—but I felt camaraderie with my students rooted in shared economic struggles, struggles I had in my youth. For instance, I perceived among my students, and in their communities, a type of rebelliousness and skepticism toward institutions many think of as ‘good.’

The theme, dominance of class, is a subjective experience of capital guiding me more than other spheres. By it, I do not mean to suggest that class is a dominant theme for everybody. It is not a universalizable. My experiences with what I am calling ‘dominance of class’ seem related to West’s (1991) idea of inescapability; “in capitalist societies, the dynamic processes of capital accumulation and the commodification of labor condition social and cultural practices in an *inescapable* manner” (xxiii; emphasis in original). West’s concept doesn’t negate “the oppositional cultures of oppressed peoples that extend far beyond their workplaces” (xxiv), and neither do I. Yet, for me, class has been inescapable. And class-consciousness became a foundation for my ethical teaching praxis among the social majorities in urban neighborhoods—neighborhoods differing drastically from Patton.

The historical fact of racial opposition (especially among economically oppressed White and African Americans in the U.S.) cannot be refuted; the roles of the KKK were filled with economically oppressed Whites from cities and small towns not unlike my own. I have been in many rooms where poor and middle-class Whites uttered explicit and unacceptable racial slurs. To complicate matters, my lived experiences with Whiteness and maleness may have guided my beliefs about the dominance of class in ways I am not yet aware. Conscientization¹⁴ is an ever-ongoing dialectic, “a continuous process of transformation” (Roberts 2000, 152). However, my experience in a social majority cultivated in me an ability to recognize oppression—in this case, that of my African American

students—and to connect meaningfully to people experiencing oppression personally and socially.

*inequities abound
and the oppressed have,
at least, a ghost of a chance*

Conclusion

As a method, autoethnography provides unique access to the object of study's memories and experiences. In this type of research, "objectivity and transferability are traded for subjectivity and singularity" (Kruse 2012, 295). I have come to believe that, because of autoethnography's subjective nature, it is well suited for exploring theoretical concepts that may be difficult to quantify. The aim of autoethnography is not, then, to quantify but to experience, elicit, and explain reflectively. Because of the reflective nature of autoethnography, I was able to tell my story and interpret it around the themes (especially the central theme, *roots*). The guiding question for this autoethnography was: how has the intersection of rurality, Whiteness, and poverty affected my attitudes, actions, and roles relative to music teaching and learning? I shared my experiences using techniques from memoir writing, around the themes *roots*, *church*, *music styles*, and *dominance of class*. Of particular prominence were my evolution into *homo educandus musicae* (rejecting popular musicing for school music) and my experience with dominance of class.

In his critique of schools as reifying scarcity, Illich (1971) states, "School serves as an effective creator and sustainer of social myth ... academic priests mediate between the faithful and the gods of privilege and power, a ritual of expiation which sacrifices its dropouts, branding them as scapegoats of underdevelopment" (44). As someone who survived the sacrificing ritual of education, supposedly succeeding in this ritual, I nonetheless find my success personally uprooting—and I have become one of Illich's *priests* sustaining the myth of music scarcity. However, to fight against the myth of music scarcity, I chose to arrange popular music for students (rather than reifying the universalizables—published music for concert band, orchestra, and choir). My yearning to become music educated often led to feelings of uprootedness: uprooted from my soil, from

meaningful musicing with friends, and from family and familiar places. Henri Nouwen might call my expectations and needs a tragedy: “The tragedy is that we are indeed caught in a web of false expectations and contrived needs” (Jonas 2009, 154). Simone Weil (1952) suggested one of these contrived needs is education. “He [sic] is severed from the universe surrounding him [sic]”; and because “the peasant ... dreams of having a schoolteacher son” (46), education (and music education specifically) is an uprooting industry fueled by yearnings in our social system.

Searching for Rerooting Praxis

As I reflect on my experiences with music education, I challenged myself to imagine a music education praxis that would be rooting, or at least not unnecessarily uprooting. This is challenging because music educators must first realize their own uprootedness: “Whoever is uprooted himself [sic] uproots others” (Weil 1952, 48). In my search, I came across the Foxfire teaching practices, which were honed in rural Georgia (Wigginton 1972). Developing since the 1960s, these practices include beginning with learner choice, teacher facilitation, active learning, peer teaching and group work, an audience beyond the teacher, creativity, reflection, and, most notably to me, “connections between the classroom work, the surrounding communities, and the world beyond” (Starnes and Carone 2002, iv). These practices seem to lead to the type of curriculum Elliott and Silverman (2015) describe as “dynamic multicultural (intercultural) curriculum” in which the music teacher works “in the context of familiar and unfamiliar music cultures” (449). Many of my own music education experiences seemed to focus on the *unfamiliar* but not on the *familiar*.

The Foxfire practices were developed when Wigginton (1972) decided to have students create a magazine based on the folk knowledge in their community. He sent students home to find content for the magazine:

So they went home and talked—really talked—to their own relatives, some of them for the first time. From these conversations came superstitions, old home remedies, weather signs, a story about a hog hunt, a taped interview with the retired sheriff about the time the local bank was robbed—and directions for planting by the signs. (11)

The goal of these teaching practices is to benefit the students and the community—through “the collection of artifacts, tapes, and photographs” (13)—and can

help guide students to realize the cultural richness they have in their own places of living. However, the magazine provided a unique application of approaches that might be used in different classes, in different places, differently. The 1980s saw teachers “stress the importance of the process that had given rise to [the magazine]” (Starnes and Carone 2002, 5). In this way, Foxfire provides an approach for teaching students, and not just a model to have other schools publish their own magazines. Foxfire is “more than a magazine” (4).

The Foxfire practices can help teachers “create learner-centered, community-focused learning environments” (Starnes and Carone 2002, 3), and also provide a unique approach to cultivating agency: “it is run by high school students—students are going on to college knowing they can be forces for constructive change; knowing that they can *act* responsibly and effectively rather than always being *acted upon*” (Wigginton 1972, 12; emphasis in original). This dual-focus of community valuing and student agency provides interesting opportunities for music teachers. A musicing education modeled on Foxfire might emphasize “the obvious importance of teachers knowing the ecological, social, and economic context of the place in which they live and teach” (Freire 1998, 121–2). I could imagine a musicing education where teachers send students to their homes to audio or video record the songs the elders in their community sing. Students would then compile them into a songbook, which they would perform and publish.

What type of music educators, then, would we in teacher education need to cultivate? Do our rural, rooted communities benefit from well-intending young music teachers bringing the gospel of Grainger or Holst, and define their work as good intentioned personal sacrifice? I would challenge these music educators by echoing Illich’s (1968) challenge,¹⁵ exclaiming *to hell with good intentions*:

It is incredibly unfair for you to impose yourselves on a village where you are so linguistically deaf and dumb that you don’t even understand what you are doing, or what people think of you. And it is profoundly damaging to yourselves when you define something that you want to do as “good,” a “sacrifice” and “help.” (5)

Newly minted music teachers need to stop going into rural neighborhoods with “good” music (which the rural students are too backward or uneducated to appreciate) helping rural people “develop” (2). Rather, music educators should

enter communities in humility as guests, and respect these communities' ways of living and of musicing.

As Bates (2014) suggested, "it is neither optimal nor necessary for children to live as 'exiles' from comfortable and original musical cultures; a primary goal can and should be to allow students to deepen understandings and skills in familiar musics" (321). This would require music teachers to begin "by acknowledging that children come to class with knowledge from the outside world and, as such, that their knowledge needs to be honored and valued" (Abrahams 2007, 229). Musicing, then, would be understood as an activity through which students are able to act (with or without being music educated), and their local places as valuable resources for school music and not places to be left behind in the search for better, more cultured musics kept behind the walls of other, distant places such as schools and universities.

About the Author

Daniel J. Shevock is a music lecturer at Penn State Altoona. He taught in public schools for twelve years, in Pennsylvania and Maryland. His experience as an urban music teacher awakened a concern for issues of creativity and social justice. Dan musics on the vibraphone and drums, and is an ardent reader. His scholarly interests include music improvising, history, and social philosophy—especially critical pedagogy and deep ecology. Dan has degrees from Clarion University of Pennsylvania (B.S.Ed.), Towson University (M.S.), and the Pennsylvania State University (Ph.D.).

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Notes

¹ In this paper, Ivan Illich’s conception of *homo educandus* is employed. *Homo educandus* is also used in Kantian theory, where “enlightenment is the age of *homo educandus*, the age in which freedom is the necessary destination of freedom” (Jesus 2006, 124) and is linked to development. The current paper does not explore the possible links between Illich and Kant’s use of *homo educandus*. However, it seems likely Illich would link *homo educandus* to “enlightenment” and “development,” which would be coded negatively.

² For an excellent example of an autoethnography dealing with race that utilizes no reference list, see Karen V. Lee’s 2008 “White Whispers.”

³ (Action Ideal III, retrieved from <http://www.maydaygroup.org/about-us/action-for-change-in-music-education/>; emphasis added).

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⁴ With ACT's unique (to the music education field) dedication to theory, these autoethnographies have placed emphasis on theory: Bates (2011) on class and rural theories; Lamb (2014) drawing on feminist (and interestingly, ecofeminist) theory; and Shevock (2015a) on Freirean theory. Following this tradition, the current autoethnography uses Illichan theory.

⁵ Here, I borrow the concept "collective autoethnography" from nursing research (Kidd and Finlayson 2010). In their collective autoethnography they tell the stories of nurses who have experienced mental illness. They suggest this method helps to discuss "the emotion and mess which is excluded from more traditional research methodologies" (30). Also, my choice of the term "collective autoethnography" was to echo Bates (2015) discussion of "individual and collective professional identities" (6). As two music teachers who grew up in different rural areas, we collectively analyzed what was shared (collective) as rural despite the differences of place.

⁶ For an extensive analysis of my conception of *environment*, or the term I prefer "ecology" (*environment* implies a division between person and other-environment that *ecology* does not seem to), see *The Possibility of Eco-literate Music Pedagogy* (Shevock 2015b).

⁷ French philosopher Simone Weil (1952) used *uprootedness* as her central concept in *The Need for Roots*. She wrote, "A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future. This participation is a natural one, in the sense that it is automatically brought about by place, conditions of birth, profession and social surroundings. Every human being needs to have multiple roots. It is necessary for him [sic] to draw wellnigh the whole of his [sic] moral, intellectual and spiritual life by way of the environment of which he [sic] forms a natural part" (43). It is good to remember the concept *roots* is interconnected with the concepts community, history (and "future"), place, and society.

⁸ These lyrics to Danny Boy are from my memory of how my grandfather sang it.

⁹ Illich and Verne (1981) described permanent education. "Permanent education absorbs the 40,000 intellectuals for whom no other job exists, and employs them as 'instructors', course designers, directors and inspectors of education." And this "ensures that they do not become a disconnected group ... by making them into a profession" (9) and "recruits them into the process of renewing the work force" (10). I have become a cog in this industrial machine, renewing the music education workforce.

¹⁰ I do not mean to suggest that Henri Nouwen represents a dominant theological or spiritual position in the Catholic Church, though it does seem his brand of Catholic scholarship (which was influential to me) may be more in line with the teachings of the current Pope Francis. For example, one can compare Nouwen's call for envisioning nature in a way beyond ownership, "When we relate to nature primarily as a property to be used, it becomes opaque—an opaqueness that in our society manifests itself as pollution" (Jonas 2009, 18), with Pope Francis's (2015) *Laudato Si'*, "Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach: it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth*" (35, emphasis in original).

¹¹ A pseudonym

¹² For an analysis of how these values connect to rurality, see Bates's (2011) *rural ideals*, especially around his discussion of country music, the "hierarchy of musical engagements" (109), and sustainability.

¹³ African Americans and Latin Americans predominantly vacationed in Wildwood, while White vacationers seemed to have preferred North Wildwood. Since I have gone to Wildwood nearly every year since 1997, I have seen this change, first with more White Quebecois, and since more White Anglophone vacationers.

¹⁴ Roberts (2000), extending Freirean concepts with post-modern theories, defines conscientization as "the development of deeper (self-conscious) understanding of the ways in which we are *not* merely isolated, self-constituting individuals" (151). Because of the theory of multiple-subjectivities, a person might be critically conscious about class but naïve in the spheres of race or gender.

¹⁵ Illich's argument was, then, an argument against the "damage" American volunteers do in Mexico. That damage can be described as an essentially uprooting venture through education (a.k.a. development).