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Imagining Change via Sociological Thinking

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Abstract

This review focuses on Part 1 of the new *Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education*, titled "Post-structuralism, Globalization, Internationalization, and Post-colonialism." Framed by Hildegard Froehlich's (2006) call for music education scholarship to "prob[e] the nature of power relationships and the paradoxes that form them" (6), we discuss not only the contexts and arguments revealed by the authors in Part I, but also consider how "power relations" and "paradoxes" might get in the way of meeting social justice goals—for the chapters in this section of the Handbook and for other authors with similar interests. The review closes with reflective questions that guide readers to consider how to acknowledge and engage with the paradoxes in their everyday work.

Keywords

Sociology of Music Education, sociological thinking, paradoxes, music education handbook, review article

> *Awareness of those paradoxes in our lives may help us to avoid inertia, at least some of the time . . . Probing the nature of power relationships and the paradoxes that form them should be considered a necessary and requisite action for inducing any desired change. (Froehlich 2006, 6)*

Why begin a book review with a discussion of paradox? Because as we—Carol and Guillermo—read and discussed Part 1 of the new *Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education*, titled "Post-structuralism, Globalization, Internationalization, and Post-colonialism," the unacknowledged paradox of power relationships as related to action and change was one of the first things that came to mind.

We originally intended this essay as a dialogue. However, it unfolded more as a collegial conversation: the two of us capitalizing on our own experiences acting as counterparts to the authors whose chapters make up the opening section of the Handbook. Thus, our review is as much reflective as analytical. Our purpose is to discuss not only the contexts and arguments revealed by the authors, but also to consider how "power relations" and "paradoxes" might get in the way of meeting the social justice goals of the book—a tension faced by all authors with similar interests. With these questions in mind, we begin our review.

This ten-chapter section is the first of three; it is preceded by a Foreword authored by Lucy Green and followed respectively by a 12-chapter section titled "Capital, Class, Status, and Social Reproduction," and a 14-chapter section, "Crossing Borders—Problematising Assumptions." Informa (n.d.) advertises the Routledge Handbooks series as educational resources that bring "together the world's leading scholars to provide a cutting-edge overview of classic and current research … while at the same time providing an authoritative guide to theory and method, the key sub-disciplines, and the primary debates of today" (para. 1). While the overview provided in this section has more to do with current than classic research, and addresses theory more often than method, the international span of the authors' perspectives is an enormous contribution to the literature, demonstrating (as the editors note in the book's introduction) "the fact that sociology is powerful to think with" (Wright, Johansen, Kanellopoulos, and Schmidt 2021, 1). The ten chapters in the opening section provide a breadth of sociological interpretations, frequently of state- or government-sponsored music education efforts or projects from Australia, Brazil, Indigenous Canada, Chile, Hong Kong, Israel, Germany, Grenada, and Turkey. Perspectives range from macro (addressing society on a large scale) to

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micro (focusing on the smallest elements of society), to meso (sometimes called "interactionist"), which navigates between the first two (Sztompka 2012, 3).

The section opens with Juliet Hess's (2021) challenging chapter, "Music Education and the Colonial Project." Hess's sociological lens aims at macro considerations of music education (primarily Western-based), providing background on the colonialist history of school music education. Hess seeks to illustrate in this chapter that "theory facilitates an understanding of the way that colonialism operates both in society and in music education, while the pedagogical comprises action—interventions that music educators can make that unsettle the ongoing colonial project" (23–24). Her practical lens challenges individual music educators, offering a framework by which music practitioners at any level can "address the coloniality of music education" (31). We admire the conviction and level of detail in this, the most practical and practice-oriented chapter in the section. Hess's reflective questions are thought-provoking and demonstrate the sorts of challenges we have come to expect from this author. However, we find it a bit paradoxical that the author was not given space in the body of the chapter for further discussion of pedagogical action; that is, specific practical (classroom) examples on how music educators could enact the anti-colonial music education she proposes. Is anti-colonialism an all-or-nothing proposition, or is it possible to make incremental steps toward anti-colonialism? How might the anti- (working against) become pro- (working toward)? Brief citations from previous work (i.e., Hess 2015 and Hess 2019)—even if not specifically sociological—would have helped readers "see the musickers."

While Hess's chapter is aimed at practice, Kertz-Welzel's (2021) chapter, "Sociological Perspectives on Internationalisation and Music Education," intends to "develo[p] a vision of a culturally sensitive internationalisation of music education (Kertz-Welzel 2018)" (40) by challenging the ways scholars think and talk about what we (all) expect from the international music education community. After pointing out some of the ambiguities in the concept and potential practices of internationalisation, Kertz-Welzel advocates for both unity and diversity, emphasizing the need to move beyond Western hegemonies such as language and editorial conventions. The section describing "sociological dimensions which unite music educators worldwide" (44) may be helpful to music scholars seeking to apply sociological thinking to issues of internationalism. However, as Kertz-Welzel notes, "internationalisation is certainly not easily accomplished, because it concerns the

very nature of universities," which will have to "change their mission or goals and … become more culturally sensitive in research and the delivery of knowledge" (42). Such is similarly true for music education, whether at university or other levels of learning. And it is particularly true for publications such as this Handbook, intended for an audience whose discourse tends to exhibit the hegemonic language and editorial conventions Kertz-Welzel challenges. We wish the reflective questions at the end of the chapter had gone beyond their current assumptions of the "global music education community" to consider ways this community could begin to exhibit the ideals presented in the chapter. What current and past actions model the unity and diversity Kertz-Welzel suggests? How might the international music education community envision future actions, including publications, that support these goals? Such is crucial for building the community Kertz-Welzel envisions.

With Ti-wei Chen's (2021) chapter, "Challenges of the Post-Colonisation Process in Hong Kong Schools," the Handbook moves from the philosophical to the empirical mode of inquiry. Using a macro lens, Chen shares the results of research that explores teacher and student perceptions of tensions in Hong Kong music education. Since the 1997 reunification of Hong Kong with mainland China, Hong Kong music educators have been compelled to teach patriotic music in Putonghua, the language of mainland China. Their students don't mind the language—the popular music they like is in Putonghua—but they object to the nationalistic political purposes of the patriotic music, particularly the blatantly militant Chinese national anthem. The author frames this situation as paradoxical, using Law's (1997a, 1997b) concepts of *decolonisation*, *neocolonisation*, and *recolonisation*, which may still be unfamiliar to many music education scholars. Although she does not state it outright, Chen is asking readers to ponder the role of colonialism in the complex politics of Hong Kong. Do mainland China's demands demonstrate decolonization, moving away from British influence to return the people of Hong Kong to their Chinese roots? Or do those demands reflect neo-colonization, in which another foreign power continues to manipulate the transfer of power? Are the Chinese actions an act of re-colonization, in which colonial power was simply transformed from one political structure to another? And, by extension, where else might music educators encounter this paradoxical cycle?

Sagiv and Nativ's (2021) chapter, "Habitual Play," is the first chapter in this section with a micro-focus. Using Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*, these authors "ex-

amine the practices of classical music instruction pedagogy in the work of conservatory music teachers in Israel" (67). Their work unveils the fine details of habitus as applied to the world of classical music instruction for children, in which teachers who were "educated to embody the *habitus* they seek to pass on to their students … operate as cultural agents, passing distinctive practices, dispositions, and worldviews that place classical music as an elite and even sanctified realm" (68, emphasis original).

In their introduction, Sagiv and Nativ place their chapter amongst the "larger wave of critical studies" of classical traditions and Western pedagogy and claim to "make a thorough reference to the hegemonic power structure between Western cultural capital and high social status" (68). But they use Bourdieu's ideas as descriptive rather than traditionally "critical" and challenge the idea that "the cultural inscription of traditional high cultural capital" is "a hegemonic force" (77). Without mentioning the premise of a "dual pedagogy" brought forth by Sagiv and Hall (2015), which adds Shusterman's ideas about bodily agency to Bourdieu's concept of habitus, the authors' assertion might be seen as paradoxical, as Bourdieu conceived of *habitus* as a tool for critiquing, rather than affirming, the privileges embedded in elite artistic culture. Further, given the placement of this chapter in a section with "post-colonialism" in its title, one might expect more than a passing reference to "the colonial/post-colonial question that might arise from" (68) considerations of European classical music in Israel.

Prest and Goble's (2021) chapter, "Toward a Sociology of Music Education Informed by Indigenous Perspectives," is destined to become a classic in our field. The authors begin by explaining the foci of cultural sociologists, and then introduce readers to several interpretations of sociological concepts from the (Canadian) Indigenous perspective. Based on findings from their extensive partnerships with Indigenous First Nations people in British Columbia, they reveal "terminological distinctions" (83) between Western interpretations and those of First Nations scholars relative to concepts such as society, relationship, reciprocity, identity, and agency. Implications for music education practice include acknowledging, in the words of one research participant, that "in Indigenous culture, it's not music making. It's a way of passing on culture from generation to generation…. It's a part of who we are; it's not something that's separate" (91). The ethical awareness with which these authors share their work is a model for the field, one that we expect to find in a handbook for researchers. Their argument that they and others "who do

this work must do so informed by the cultural lenses/meaning of those who have created the music" in order to "avoid miscommunication between non-Indigenous researchers and Indigenous research participants who are steeped in their culture(s)" (81) is reflected by the examples they provide in the chapter. Prest and Goble commit to "reflect and highlight Indigenous sociological conceptions of musical and pedagogical practices that (they) have encountered in (their) research" that have not been considered in the field of music education (81). If there is a paradox to acknowledge here, it is that this may be the only chapter in this section that brings in the perspective and voice of the other.

Parkinson and Gardner's (2021) chapter, "Nation, Memory, and Music Education in the Republic of Turkey," uses a macro-level lens to examine changes in state-sanctioned music education since the outset of the Turkish Republic. The historical summary at the outset of the chapter provides a thought-provoking analysis of how the arts can be used to pursue political goals. The authors first explain the strong influence of Turkish sociologist Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924) on music education at the outset of the Turkish republic, a vision that "was rolled out across society through a synchronized combination of state coercion on one hand, and civil society reforms designed to garner consent from the populace on the other" (97). As the chapter proceeds, the authors "examine Gökalp's notion of Turkishness" to understand similar influences during the Kamal regime. Next, they "offer a Gramscian analysis of music education reforms implemented during the first three decades of the Republic" and then "consider the pedagogic legacy of these reforms." Lastly, they offer a "discourse analysis of reports and speeches from the Third National Culture Summit" in 2017 (98). While the chapter provides a good model for other researchers with similar interests, it is disappointing that the authors do not provide more detail about either their rationale or the methods of their Gramscian analysis. Since readers approach handbooks like this one seeking exactly that kind of information, such would have strengthened the chapter's usefulness.

Narita and Feichas' (2021) chapter, "In Search of a Potentially Humanising Music Education," provides a meso-level examination of pedagogical practices at two Brazilian universities. Their point of departure seems to be that music education is inherently humanizing, and they combine the ideas of Freire and Green to support their assumption. Given that one of us writes from the Latin American perspective, we see the juxtaposition of Paulo Freire's ideas with those of Lucy

Green to be problematic. Freire was writing to empower illiterate, impoverished citizens of Brazil. Green's work has to do with understanding the informal music learning of youth and young adults in Britain. We therefore suggest caution when uncritically applying theories and concepts produced in industrialized countries (even when well-intended) to contexts whose structural inequalities differ greatly from the former. For instance, the authors conclude that "[s]ociology of music education, especially issues of power relations in knowledge construction, has been contributing to raise our awareness of the need to develop critical thinking to enable citizens to make a difference in the world we live in," and that music "is a powerful way to touch people" on themes like: "humane values of respect, humbleness, tolerance, and above all, love" (118). Might it be paradoxical to assume this foundational narrative of the Western model of music education as truth in a region considered one of the most unequal in the world? How might authors realize the potential of Freire's praxis to challenge and reflect the inequality in Brazil and other similar geocultural contexts?

The chapter by Hall, Crawford, and Jenkins (2021), "Questioning Convergences Between Neoliberal Policies, Politics, and Informal Music Pedagogy in Australia," also is a model for the field. A macro-level policy analysis of Musical Futures Australia [MFA], the chapter focuses on corporate rather than governmental actions. The authors argue that the "underlying discourses [of MFA] concerning student autonomy (learning) and curriculum relevancy (teaching) are based in neoliberal rationalities and are in tension with social justice imperatives" (121). After leading readers through the background of MFA, how the organization migrated to Australia, and how it has become integrated within government-sanctioned school music, the authors suggest three persistent problem areas:

- "A need for music education to play a role in decolonisation, in both material and metaphorical terms" (130).
- Gender inequalities and their interactions with the conflation of popular music with informal music learning.
- "Creating culturally responsive spaces where students feel safe to express nonconformist musical tastes and identities" (131).

The authors conclude that "in Australia, Musical Futures has responded to neoliberal imperatives by aligning their version of informal learning and non-formal teaching with the knowledge economy" (131). However, we must point out that

Western music and music education have been aligned with the (capitalist) knowledge economy since its inception (Attali 1977). Although the chapter is excellent and achieves its stated purpose, we perceive as paradoxical the underlying intention of advocacy based on an assumption of the "good" in music. We therefore caution that there are structures of exclusion in all of music.

The chapter by Carlos Poblete Lagos (2021), "Socio-cultural Background and Teacher Education in Chile," another meso-level study, provides a model for studying multi-layered musical acculturation among a clearly defined group of music educators over a specific period of time. The author reviews and acknowledges a wide variety of authors and perspectives related to ways of considering musical repertoires and is clear about the basis of terminology used in the chapter (i.e., Basil Bernstein's definition of repertoire and reservoir, 138); he brings together understandings of "the acquisition of musical repertoires" from sociological (i.e., Campbell 2010 and Green 2008) as well as social-psychological perspectives (i.e., O'Neill 2010, 2014). Borrowing from Bourdieu's concept of habitus the idea that there are "structures that organize the core of the experience" (138), the chapter culminates in the author's "Taxonomy of classification of musical genres" (141). Like Parkinson and Gardner and Chen, Poblete pays attention to the political nature of government-sponsored music education within the larger context of state-sponsored education.

Danielle Sirek's (2021) chapter, "Jump Up, Wine, and Wave," closes the section. Here, based on fieldwork undertaken while living in Grenada, the author explores "relationships between music education, social group identity, and symbolic boundaries (Lamont 1992)" by way of the Grenadian musical tradition known as soca. (Sirek explains that although soca originated in Trinidad and Tobago, it has become "the most popular musical style in Grenada," 154). Defined by Lamont and Molnar (2002) as "conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space" (168 in Sirek, 153) symbolic boundaries may be understood as "the lines that divide in-group/out-group differentiations" (153) at the inter-subjective level, while social boundaries are more objectified and related to tangible resources (164).

Borrowing from Lucy Green (2008), Sirek analyzes how the inter-sonic/inherent and delineated meanings that Grenadians give to soca music (i.e., affirmation/celebration of that music or aggravation with/alienation from that music) suggest symbolic boundaries. Younger Grenadians tended to respond with celebration,

while many older citizens, as well as those from the more conservative Adventist culture, found the music aggravating. She notes how these boundaries were disrupted by a UNESCO-backed Carnival Arts Program, later taken over by the Grenadian government, that provided significant funding for schools who participated in a soca competition. Ultimately, this initiative, by breaking down "moral and cultural symbolic boundaries … between soca lovers and those who dislike soca" gave soca lovers more opportunities to "control assets and dominate cultural resources" (161). We agree with Sirek that it is necessary to bring globalization into the discussion. Also noted by Hall, Crawford, and Jenkins (as described above), whether sponsored by government or industry, neoliberal music education initiatives acting in the name of progress can shift and dismantle symbolic boundaries and provide status and access to those who follow its demands. Thus, her conclusion, "to further understand the ways in which music education contributes to social groups distinguishing themselves, acquiring status and dominating resources" (162), could be strengthened by broadening the context beyond Grenada to a global one. Many scholars wrestle with similar issues. How might scholars use abstract concepts like symbolic boundaries to reveal information about local contexts beyond the affirmation of the concepts?

As we acknowledged at the start of our review, the international nature of the chapters in this section set the stage for this to be a landmark handbook in our field. However, a few omissions have the potential to weaken its impact. The section title, "Post-structuralism, Globalization, Internationalization, and Post-colonialism," is a bit misleading. Other than Bourdieu, who is not typically considered "poststructuralist" (although his ideas are historically "post-structural"; see, for instance, Harcourt 2007), neither the term itself nor the theorists most associated with the term appear in the section or in the Table of Contents. The section introduction suggests that the chapters follow "two critical traditions": those aligned with neo-Marxian thinking and that of Bourdieu, yet only Sirek's chapter mentions Marx, and only in passing. Handbooks, by their nature, are "go-to" sources for scholars—particularly novice scholars—seeking historical, theoretical, and methodological information about a topic. It may frustrate readers if they do not find precision in the foundational information they seek.

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Conclusion

As we conclude this review, we find resonance between the editors' optimistic hope that the sociology of music education may "enabl[e] us to imagine and strategize for change" (1) and Froehlich's words, cited in the incipit with which we began this review. Froehlich suggests that four paradoxes should be probed as "a necessary and requisite action for inducing any desired change" (6). First, it is "easier to call for change in others than in oneself as it is usually much easier to say than to do" (6). We applaud contributors Hess, Kertz-Welzel, and Prest and Goble, whose chapters offered varied examples of looking within ourselves—challenging our worldviews and positionalities—as the start of making change. Second, we need to "acknowledge our contradictions" (7), appreciating that jumping "over [our] own shadows" is impossible not only for our students, but for all of us (7). We tend to take for granted the idea that music education is good by nature. We applaud, for instance, that the chapters by Crawford and Jenkins and Narita and Feichas explain very clearly the dynamics of neoliberalism and seek to establish connections between neoliberal policies and processes, and at the same time, we point out that the historical origins of neoliberalism, like capitalism, are rooted in earlier colonial processes. As Hess notes in the opening chapter, we cannot claim to seek change in our field without acknowledging that institutionalized music education historically has operated within the rationale and goals of capitalism.

Third, Froehlich suggests that we should recognize "instances in higher education where the topic of 'exclusion' results in paradoxes in the practices of the academy" (7). While Froehlich is describing exclusionary processes in higher music education, especially in North America, we suggest an additional interpretation. In her book, *Decolonizing Educational Research,* Leigh Patel (2016) suggests there is an underlying hegemonic logic in Western scholarship that seeks to "locate the factor affecting the population, and then home in on a single intervention" (22). Rosabal-Coto (2019) notes that in music education, such interventions are often based on a failure to interrogate the material conditions of the musickers and assume that music learning and socialization are universally good. Many chapters in this section, like much of the academic writing in our field, fail to interrogate the geocultural, peripheral contexts embedded in the situations they describe, ultimately taking those conditions, and the musickers who inhabit them, for granted

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(Patel 2016, 23; Gaztambide-Fernandez 2011). Froehlich's fourth and final paradox suggests that we must admit to our "fundamental differences in viewpoint on what music education should be about" (8), which is vitally important in an international collection such as this one. As we have pointed out throughout this review, the underlying conviction that music education is inherently good, or that it is believed to be the same for all people in all places and situations, is insufficient if our goal is the enactment of change.

Froehlich's point, and ours, is that it is necessary to engage with paradoxes, not be paralyzed by them. Acknowledging our paradoxes lets us move beyond easy-made solutions and recipes. For our words to lead to envisioning and enacting change, music education scholars must appreciate and aim to represent all the complexity of the contexts and people we claim to represent, whether it is familiar or uncomfortable to us or not.

Perhaps the greatest paradox illustrated in the first section of this volume is that it is difficult to tease out exactly what our differences are when the contexts are international in scope. It seems we all take our own perspectives—even that which we consider to be "critical"—for granted. Thus, we wonder if the field of interest that has become music education sociology (and perhaps music education itself) is willing/ready to overcome inertia and acknowledge its own shadows in what Wright (2014) has called its ongoing fourth wave. We might need to let go of many personal and professional assumptions altogether—first and foremost, the "good" in music—if we intend to make a groundbreaking leap into a whole new wave of music education sociology that acknowledges, imagines, and strategizes change in our research and practice.

Following the chapter format in the Handbook, we propose the following reflective questions to the readers:

1. How could you use sociological thinking to acknowledge, imagine, and strategize for change in the music education practices you encounter on a regular basis? How could the global community of music educators come together to do the same?
2. How would you apply the thinking from one or more of the chapters in this section to your own professional context? What actions, as opposed to abstraction or speculation or easy solutions/recipes, could you imagine? How could you remain aware of the specific contexts—people, places, and material realities—that you claim to study or represent?

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3. What paradoxes do you note in your everyday work in music education? How can you acknowledge and keep those in view in your quests for change? How might your efforts be expanded to address local and global practice and research?
4. If this volume represents the fourth wave of (music education) sociology, what kind of theoretical or practical issues and approaches do you imagine for the fifth?

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