

Activist Music Teaching: A Way Forward or a New Autocracy?

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Abstract

The push toward socially just music education begs the question of whether activist music teaching may foster a new autocracy. In this paper, I consider how Deleuzian lines of flight and the related concepts of nomadism, territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization trouble or extend activist music education. I further explore the question of how students might dissent and draw a “line of flight” from the activist authority of the teacher. I draw on Deleuze and Guattari’s (2005/1987) nomadism and “lines of flight” to consider the limits placed on the lines of flight drawn by students when a leftist ideology operates in the classroom.

Keywords

Activist music education, autocracy, Deleuze and Guattari, lines of flight, hegemonic

Introduction

Pete Shungu: Even teachers who are really progressive or really left-leaning can unintentionally not give students much freedom, 'cause they want students to believe exactly the same thing that they do. Regardless of the political leanings of the teacher, it's important for them to teach students not to just trust someone because they're a teacher—not to just trust someone because they're older than them. That it's important to be able to question. (Hess 2019b, 109)

Pete Shungu, a 33-year-old hip-hop/soul/jazz/funk musician, who emceed and played trumpet in the Afro D All Starz, participated in a recent research study on music education and activism (Hess 2019b). He was from New Jersey, and he identified as multiracial and Black. He studied international relations and education and taught in classroom settings. At the time of the research, he worked with youth through an organization called uAspire.¹ In the study, I sought to construct an activist music education pedagogy for PK–12 schooling and ultimately recognized that while activism likely cannot be enacted in school in the form it takes in the streets, music education in schools can indeed set the conditions for activism (Hess 2019a). Pete outlined his observations of teachers on the far left, who tend to want students to capitulate to the teacher's views in the classroom. The activist-musicians who participated in the study articulated a vision of music education in which youth could question authority and challenge their education. This article, however, examines what it might mean to truly dissent from the views presented within in the context of the school classroom. The call for papers for MDG 32 asks scholars to consider whether the push toward activist music education presents the potential for what I call a new autocracy.² In this paper, I take up this question. How might music educators avoid imposing their views while striving to be socially aware and teach for social justice through music?" Indeed, the push toward socially just music education (Benedict et al. 2015, Gould et al. 2009) begs the question of whether activist music teaching may ultimately foster a new autocracy. While activism can occur on either side of the political spectrum, I focus my critique in this article on left-leaning activism. In doing so, I aim to hold the left accountable for enacting the anti-oppression it purports to be about.

In this exploration, I consider how Deleuzian lines of flight and the related concepts of nomadism, territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization trouble or extend activist music education. I am particularly interested in how a student might dissent and draw a line of flight from the activist authority of the teacher. I explore the tri-faceted pedagogy that I put forward previously to

construct an activist music education (Hess 2019b) to examine how lines of flight might be mobilized in such contexts. I thus consider the limits to autonomy imposed by activist music teaching and further challenge how a student might disinvest from authority (Schmidt 2016) in these instances. I further consider what it might mean if the dissent ultimately encouraged through an activist approach to music education aligns with white supremacist, ableist, capitalist, heteropatriarchy, and otherwise oppressive ideologies.³

Ideally, activist music education is connective, expressive, and political (Hess 2019b). Its connectedness fosters community, and its expressivity encourages storytelling. Explicitly political, activist music education nurtures a “culture of questioning” (Giroux and Giroux 2004). I draw on nomadism from Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) to consider what they describe as “lines of flight”—creative lines that reveal open spaces. Elsewhere, I have explored the limits of enacting activist music education within the institution of school (Hess 2018), concluding that activism likely occurs in schools only when interests converge (Bell 1995) between activists and schools. In this article, I address the question of the limits placed on the lines of flight drawn by the students when a leftist ideology operates in the classroom. Ultimately, I consider the limits enforced by leftist ideology in the context of the global operation of the “alt-right” white supremacist ideologies (see Giroux 2017 for a discussion of the U.S. context). As scholars continue to critique those on the far left who aim toward anti-oppression, I argue that the strength of oppressive discourse of the alt-right may present a more significant problem than challenging elements of oppression within largely anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Activist Music Education: Conceptualizing Dissent

I employ an orienting question for this article to consider the ways that students may draw lines of flight within the context of an activist music education, with a particular focus on lines of flight that diverge from the direction taken by the teacher. In this way, I explore how Deleuzian lines of flight (and related concepts) trouble or extend activist music education. First, therefore, I must offer a discussion of what I mean by an activist music education. As noted previously, elsewhere (Hess 2019b) I have explored what an activist music education could mean for PK-12 education. I ultimately put forward a tri-faceted pedagogy for activist music education that combines what I called a *pedagogy of community*, a *pedagogy of expression*, and a *pedagogy of noticing*. Each of these interconnected pedagogies are comprised of additional tenets.

I rooted a *pedagogy of community* in ideas of connection. This pedagogy first focuses on building community locally—encouraging youth to connect to their peers and teachers to foster a positive environment in their classrooms. Building community also involves teaching ensemble as togetherness, creating mutually supportive spaces, and giving youth significant responsibilities in music class. The second component requires deep contextualization work—connecting musics to their histories. This work involves understanding music as a human practice and looking for the humanity behind all musics studied. The final facet of a pedagogy of community comprises connecting to what I called *unfamiliar Others*—individuals or groups unknown or unfamiliar to the students but connected to a music with which the students engage in the classroom. This pedagogy of community encompasses an important first facet of activist music education as I conceptualize it.

The second facet of activist music education is a *pedagogy of expression*. The foundation of such a pedagogy centers music as a means for sharing lived experiences. The activist-musicians who participated in the study that formulated this activist music education argued that songwriting should constitute an essential part of any music education curriculum. Many of the activist-musicians themselves centered their own experiences and identities in their music and thus saw the value in doing so. Before encouraging youth to share their experiences, however, it is important to honor their experiences. Thus, the first component of a pedagogy of expression involves practicing culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2018, McKoy and Lind 2023)—ensuring that youth feel that their lives and experiences are validated by their teachers, their peers, and their school curricula. Once youth feel firmly grounded in their respective experiences, educators may invite them to share their experiences through music. This sharing is rooted in the Freirian idea of “naming the world” (Freire 2000/1970). The ensuing pedagogy of expression constitutes the second main tenet of activist music education.

Finally, a *pedagogy of noticing* encourages youth to notice the conditions that shape their lives. This pedagogy is rooted in what Giroux and Giroux (2004) call a “culture of questioning” (123) and challenges youth to question what they encounter. A pedagogy of noticing first involves helping youth to notice and identify the ideologies that operate both inside and outside of the classroom. From there, teachers can encourage youth to recognize the conditions that shape their lives and the lives of others. Music can aid with this work. DJ Phatrick, a 32-year-old prominent hip-hop deejay and a second generation Chinese American, suggested that teachers can purposefully select music that reflects the lives of students to help the

class make connections. Recognizing ideologies and conditions that shape youth's lives requires practice. Developing a habit of noticing and questioning takes time. Once this practice is firmly in place, teachers can encourage youth to move to action, the vital third component of a pedagogy of noticing.

These three interlocking pedagogies comprise the tri-faceted pedagogy for activist music education as I have imagined it based on the insights of these activist-musicians. While the pedagogies are interconnected, taken separately, each pedagogy contributes to activist music education. A pedagogy of community by itself facilitates students being in community, respecting each other's humanity, and understanding music as a human practice. A pedagogy of expression facilitates both the honoring and sharing of lived experiences, teaching children and youth to value their own voices. A pedagogy of noticing facilitates noticing ideologies and the lived conditions that shape one's experience and subsequent moving to action. While they refract in different ways, each of these three pedagogies sets the conditions for future activism, and in doing so, stands on its own. When these pedagogies become interwoven, their foci combine for a more robust activist potential.

The pedagogy of noticing emphasizes a culture of questioning (Giroux and Giroux 2004, 123), so the underlying question for this article challenges how far a student may be able to take questioning in the classroom. When the agenda is activism, as put forward here, how might students draw creative lines of flight? How do the lines of flight drawn trouble or extend the potential for activist music education? How might students challenge the pedagogy or assertions made in the classroom? In what ways do teachers, pedagogy, and curricula limit what becomes possible in the classroom space? The ways that students can genuinely enact dissent in this context frames the subsequent discussion.

Deleuze and Guattari: Drawing Lines of Flight

Conceptually, in this paper, I consider Deleuze and Guattari's *line of flight* to interrogate how students drawing Deleuzian lines of flight troubles or extends activist music education. I further explore how, in the context of an activist music education, students might draw their own lines of flight. To examine this concept, I first consider nomadology (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987), and subsequently explore what Deleuze and Guattari articulate as a line of flight. I then examine how they take up what they call territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization to consider how these dynamics might operate in this context. I draw on literature across a wide range of disciplines to examine the line of flight. This

breadth demonstrates the use of Deleuze and Guattari's work within different disciplines.

Nomadism

In *Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine*, Deleuze and Guattari explore nomadology. Elsewhere (Hess 2018), I have explored the war machine extensively and the related concepts of smooth and striated space. I return to this treatise to consider the nomad—a figure who refuses to be defined by set categories and definitions (Rayner 2013). Nomads are not bound by the State and its striated space. Nomads do not follow regimented or normative paths, but rather set out to explore and draw creative lines of flight (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987). Hilary Malatino (2014) asserts:

For Deleuze and Guattari, nomadism is a form of life that is shaped by continual embarkation on lines of flight—that is, modes of escape, moments of transformation, ways of becoming other-than-normative, and ways of acting in excess of, or insubordinately in relationship to, repressive forces. Lines of flight have the capacity to deterritorialize, to undo, to free up, to break out of a system or situation of control, fixity, or repression. (138)

When nomads pursue lines of flight, in other words, they may become able to respond to situations creatively without the influence of the State apparatus. In their treatise, Deleuze and Guattari position nomad science relative to royal science or State science. While nomad science may be appropriated by State science for its own purposes, at other times, nomad science may follow a creative line of flight and open up different possibilities (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987). “Nomadism,” Robin Usher (2010) argues, “is de-territorialization, the taking off on creative lines of flight that work outside the conceptual structures and rationalities of the established order” (72). Nomads enact lines of flight that allow them to escape set regimentations and rules and reside beyond the striated and segmented space of the State. While the State may try to restrict the nomad, the nomad may pursue lines of flight that lie beyond the dominion of the State. Importantly, nomadology was not intended as a concept or a theory, but rather, a practice.

Lines of Flight

In his notes on the translation of *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987), translator Brian Massumi notes that the words *flight* and *escape* both translate as *fuite* in French. *Fuite* has several

meanings. He writes, “*Fuite* covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance (the vanishing point in a painting is *a point de fuite*)” (xvi). Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) observe, “In a book, as in all things, there are lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification” (3). Lines of flight, in other words, stand in opposition to articulation, segmentation, strata, and territories.

A line of flight is an escape from regimentation, a drawing on creativity in a way that creates something new. “Lines of flight,” Tim Rayner (2013) writes, “are bolts of pent-up energy that break through the cracks in a system of control and shoot off on the diagonal. By the light of their passage, they reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists.” The normative does not restrict the line of flight. The line of flight evades control. In his commentary on gender, Matt Fournier (2014) remarks that lines of flight constitute the “elusive moment when change happens” (121). John Hughes (1997) observes a line of flight is “a movement which interrupts or suspends familiar, confining, formal possibilities and their prescribed organic and social requirements” (46). Peter Hallward (2006) explores the line of flight in relation to creating:

A “line of flight or deterritorialisation” is Deleuze and Guattari’s term for “an abstract line of creative or specific causality.” . . . Every creating, every virtual or “abstract” machine is oriented by such lines of flight, i.e. forms of flight that do not respond to some external threat, that are not forms of flight *from* something, so much as the vectors of a pure escape, a pure movement *out* of something. Flight is here solely a matter of *taking* flight. As creations, lines of flight are themselves primary and constituent, they are “not phenomena of resistance or counterattack in an assemblage, but cutting edges of creation and deterritorialisation.” (58, emphasis in original)

This harkens back to Massumi’s note about the translation of *fuite* as escape. Lines of flight are first and foremost creative, and they move beyond what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as striated space—space that I have noted elsewhere “regulates movement, restricting possible moves and directions” (Hess 2018, 26). The State and its institutions, including schools, control and striate space within their reach. Lines of flight refuse such striation and make bold moves “*out* of something” (Hallward 2006, 58) anchored in creativity.

Lines of flight may also assert resistance. In his discussion of contemporary education, Jason Wallin (2014) goes so far as to say that the line of flight

constitutes the greatest political challenge in so far as it might become capable of evading the image of an adapted and homogeneous people implicate to the

teleology of standardization, producing instead the conditions for a nomadic war-machine capable of fulminating a critique of the State from the position of an outside thought. (133)

To be able to critique the system from outside the system means that a person who follows a line of flight may well be able to imagine a future unconstrained by the current regime. In discourse on educational research, Robin Usher (2010) affirms, “Lines of flight . . . disarticulate relations between and among practices and effects, opening up contexts to their outsides and the possibilities therein. They break-down unity and coherence. They decenter centers, disrupting hierarchies and disarticulating strata” (71). They do indeed constitute a great political challenge to longstanding practices, restrictions, and regulations. In the context of narrative therapy, John Winslade (2009) observes:

Lines of flight are shifts in the trajectory of a narrative that escape a line of force or power. These diagrams of lines of power are also “places of mutation” (Deleuze, 1995, p. 85) where people bend the lines and seek out lines of flight to somewhere else. The action of bending a line of power is an act of resistance to the operation of power, but it differs from what Foucault (2000) called “muddled resistance” (p. 155). They are not just any act of resistance but particularly creative shifts that give rise to new possibilities for living. They are directions rather than destinations and they lead to the living of life on some different plane or in some different territory. (337–38)

The political challenge that lines of flight pose, then, does not necessarily directly challenge the State, but rather is simply not constrained by what the State imposes. Lines of flight have an inherent creativity and offer what Elizabeth Gould (2009) calls “creative responses to material problems” (132). Rather than work within a system, they offer a life beyond it. The State will continually try to appropriate these creative moves for its own purposes, and at times, will do so successfully (Hess 2018). At other times, however, lines of flight maintain their integrity and operate nomadically beyond the constraints of the State apparatus.

Territorialization, Deterritorialization, and Reterritorialization

Deleuze and Guattari’s (2005/1987) concepts of territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization also become relevant to this discussion as they create contexts for lines of flight. They write:

Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, with binary relations between the points and biunivocal relationships between the positions, the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature.

These lines, or lineaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions. Unlike the tree, the rhizome is not the object of reproduction: neither external reproduction as image-tree nor internal reproduction as tree-structure. (21)⁴

Territorialized space is striated. The State apparatus and its institutions order and control space using various forces. When someone draws a line of flight, that carries the potential to deterritorialize space—to open a space that is not subject to the rules and regulations of striated space. Such spaces, however, may be subject to reterritorialization if State forces become able to impose rules and regulations over the deterritorialization opened up by a line of flight. Maria Tamboukou (2010) observes:

Territorialisation and deterritorialisation both derive from the latin word *terra*, meaning earth. Both terms therefore relate to processes of grounding or uprooting. In this light, processes of *territorialisation* “define or sharpen the spatial boundaries of actual territories” (DeLanda 2006, 13), but they also work towards solidifying the often moving grounds of the assemblage thus “increasing its internal homogeneity” (2006, 13). Processes of *territorialisation* are therefore always antagonistically related to processes of deterritorialisation, which “destabilize spatial boundaries” (2006, 13) and once again create earthquakes in the grounds of the assemblage. (687, emphasis in original)

The metaphors of grounding or uprooting serve the discussion of spatialization thusly: While territorialization involves defined and clear boundaries, deterritorialization destabilizes any such boundaries. In this section, I first explore territorialization and subsequently turn to deterritorialization and reterritorialization, drawing on scholars across various disciplines.

While lines of flight act to deterritorialize space, what Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) call “molar lines” conversely “territorialize, organize and stratify, relaying dispersive flows of desire into administrable regimes and patterns” (Windsor 2015, 158). Not rhizomatic or nomadic in nature, molar lines are arborescent and follow clear trajectories that reproduce State tendencies. Molar lines territorialize space and aim to “define or sharpen the spatial boundaries” (DeLanda 2006, cited in Tamboukou 2010, 13). In territorialization, power apparatuses stabilize the forces at play and regiment them. These structures then regulate those who encounter them.

Deterritorialization conversely occurs when someone follows a line of flight that disrupts these spatial boundaries. As Jesse Rathgeber, Austin Showen, and Jon Stapleton (2017) note in the context of music education, territories

involve dynamic components, they are always in motion. This means that within any territory there exists potential for things to take flight and break out what Deleuze and Guattari call “deterritorialization.” Any given territory in this sense is always reworking itself, always with the potential to become something else. But things that take flight and break out in a deterritorialization can also connect up with each other in new ways they can “reterritorialize” and make something new. (13)

Paul Patton (2003) notes that “when the deterritorialized element is immediately subjected to forms of reterritorialization which enclose or obstruct its line of flight” (54) that the line of flight is negative. Lines of flight are positive when they are not subject to reterritorializations (54). A macro example of a reterritorialization may be the emergence of a new state after a revolution (Fournier 2014, 121), while a micro example may simply involve someone’s resistance becoming resubject to the regulations they tried to escape. Tamboukou (2010) observes that both territorialization and deterritorialization may operate simultaneously. While territorialization stabilizes “the identity of an assemblage by increasing its degree of internal homogeneity” (DeLanda 2006, 12, cited in Tamboukou 2010, 686), deterritorialization destabilizes the whole (Tamboukou 2010, 686).

Deterritorialization, Reterritorialization, Neoliberalism, and Late Capitalism

Although lines of flight offer potential for deterritorialization, these concepts might reinforce neoliberal ideologies of deregulation.⁵ Stuart Jeffries (2021) traces how Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts, among other postmodern theory, surprisingly coincide with neoliberal ideologies. He argues that “post-modernism originated under the star of neoliberalism” and suggests that postmodernism and neoliberalism are mutually constitutive. Using Deleuze and Guattari to problematize the State apparatus can be read as radical but can also be read within the context of neoliberal notions of deregulation. Postmodernism, then, can serve as a mechanism either to critique the status quo or to capitulate to it. For example, tearing down public housing to build private, for-profit multi-purpose condominiums might very well align with constructs of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.⁶ Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) observe:

You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. (9)

Lines of flight may always reinscribe microfascist behaviors (Wallin 2014) and capitulate to the ideologies of deregulation in neoliberalism. “What is it which tells us that, on a line of flight, we will not rediscover everything we were fleeing” (Deleuze and Parnet 2002/1977, 38, cited in Tamboukou 2010, 694). Postmodern turns, then, often reflect rather than interrupt late capitalism.

Acknowledging how postmodernism perpetuates late capitalism makes it important to clearly delineate how I take up the work of Deleuze and Guattari. In what follows, I am interested in the radical possibilities in deterritorialization that include the potential for new anti-capitalist nomadologies. Unlike other postmodern theorists, while Deleuze is anti-essentialist, he is intrinsically a materialist. His work with Guattari offers tactical strategies that can be taken up by groups that capitalism not only exteriorizes but targets for removal and extermination (see for example Giroux 2006). In exploring the question of how students may freely draw a line of flight in the context of activist music education, music educators must remain aware of the potential to reinscribe the oppressive forces that an anti-oppressive activist music education attempts to avoid.

A Note on Oppression and Anti-Oppression

In what follows, I consider the ways that an activist music education might inscribe or reinscribe oppression or anti-oppression. This kind of binary is atypical in Deleuze and Guattari’s work. In invoking this binary, I look to Ibram X. Kendi’s (2019) work on anti-racism. Kendi argues that at any given moment, our actions are either racist or anti-racist. In other words, we are either actively working toward the project of anti-racism or we are reinscribing racism; there is no middle ground of non-racism. I similarly conceptualize a lack of neutral ground for anti-oppression. We either actively engage in anti-oppression or we reinscribe oppression, and that can change from moment to moment for each person. In considering Deleuze and Guattari’s approach, I want to think about the ways that anti-oppression might capture qualities of lines of flight. As explained in the preceding section, lines of flight are always in motion. They resist striation and territorialization. They are also always creative, imaginative, rhizomatic, and nomadic. How then, might anti-oppression be enacted as a line of flight? The moment-to-moment nature of anti-oppressive work (whether a person’s actions align with oppression or anti-oppression at any given time) invokes, to some extent, the creativity inherent in the line of flight. To enact anti-oppression is a continual process of creating, recreating, acting, and imagining. Anti-oppressive pedagogy must, therefore, be created

and recreated in each moment. Educators must thus be aware of, critique, and challenge the moments when pedagogy “slips” and reinscribes oppression.

Activist Discourse and Lines of Flight

In this section, I offer three fictionalized vignettes⁷ that align with the tri-faceted pedagogy for an activist music education. Within each of these vignettes, I engage with the potential for students to draw a line of flight. I am specifically looking for moments of imaginative wandering and potentialities. In other words, I explore how lines of flights and the related concepts (nomadism, etc.) trouble or extend activist music education practices, with a focus on how students might draw a line of flight from the overarching activist ideology operating in the classroom. Importantly, I consider the relationship between lines of flight and oppression and many of its complexities. In exploring these complexities, I offer a series of questions that challenge how a line of flight and, indeed, deterritorialization might operate within the tri-faceted pedagogy for activist music education. What emerges throughout are the clear challenges to enacting these concepts in such contexts. I note that I have no “answers” to these questions, and indeed, answers are not particularly consistent with Deleuzian imagining. Instead, I offer questions as a means of thinking through.

Vignette 1

Susan is a white teacher in her late-thirties who teaches a student population of predominantly students of color. Many of the students at the school receive free-and-reduced lunch and rely on the school for their meals. The sixth-grade class enters Susan’s classroom, grab bucket drums from the pile as they make their way to their seats in the semi-circle. The routine is familiar. Susan asks for a volunteer to start a basic groove, and Kyra eagerly volunteers. She drums a complex, syncopated rhythm that the rest of the class picks up. The volume in the class rises. Susan invites students one-by-one to create a complementary pattern to Kyra’s and add it to the class groove. In the next fifteen minutes, what began as one groove played by 30 students becomes 30 individual patterns that fit together with varying degrees of success. Students concentrate. The degree of focus in the class remains constant and some of the patterns that did not quite “fit” in the groove find their way in. Susan invites Shawn to step away from his drum and lead the class in varying the dynamics and tempo of the groove. Shawn steps into

the role of the conductor and raises his arms to indicate variations to the dynamics and tempo. The group follows his lead and get slower and faster, louder and softer, as he indicates. Students listen closely to each other as they make these changes. They have learned over time how carefully they must attend to each other for the drum circle to be successful. Susan picks up her drum and starts to drum roll loudly. Students take note and know that the ending will follow. They close together in a final pattern, after which the class erupts in cheers and high fives. They know they have done well.

This vignette encapsulates the first element of a *pedagogy of community*—building community locally within the classroom. Students readily attend to one another and mindfully engage in what activist-musician Taiyo Na refers to as a “practice of community:”

Jamming, vibing, and improv[is]ing with a group of people musically, theatrically—that’s the practice of community. You have to listen to each other and make sure that people have their solo space or lecturing space, but at the same time, fall back and listen to places where everybody can participate. (Hess 2019b, 44)

By Taiyo Na’s standards, this classroom activity fostered community—the first component of the tri-faceted pedagogy of an activist music education. By introducing the question of the Deleuzian line of flight, one might ask how students might dissent, drawing their own creative lines of flight, within a pedagogy of community. How might someone choose not to engage in the community? How might a line of flight as dissent, in this context, become more than non-participation? If a student elects not to participate, what does that do? How does that change the sense of the community? How might participants construct a community without everyone’s participation? Ideally, it seems a community may function best when community members act in their own best interests while keeping collective interests in mind, but that seems complicated when competing interests may be contradictory.

I wonder if, in settings such as this one, there is an overarching civility discourse at play. To engage in community is to yield to the structure of the class. But how does civility discourse inform the desire or the ability to dissent? What does a line of flight look like/sound like in a community? Perhaps in the context of a community, a unique contribution would constitute a line of flight. How might a participant discern which kinds of contributions are valued within the context of a pedagogy community? How does that change when the classroom operates with a prevailing leftist ideology? How might this discourse of community become

something beyond compliance discourse? This drum circle activity has a particular and well-rehearsed structure. In the description, students' contributions "fit," more or less well, into the overarching groove. This space, then, is striated (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987). The overarching groove and the teacher set the conditions for participation and make certain kinds of improvisation outside the scope of what is considered acceptable. What, then, would it take to deterritorialize? How might the community make this space something other than an arboreal space dictated by the main groove? Deleuze and Guattari (2005/1987) challenge arboreal hierarchies, looking instead to rhizomes. How might we open such a space to allow more than just a few prescribed possible outcomes or contributions? What would it take to make the activity rhizomatic? How might music educators set the conditions to facilitate students to draw their own connections in ways that confound hierarchies?

While in some ways, the drumming activity is student-centered, the teacher sets the parameters. How can activities that purport to be student-led really become student-led? Gould (2007) challenges what she calls the "problematic of democracy." What would it take for students to truly drive the community? How can we imagine a student-driven practice as something beyond a reterritorialization? Susan invited Shaun to step into the role of the conductor, but his actions operate within her framework. Moreover, drum circles have leaders, but not conductors. "Conducting" a drum circle constitutes a Western ethnocentric imposition on a non-Western tradition. If this activity truly became student-led, how might the students make room for dissent within the new community? How would a deterritorialized drum circle look/sound? Holland's thoughts on jazz provide interesting considerations. Holland proposes that "[t]he standard tune in jazz becomes the point of departure for a collective line of flight that involves musicians and audience alike in a creative endeavor that aims at making the old tune into something unheard of" (Holland 2008, 204).⁸ Perhaps a line of flight for a drumming activity, then, may involve beginning with a groove and unsettling it or taking it on a journey. How might a drum circle become a "collective line of flight" (Holland 2008, 204)? This new question returns to the question of dissent. How might teachers make room for students to resist embarking on a "collective line of flight"? What role do they then have in that experience? How might the concept of a "collective line of flight" unsettle possibilities inherent in the line of flight? A collective line of flight implies that a group collectively wills themselves in the same direction out of striated space. Yet surely some degree of individualism makes a collective "willing"

unlikely. The question then becomes how teachers might create enough room within music for students' lines of flights to refract differently and still play well together. How might we make space for students to dictate their participation? Within the parameters of both schooling and music class, how might students refuse?

Such instances of community raise questions of fascism or microfascism. Bradley (2009) argues, for example, that the "urge to merge" (Keil and Feld 1994, 98) felt within an ensemble context could potentially lead to fascism. Ensembles can erase the individual. Bradley asserts that the sense of solidarity engendered by ensemble music-making has dangerous potential. She points to a moment in her experience directing the Mississauga Festival Youth Choir that served to powerfully unite the choir. She argues that this pivotal moment could have produced two radically different effects—the production of multicultural human subjectivity (Bradley 2006) or the emergence of fascism. The moment of unity she describes parallels the vignette above in some ways. While a pedagogy of community may foster a sense of unity and solidarity, such oneness may result in fascism. Indeed, Bradley's argument brings into stark relief the question of dissent in ensemble contexts. When many individuals come together as one, how might an individual forge a creative line of flight? Perhaps of greater interest, what might emerge when a line of flight "interrupts" a pedagogy of community?

Vignette 2

Susan's seventh grade class arrives at the music room, talking excitedly amongst themselves. Today is a workday. Prior to this assignment, students had spent time listening to artists speak about their realities. Susan has challenged the students to create music that either articulates their own experiences or speaks to an issue they identify as important. Students quickly settle down to work. Some students get right into their music, while others struggle to figure out a topic for their songs. Susan circulates and checks in with various students. She stops to talk to Tyrone, a Black youth, who is staring into space. "How's it going, Tyrone?" she asks. He sighs, exasperated. "I've got nothing." "What are some ideas you have been considering?" "I don't know. I don't want to talk about my life." "That's okay. What are some issues you care about then?" He mumbles something. "Sorry, I missed that," says Susan. He raises his voice: "Police violence." "That's an important topic." "I know," says Tyrone, "But it doesn't feel right to make it into

music. It matters too much.” “Hmm... I get that,” Susan affirms, “But can you think of something that you could talk about through music?”

The second facet of the tri-faceted pedagogy encourages teachers to honor children and youth’s lived experiences before inviting them to share them. The honoring of students’ experiences involves a place-based pedagogy such as culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2018, McKoy and Lind 2023)—an approach that focuses on children and youth’s strengths and assets. Sharing in this context occurs through songwriting combined with the Freirian (Freire 2000/1970) practice of “naming the world” (Hess 2019b). When speaking truth to power is the curriculum, how might youth dissent? The question then becomes how students might draw a line of flight within a pedagogy of expression. What would it mean to not participate or to participate on one’s own terms in the honoring and sharing of lived experiences? In such a context, what limits shape the kind of songwriting that is acceptable in the classroom? The curriculum, entangled in Freire’s (2000/1970) idea of naming the world, seems to require taking a position on one’s own circumstances, understood as a justice issue.

In the context of compulsory sharing of lived experiences, what does a line of flight look like/sound like? Brené Brown (2012) encourages individuals to only share their experiences or stories with those who have earned the right to hear them. In proposing the honoring and validating of children’s and youth’s lived experiences as the first component of a *pedagogy of expression* in Hess (2019b), I believe I attempted to facilitate the groundwork necessary for earning the right to hear students’ stories. Youth, however, do not owe their stories to anyone. In fact, making (personal) storytelling the curriculum may actually force vulnerability. In another context, I have argued that the way that educators foster resilience among minoritized youth who experience oppression may, in fact, pathologize them (Hess 2019a). Focusing on the vulnerability of minoritized youth fails to recognize their strengths and resistance. Moreover, it is important to recognize that some minoritized groups and individuals are more inherently vulnerable than those in dominant groups (Cole 2016). While a pedagogy of expression may be configured as a means of speaking truth to power, it could easily degenerate into mandating vulnerability—hardly a just requirement in the classroom. What then constitutes a line of flight in such circumstances? How might students refuse? Or alternatively perhaps offer something different?

In the context of a pedagogy of expression, an expectation that students will capitulate by sharing their stories may be inferred from the curriculum. The classroom again becomes striated space, structured by expectation of vulnerability. When songwriting and storytelling becomes striated space, what does deterritorialization look like/sound like? When the curriculum centers speaking truth to power, how can teachers genuinely integrate choice into their programs? What would it take to encourage a creative line of flight? How do we extend choices for student autonomy beyond the simple refusal to participate?

Further questions arise from this curriculum of expression. How do activist stances in curriculum complicate student participation? Under what circumstances could it be assumed that students' experiences will constitute justice issues? Assuming students' experience will point to justice issues takes a deficit mindset of the student community even while encouraging change-making. How does the question of justice issues change in a predominantly white classroom space with students who have significant class privilege? The study of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) (Burke Harris 2018, Felitti et al. 1998) indicate that justice issues are widespread, even in spaces of privilege. Justice issues, however, may not always be present. Requiring the "naming of the world" may enable teachers to make assumptions about students' experiences. It further assumes that teachers have a right to expect students to bare their experiences for public consumption.

A pedagogy of expression makes a curriculum about speaking truth to power a socially just and accountable move. What then constitutes a line of flight from this activist requirement? Refusal certainly becomes a possibility, although refusal does not necessarily involve creativity. When lines of flight involve "creative responses to material problems" (Gould 2009, 132), they prompt consideration as to whether an element of imagination exists to a line of flight. In the context of songwriting, rather than sharing (presumably negative) experiences, how might teachers create space for a student to create a song that engaged with the world they wanted instead of the world that is? This act of imagination, however, likely conforms to the curricular assignment of naming the world, even while imagining another possible world. How might students enact speaking to joy instead of hardship as a line of flight? Black joy now constitutes a significant part of the discourse amidst the police violence and harm to Black bodies (Joseph 2020). What would not fulfilling the assignment look like/sound like? Perhaps refusing to center or discuss one's own experiences becomes a line of flight.

In the vignette, Tyrone seems to feel that musicking about police violence minimizes or trivializes the issue in some way. In considering a pedagogy of expression, then, teachers must also grapple with whether asking children and youth to music about experiences lessens the gravity of the experience. Students may not feel as though they have the musical skills to do justice to an issue. When teachers invite students to speak to issues that are important to them, they also need to provide students with the necessary, developmentally appropriate musicking skills related to communicating critical issues.

This leftist curriculum of speaking truth to power firmly centers justice issues. A creative line of flight that departs from such a curriculum may potentially center opposite discourses. Honoring lived experiences involves culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2018, McKoy and Lind 2023). In what ways does such honoring extend to students who promote white supremacy or other oppressions? In this context, centering white supremacist discourse or experience could very well qualify as a line of flight. Teachers may insist that what music students put forward must not be rooted in the oppression of any other human being or group. Opposition from the right, however, may resist this restriction by mobilizing a “freedom of speech” argument. White supremacist discourse, however, is far from “smooth” space (Deleuze and Guattari 2005/1987). Rather, it is deeply striated in discourses that shape and reinforce the status quo. Capitulating to the status quo and its white supremacist, capitalist, ableist, heteropatriarchal requirements does not require imagination, nor is it creative. Indeed, the path is well-trodden and involves predictable moves like claiming “freedom of speech” in the assertion of something oppressive. Such moves categorically cannot constitute a line of flight. While the teacher may create an activist and counterhegemonic space in her classroom (perhaps a line of flight for the teacher), such a space still operates within the larger oppressive status quo, and actions that reinforce such oppression fail to enact anything original. Rayner (2013) writes that lines of flight “are bolts of pent-up energy that break through the cracks in a system of control and shoot off on the diagonal. By the light of their passage, they reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists.” Students who dissent from activist curriculum and pedagogy by engaging with the oppressive status quo categorically do not reveal anything new but rather capitulate to the system of control in the broader national and international context.

Vignette 3

A group of eighth graders enters the room. They are joking back and forth and talking with each other as they settle into their seats. Susan explains that she wants to introduce them to a classic hip-hop song. Students are not surprised. Susan often integrates hip-hop into her lessons. Many of the students in the school engage with hip-hop in some way, either by listening, emceeing, or beat making. Susan turns on “The Message” by Grandmaster Flash and Furious Five. Students listen as the lyrics explore the experience of growing up in the projects. The song finishes and the students remain quiet. Susan prompts, “Were any of these themes familiar to you from other songs you listen to?” Heads nod and a couple of students mention songs that take up these ideas. “Why do you suppose these themes are so prevalent in hip-hop music?” Students talk about class and racism. They notice similarities between their neighborhoods and the neighborhood in the song. “Hip-hop is kind of a reflection of our reality,” Tyrell observes. “Well, sometimes,” Keisha interjects. “Why sometimes?” asks Susan. “I think that sometimes, emcees are from neighborhoods like ours and they get it. Other times, not so much.” “Are there certain songs you relate to because they reflect your experience?” Students erupt with names of songs. “How does music do that?” Susan asks. The discussion turns to police and how they behave in the students’ neighborhoods. They reference songs that reflect this experience, and the discussion becomes a fierce critique of police violence (from DJ Phatrick, Hess 2019b, 116).

This vignette aligns with the third component of the tri-faceted pedagogy—a *pedagogy of noticing*. Indeed, this activity draws upon the second element of this pedagogy—*noticing the conditions that shape one’s lived experiences*. In considering a creative line of flight, how might dissent look in the context of a pedagogy of noticing? What would it mean for a student to refuse to compare their life to class material? What conditions would enable a student to remain silent? What costs might be associated with silence? In this vignette, the teacher assumes that she has picked a song that will speak to the students’ experiences—a considerable assumption on her part. What might it mean for the students to resist that assumption? In again centering the possibility of dissent, how might students refuse to share their own experiences? In this vignette, examining lived conditions becomes the curriculum, except rather than examining actual lived conditions, the lived conditions in question are imagined by the teacher.

How might students enact a line of flight in this context? While refusal perhaps again becomes a possibility, an imaginative line of flight remains more elusive. How might students refuse to capitulate to what the teacher has assumed about their lives and instead offer a different narrative? Counterstories, for example, are central to critical race theory (CRT), as they offer lived experiences in contradiction to dominant narratives (Delgado 1989, Delgado and Stefancic 2017). “The Message” itself likely constitutes a counterstory already, making a departure from its narrative also a counterstory, but not necessarily in opposition to the dominant narrative, as is inherent in CRT counterstories. Seeing as the teacher has already introduced a counterstory, a story that emerges in opposition to her assumption of students’ lived experiences would likely be welcome in this context. The point of this exercise is to encourage youth to express their counterstories through analysis of the song the teacher presents. When counterstory is curriculum, then, in what ways might a dominant narrative become a line of flight? How does this practice make space for a dominant narrative that potentially reinscribes white supremacist, ableist, capitalist, heteropatriarchy? This question returns to the issue raised previously. As argued, in its capitulation to the oppressive status quo, a dominant narrative cannot constitute a line of flight. The status quo is the epitome of territorialization and certainly institutes striated space. Considering lines of flight out of the structure created in this vignette raises the question of the ways that one might diverge or dissent from the curriculum in a way that creatively refuses to uphold oppressive ideology.

What then does deterritorialization look like/sound like here? How might students refuse to analyze their lived experiences or conditions in relation to the music presented? This comparison from a context expressed in music to students’ lived realities appears to be always already territorialized. Susan has structured the activity in a way that demands students to capitulate in particular ways. In this example, the counterstory is the curriculum. Mandating the analysis of assumed oppressive conditions becomes additionally complex given the racial dynamics at play between a white teacher and predominantly BIPOC students. When a teacher believes she is open to dissent in the classroom, what kind of dissent does she mean? What conditions might create or avoid striated and territorialized forms of dissent? What might it mean if dissent is striated, and how might the nature of dissent preclude striation? Activism in this context is curriculum, and curriculum typically operates as striated space. In the vignette, Susan created a structure for student responses rooted in an assumption of their lived conditions. Dissent that

refuses her assumption, however, may still capitulate to the activist agenda by offering a different counterstory. As an activist teacher, Susan has probably drawn a line of flight herself to create a program in opposition to the oppressive discourses that may shape the national and local context. Activism can occur in striated space, as the vignette demonstrates, but when activism itself constitutes a line of flight, it may well operate in smooth spaces that produce possibilities beyond those previously imagined. What might a line of flight look like/sound like in such activist contexts? What conditions make a line of flight more likely in non-activist contexts?

A pedagogy of noticing encourages dissent, following the recognition of the ideologies circulating and the analysis of lived conditions, but how can dissent constitute curriculum? The structure Susan has set up involves dissent from the status quo, thus making dissent curriculum, but it remains unclear as to whether a student may draw a further line of flight in a way that offered something truly different. “Something different” in this context may constitute oppression. While something oppressive does not comprise a line of flight, it may creatively inform a line of flight and nonetheless count as dissent in this classroom.

Lines of Flight in Activist Contexts: A Wicked Problem?

Analysis of the vignettes reveals complexity. Actions that might typically constitute lines of flight in a status quo environment do not necessarily become lines of flight in leftist or activist contexts. Speaking truth to power, the counterstory, or critique may challenge the status quo. Within this tri-faceted pedagogy, however, these moments of resistance have instead become the curriculum, and activism has become striated space. So, what is dissent as a line of flight in the context of activism? As discussed, dissent may involve holding up the white supremacist, ableist, capitalist, heteropatriarchal status quo. A line of flight rooted in oppressive ideology is not a genuine line of flight, as it capitulates to the dominant oppressive discourse, which itself is striated. Dissent that aligns with a dominant system cannot really be a line of flight. Rather, such dissent remains striated by the combined systems of white supremacy, ableism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy. While these interlocking systems may not be the dominant ideologies operating in a classroom that opposes these systems, they remain the prevailing ideologies in broader society. Capitulating to dominant oppressive systems is not creative or imaginative, and it certainly does not constitute a rupture of any kind. Affirming oppressive discourses and the status quo fails to “reveal the open spaces beyond the limits of what exists”

(Rayner 2013). Instead, capitulation simply reinscribes systems already firmly in place.

Theorizing what might constitute a line of flight when activism shapes the curriculum reveals a paradox—a search for openings that refuse striation in the context of institutionalization (schooling) that always already remains striated. Activism, sometimes flexible and nomadic in a real-world context, likely becomes regimented when institutionalized. If students cannot draw a line of flight or dissent from the activist curriculum, activism then turns into the new autocracy. In an activist context, dissent that functions to further the activist agenda does not necessarily reveal an open space. Dissent, however, that is rooted in someone's oppression is not acceptable, so there are limits to dissent. Oppressive ideology is often present both in society and in schools. In an activist music education rooted in principles of community, expression, and noticing, dissent is welcome but not if it is based in the oppression of an Other. Any dissent that occurs, then, likely acquiesces to the activist ideology operating in the classroom. To find moments of rupture in firmly striated space becomes unlikely, as these moments of rupture likely conform or capitulate to the overarching activist curriculum.

The issues I have raised in this article coalesce into four parallel questions: (1) In what ways has activist curricula become the new autocracy? (2) What might it mean to find openings in striated space? (3) How might one draw a line of flight in a prevailing leftist ideology? (4) How do Deleuzian lines of flight and the related concepts of nomadism, territorialization, deterritorialization, and reterritorialization trouble or extend activist music education? Situated on a terrain that is contradictory in nature (the search for openings in always already striated space), does this dilemma then constitute what Rittel and Webber (1973) deem a “wicked problem”? These questions resist resolution and have inherent complexity. In the social policy planning context, Rittel and Webber offer ten characteristics of wicked problems:

1. There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule. (The planner terminates work on a wicked problem, not for reasons inherent in the “logic” of the problem. He [sic] stops for considerations that are external to the problem: he runs out of time, or money, or patience.)
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but better or worse.
4. There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.

5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a “one-shot operation”; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial and error, every attempt counts significantly.
6. Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.
7. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.
8. Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.
9. The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.
10. The social planner has no right to be wrong (i.e., planners are liable for the consequences of the actions they generate). (161–67)

I originally set out to theorize an activist music education for K–12 schooling to construct a way that music education might contribute to an ongoing climate of injustice and oppression (Hess 2019b). Schooling firmly functions to reproduce unequal social relations (Apple 2004, Bourdieu and Passeron 1990, Love 2019), and I sought to interrupt this cycle. In doing so, however, I created a problem rooted in contradictions: in an activist classroom, drawing a creative line of flight out of a striated space is likely impossible. Rather than an agenda of social reproduction, the agenda becomes (dogmatically) anti-oppressive. In some ways, an activist agenda set against the dominant agenda of social reproduction captures what Allsup (2016) refers to as the antinomy of education:

The qualities that give meaning to the term “education”—replication and transformation, tradition and change—are in an equal state of contradiction. An antinomy exists, thus, when a concept cannot be understood apart from the paradoxes that give it meaning. (40)

An activist music education embodies what Allsup (2016) identifies as transformation. Dogma of any sort, however, resists movement or rupture, making it no easier to draw a line of flight in an activist context than in the context of social reproduction. Given that activism may constitute a line of flight in socially reproductive schooling, drawing a line of flight in an activist context may be more difficult in reality. In seeking a solution to a school system that replicates oppressive ideologies, I created a different problem—a new autocracy that resists dissent.

In their Deleuzian examination of school-based sex education (SBSE), Friehe and Smith (2018) observe:

While lines of flight have deterritorializing potential, in that they resist the solidification of an assemblage's affective flows and movements of desire, deterritorializations are always relative, and the lines of flight adolescents draw are often reterritorialized in SBSE (Allen, 2012; de Freitas, 2013; Renold and Ringrose, 2008; Thanem, 2010). As such, we recognize that teens' strategies of resistance, understood as fluid lines of flight and becomings, are not total resistances that allow youth to escape fields of power relations, but reveal processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization (Tamboukou 2008). (178–79)

In considering the antinomy of education—the tension between social reproduction and activist music education as ideologies for schooling—perhaps the wicked problem of the question of a line of flight in the context of activist ideology operates similarly to what Friehe and Smith (2018) found in SBSE. The striation of school contexts within the larger context of dominant oppressive ideologies makes it difficult, and likely sometimes impossible, to escape fields of power relations. Resistances or lines of flight, however, may enact processes of both deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Both teachers and students can look for openings that occur within larger structures and ideologies.

Challenging the potential autocracy of an activist music education offers a critique of the left. This critique is situated in the larger context of what Mills (1997) calls “global white supremacy” (125)—a global political structure. At this current juncture, the global context entails the interlocking systems of white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, and heteropatriarchy, which firmly operate in ways that are regularly fatal to minoritized populations. What is the relationship between the critique of the far left and oppressive discourses? Why, in a context in which police violence consistently claims the lives of Black people, and the origination of COVID-19 in China has led to a resurgence of brutal anti-Asian hate crimes, should scholars and educators continue to challenge activism to ensure that it is indeed emancipatory? Why critique an anti-oppressive pedagogy within an overarching system that valorizes hate and oppression?

When we fail to subject radical action to critique, however, we risk reinscribing oppressive discourses. Continuing to critique the left holds activist pedagogues accountable to actualizing something that creates room for openings. In fostering an activist music education, educators would do well to avoid setting the conditions for yet another autocracy. If the question of a line of flight in such contexts is indeed a wicked problem, it requires continual examination to offer space for dissent and critical and contentious conversations. Activist music education must not be static, and certainly must not be dogma, but rather invented and reinvented for every context. In this reinvention, educators can aim to keep their pedagogy fluid

and flexible, while acknowledging the striation inherent in schooling. The search for openings does not remain with students alone, but rather becomes part of imagining an activist pedagogy. Collectively, students and teachers may find ways to undermine an autocracy and create room for possible lines of flight—for nomadic movement within curriculum, even when curriculum itself is resistant.

Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Jamie Magnusson, Barbara Applebaum, Elizabeth Gould, and the three anonymous reviewers for helping me to strengthen this work.

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Juliet Hess is an associate professor of music education at Michigan State University, having previously taught elementary and middle school music in Toronto. Her book, *Music Education for Social Change: Constructing an Activist Music Education*, explores the intersection of activism, critical pedagogy, and music education. Her second book, *Trauma and Resilience in Music Education: Haunted Melodies*, is an edited volume co-edited with Deborah Bradley. The volume acknowledges the ubiquity of trauma in our society and its long-term deleterious effects while examining the singular ways music can serve as a support for those who struggle. Hess received her Ph. D. in Sociology of Education from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Her research interests include anti-oppression education, trauma-informed pedagogy, activism in music and music education, music education for social justice, disability and Mad studies, and the question of ethics in world music study.

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Notes

¹ uAspire is an organization that “works to ensure that all young people have the financial information and resources necessary to find an affordable path to—and through—a postsecondary education.” See www.uaspire.org/about/mission. Pete now teaches in the School of Music at the University of Illinois.

² See <https://mdg32.weebly.com/call-for-proposals.html>. The question posed in the call reads as follows: “Does the ‘production’ of activist music teachers represent the potential for new forms of colonization?” I am wary of the word “colonization” used in the call as a metaphor (see Tuck and Yang 2012 for a vigorous opposition to using colonialism as a metaphor). This use evokes a particular set of power relations resulting in genocide. I thus have shifted the question to consider whether activist music education produces a new autocracy.

³ I target these interlocking systems of white supremacy, ableism, capitalism, and heteropatriarchy throughout, as these systems are deeply interconnected and both prop each other up and reinforce each other. My dominant focus in this article is the system of white supremacy. By naming the interlocking systems in this way, I acknowledge that white supremacy is often also ableist, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal. While these systems do not receive equal treatment in my analysis, by naming them I invite the reader to consider how the ways in which white supremacy shows up in activist considerations often relies on these other systems of oppression.

⁴ New research in ecology indicates trees are connected through a network facilitated through fungi. In Deleuze and Guattari’s work, they conceptualize trees as singular entities, as we now know that trees are also part of a larger, connected, rhizomatic, Mycorrhizal network (Beiler et al. 2010, Song et al. 2015, Wohlleben 2016). In this paper, I use their arboreal metaphor as they originally conceptualized it, acknowledging that what these scholars argue about trees disrupts their original conception.

⁵ Thank you to Reviewer 2 for this insight.

⁶ Such moves constitute what Joseph Schumpeter (2003/1943) calls “creative destruction” in the context of capitalism. Stuart Jeffries (2021) begins his book with this concept.

⁷ While the vignettes are fictionalized, the third vignette actualizes a pedagogical suggestion for an activity from DJ Phatrick in my 2019 book.

⁸ Jazz offers something interesting to this discussion as a music that has been appropriated and institutionalized. Jazz offers a case study of what occurs when a music that was once on the margins becomes institutionalized. Jazz “standards” become standardized, and indeed, canonic, and creativity often occurs within set parameters. This institutionalization is not part of Holland’s (2008) discussion.