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What Should One Expect from a Sociology of Music Education?

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Abstract

Based on a review of the recent publication, *The Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education,* this article seeks to problematize what might be meant by "sociology of music education." Taking a "socio-historical" approach, the article examines the historical trajectory and legacy of sociologically oriented interests in music education. Drawing on intersections between philosophy and sociology, the author emphasizes the difference between the empirical and the normative to argue for greater sociological sensitivity to music education's relationship to the political role of schooling as a state institution.

Keywords

Bourdieu, culture, inequality, music education, philosophy, schooling, sociology

As co-editor of two scholarly handbooks (Mantie and Smith 2016, Ruthmann and Mantie 2017), I am intimately familiar with both the joys and challenges of academic handbook production. There is an inherent impossibility in any scholarly exercise intended to be authoritative, comprehensive, exhaustive, and, particularly with "international" handbooks, inclusive of every possible social parameter imaginable (gender, race, class, sexuality, geographic location, and so on) in terms of the book's content and the positionality of the contributing authors. Add to these considerations the professional politics of

the invited/curated authors: How does one balance emerging and established voices (without offending either group), for example? How does one avoid the narrowing of perspective (and confirmation bias) that results when curation is so often based on one's own professional network?

It was with a sense of empathy for the editors and excitement for the topic that I embraced the opportunity to participate in this special issue celebrating and critically examining the *Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education*. Although only charged with reviewing Part III: Crossing Borders—Problematising Assumptions, I am passionate about the sociology of music education, and I eagerly read the book cover-to-cover in the summer of 2021. Handbooks really aren't about cover-to-cover reading, however. Or at least I've never really thought of them that way. Frankly, I'm not entirely sure I understand what today's scholarly handbooks are supposed to be. There was a time when I thought of handbooks as definitive literature review summaries or comprehensive volumes that more or less summed up everything implied in their titles. That certainly seems to be the nature of the *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (Colwell 1992) and *The New Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning* (Colwell and Richardson 2002)—volumes that, in my estimation, appear to emulate comprehensive handbook projects in other disciplines. The two-volume *Oxford Handbook of Music Education* (McPherson and Welch 2012) marked a shift in our field. The *Oxford Handbook of Music Education* does not take the form of objective, "voice from nowhere" literature reviews or Wikipedia-like comprehensive summaries of past handbooks but instead centers the voice of authors, who takes a position on their subject matter.[1] Thus it is also with *The Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education*, where individual chapters are not scholarly summaries or literature reviews but individual case studies intended to illustrate various sociological issues salient in music education.

Some readers will recognize that my title is an homage to Philip Alperson's (1991) article, "What Should One Expect from a Philosophy of Music Education?" Read in 2022, Alperson's article serves as a reminder of how much our thinking in music education has changed. The acrimonious "aesthetic-praxial" debates of the 1990s highlighted by Alperson seem almost quaint today. (I, for one, am grateful that we as a profession have moved on.) There is something subtle yet telling in Alperson's title, however: that niggling English language article, *a*. It is arguably better than *the*, and yet, the *a* in the title implies something ontological. Rather than the framing that might result if the articles *a* or *the* were omitted (e.g., "What

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Should One Expect from Philosophy in Music Education?"), Alperson's title (and essay) is premised on the existence of *a* philosophy.[2]

Of what relevance is this sojourn into the importance of English language articles (*a, the*)? Far from mere semantic word play, articles help to signify the mutually known (or assumed to be known) from the mutually unknown or generic (e.g., the tree versus trees). To speak of *a* (*the*) philosophy of music education or *a* (*the*) sociology of music education establishes or presupposes a kind of countable nounness distinct from the non-countable. The thing being counted (i.e., identified as a singular item) in the sense of *a* (*the*) *philosophy* or *a* (*the*) *sociology* is determined by the preposition *of* (i.e., "of music education"). In other words, a group of people must believe (a) "sociology *of* music education" exists.

I in no way presume to hold special insights into what sociology of music education *is*. My purpose here is more modest. It is inspired by Sidsel Karlsen's (2021) article, "Assessing the State of Sociological Theory in Music Education: Uncovering the Epistemic Unconscious," which thoughtfully and comprehensively examines sociological theory in music education over the past decade. I was particularly taken by Karlsen's suggestion that sociology is "concerned with some form of contextualization or historicization" (138). In response, I have sought to expand Karlsen's historical scope and context in order to continue the dialogue. My hope is that, rather than making a pronouncement on what the sociology of music education is or should be, my examination can serve, in the spirit of *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* and the MayDay Group, as a provocation for ongoing critical and self-reflexive conversations about all things social in music education.[3]

The Sociological Turn?

Froehlich (2007) and Lamb (2010) both point out the rapid expansion of sociocultural concerns in music education occurring since 1990. Appearing as only a single chapter in the 1992 *Handbook of Research on Music Teaching and Learning,* sociocultural issues warranted an entire section in the 2002 "new" handbook. Based on the advent of symposia on the sociology of music education from 1995 onwards—ultimately leading to the formation of the International Society for the Sociology of Music Education—and the number of sociologically-oriented books in music education in the twenty-first century (e.g., Wright 2010; Froehlich 2007; Burnard, Hofvander Trulsson, and Söderman 2015), it is tempting to believe that

the sociology of music education is a relatively new field of inquiry. A closer look, however, reveals something different. In fact, sociological concerns were arguably at the centre of school music efforts in the first half of the twentieth century (certainly in the US, if not more broadly), before eventually giving way to the dominant concerns of psychology and aesthetics.

Considered historically, current sociological interests and activity in music education may be viewed as reflecting what Joseph Abramo (2021) calls "a particular form of sociology" associated with the cultural/epistemological turn in the social sciences (156). This more recent iteration of sociological interest in music education, driven almost exclusively by Bourdieusean influences,[4] differs markedly from what Marie McCarthy (1997) describes in "The Foundations of Sociology in American Music Education (1900–1935)," where sociological concerns centered more squarely on what she describes as "the need for formulating a social philosophy for music in education" (76). As one illustration, McCarthy compiled questions posed by the Teachers College, Columbia University professor David Snedden in the 1920s and 1930s, categorized in terms of Music in Society and Music in Education. A few of Snedden's questions were:

> What specific standards of taste and appreciation should control the teaching of music? Why? Do the criteria of "good music" include its popular or democratic appeal? Its power of producing social results? Are musicians the best judges of the kinds of music that should be promoted at public expense? (McCarthy 1997, 78)

Although these questions remain at the normative, conceptual level, they unmistakably reveal sociological sensibilities.

Similar sociologically oriented interests in the 1920s and 1930s can be found in Clara Josephine McCauley's (1932), *A Professionalized Study of Public School Music,* where the third chapter is entitled "Sociology of Public School Music." Among McCauley's concerns were the questions *what music* and *for whom*. Notably, she emphasized the school as a basic institution of democracy and the role music might play within it. In other words, the spotlight focussed on how music might serve educational purposes and on how the kind of music teaching that might occur in schools, as public institutions, should differ from the kind that occurs outside of schools.

Sadly—at least for those of us with proclivities toward a sociological imagination—sociology took a back seat to psychology in American music education during the second half of the twentieth century.[5] With rare exceptions, such as the work

of John Mueller, Max Kaplan, and a handful of others, sociological concerns would not again enter the mainstream consciousness of American music education scholars until the 1990s, evidenced in such events as the founding of the MayDay Group and the inaugural sociology of music education symposium. Even with those developments, one finds McCarthy (2000) commenting that "there is an underdeveloped tradition of dialogue between music education and sociology" (3).[6]

To McCarthy's observation I offer the additional causal explanation that the decline of sociological concerns in music education over the course of the twentieth century—at least in the United States —can be traced to the formation of National Association of Schools of Music in 1924, and the subsequent partnership arrangements made with the Music Educators National Conference with respect to the program of study for the credentialing and licensure of music teachers (see Talbot and Mantie 2015). From the outset, a music teacher was defined not as an educator teaching music, but as a *musician* who teaches—i.e., a musician trained in the Western art music tradition of the university conservatory, an institution comprising, by definition, *musicologists*.[7] As a result, the training of music teachers results in people who think of *music* primarily as notated music in the Western art music tradition. The musical practice of the conservatory consists of rehearsing "works" of music, usually as a large ensemble, with the aim of realizing the "composer's intent." These works are subsequently performed on a stage for a seated audience. As Peter Martin (2015) observes, musicological and sociological perspectives "[emerge] from, and [are] grounded in, distinctly different academic discourses; as a consequence the way in which 'music' is constituted in each will be different" (103). Put in Bourdieusean terms, the habitus of music educators inclines them toward conservatory conceptions of music; the gatekeeping mechanisms of the university conservatory ensure the never-ending perpetuating of the system (see Koza 2008).

Despite the seeming impossibility of it, given that almost all of us are products of the system that emphasizes art objects over people, sociology and social concerns did manage a comeback (of sorts) in the 1990s. Save for the work of Christopher Small, this comeback was not driven by sociologists or by music educators with a love of sociology (such as those who attended the first American sociology in music education symposium in 1995), but by three discrete intellectual currents of music education in the 1990s: (1) rising multicultural awareness, (2) feminist thought, and (3) jazz, or more precisely, music education philosophers with backgrounds as jazz/commercial musicians.

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Today's "culturally responsive" (or culturally relevant/sustaining) movements can be viewed as having roots in the 1990s multiculturalism in education movement (see e.g., Banks and Banks 1995). Multicultural awareness in music education (see e.g., Volk 1998), at least in the United States, was a predictable response to multiculturalism in education and the growing effects of globalization. Multicultural music education may seem rightly problematic today, given the way it ultimately served to further entrench the centrality of Eurocentric art musics, but it did provide the momentum for interest not only in cultural diversity in music teaching (e.g., Cultural Diversity in Music Education) and "world music pedagogies" (see e.g., Campbell 2004), but the general ethnomusicological principle of "music in its cultural context"—thus sparking widespread interest in teaching music as a cultural rather than strictly aesthetic phenomenon and paving the way for sociological interests in music education (since the line between sociology and anthropology is not clear-cut in our field).

Feminists in music education claim a long lineage, but it was Bennett Reimer's second edition of *A Philosophy of Music Education* in 1989 that seemed to be the match that lit the powder keg: yet another philosophical statement that continued music education's tradition of denying lived experiences. The special issue that appeared in the 1994 issue of *Philosophy of Music Education Review* dedicated to feminist perspectives in music education featuring the leading voices of Roberta Lamb, Julia Koza, Elizabeth Gould, Lucy Green, Charlene Morton, and Deanne Bogdan is but one example of many responses by feminist writers of the 1990s to the idea of music and music education's purported innocence. *No, damn it! The teaching of music is about more than the music. There are people involved!*

On another front, the (mostly male) music education philosophers who founded the MayDay Group in 1993 began their assault on aesthetics by invoking the word *praxial*.[8] Mostly unconcerned with the feminists, their focus (as music education philosophers and as jazz/commercial musicians) was on how aesthetics failed to properly account for musics outside the Western art music canon. Jazz, for example—as a primarily improvisatory, processual form—wasn't about "works" of music. Neither were many other of the world's musics. Music, argued the original MayDay Group philosophers, is an inherently social phenomenon. Ergo, the true value of music education did not reside within music as a work of art, but resided instead in the social practice of music, and how this might serve the aims of education.[9] Arguably, *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education,*

launched in 2003, has been the most significant scholarly force in advancing social theory and sociological interests in music education over the past twenty years.

The Philosophy-Sociology Nexus

"Sociology of music education 2.0," in my reading of the story at least, owes its existence primarily to the philosophers and feminists of music education. By challenging the supremacy of the psychology-aesthetics paradigm that positioned music and music learning in abstract, universalist terms, philosophers and feminists in music education placed social and cultural issues back on the agenda. Some aspects of sociology of music education 2.0, such as questions about the kinds of music that should be included in schooling, were not unlike those of the 1920s and 1930s. Other aspects, however, such as questions around class, race, and gender were new. In either case, philosophical scholarship opened the door to sociology.[10]

The traditional narrative of the social sciences is that they were developed in the nineteenth century in an attempt to emulate the "hard truths" of the natural sciences. Hence, sociology, rather than being philosophical musings about the social world, began to lay claim to the kinds of empirical insights previously reserved for the natural sciences. Through proper scientific study, one could *know* things about the social world. What is sometimes lost in the philosophy/social science discussion is the crucial distinction between the empirical and the normative. It is one thing, for example, to count the number of female authors of particular dissertation topics (see Nielsen and Dyndahl 2021); it is quite another to draw "implications for practice" based on the results.

In explaining the "sociological imagination," C. Wright Mills (1959) suggests it is "the capacity to shift from one perspective to another" (8). In a similar vein, Zygmunt Bauman writes that "the main service the art of thinking sociologically may render to each and every one of us is to make us more sensitive" (cited in Wright 2010, 1). Closer to home, Hildegard Froehlich (2004) submits that "sociology is about seeing the small and the big picture" (16). At heart, all of these statements imply theory (i.e., description or explanation). There would be little point in thinking sociologically (i.e., theoretically), however, if there was no intent to somehow *use* this way of thinking. In the context of music teaching and learning, one assumes there is a desire for sociological thinking to improve practice. Indeed, as Sean Powell (2021) asks, "If theory does not eventually lead to an improvement in conditions for students and teachers, why pursue it?" Powell goes on, however, to

point out the important difference between a "demand for connection [between theory and practice] and a demand that theory conform to existing practice" (201).

There is an important distinction, then, between the descriptive and the prescriptive. There is also a distinction between prescription aimed at utility or efficacy—i.e., improving what one is already doing—and prescription aimed at doing something else entirely. To do something else—i.e., to change practice— depends on offering a normative argument for why one course of action is better than alternatives. One does not do this empirically. One of the difficulties in determining what might be meant by "the sociology of music education" is that the lines between *studying* something and *justifying* something get rather blurry. As a case in point, Steven Kelly (2002), in an article entitled, "A Sociological Basis for Music Education," states, "This paper seeks to illustrate that the social contributions of music education are vital to the justification of music in the schools" (40). Taking the opposite approach, McCarthy (2000) writes that David Elliott's (1995) *Music Matters* "provides us with a philosophical foundation for a sociology of music education" (8). In both cases, it seems that philosophy and sociology are inextricably linked.

"ology"

The "ology" suffix, from the Ancient Greek λογία, is generally taken to mean "to speak of" or "the study of" (online Etymology Dictionary). But does the sociology of music education mean sociological study *within* music education or *about* music education? Is music education the object of study or is the object of study the specific activities that occur within the practice? To extend the line of questioning, what, precisely, does it mean to study music education sociologically rather than, say, psychologically, anthropologically, or other discipline-specific ways? How hard and fast are the boundaries between the strictly sociological study of music education and studies that might be described more broadly as sociocultural—a scope that Roberta Lamb (2010) submits should include sociology, anthropology, social history, social psychology, and cultural studies.[11] If the sociology of music education is taken to mean the empirical study of any social aspect of music learning and teaching rather than more narrowly defined according to studies that use the concepts and theories generated by sociologists proper (i.e., the study of society, groups, or the individual-society relationship), this seems to suggest that anything beyond narrow definitions of things like cognition, perception, biology,

issues related to the natural sciences (e.g., acoustics), and so on, would qualify as the sociology of music education. In other words, if "the sociology of" is understood as sociocultural study broadly construed, then a good deal of (if not most) research in music education today arguably falls into this category.[12]

The "scope of study" problem may be attributable to the complexity of our discipline. Hildegard Froehlich (2007) suggests, for example, that music education is an interdisciplinary field that involves "(1) the tradition of music making, listening, and responding; and (2) the tradition of education as a societal mandate" (1). Each of these areas is immense. Music education has a relatively small research community. For researchers in music education to have to account for both of Froehlich's two areas is a tall order. Complicating matters is Lucy Green's (2021) observation in the foreword to *The Routledge Handbook to Sociology of Music Education* (hereafter *RHSME*) that, unlike many other social scientists, music education researchers have the unenviable task of studying something that is itself the cause of change. This, she points out, is one of the differences between the sociology of music education and the closely related fields of ethnomusicology and the sociology of music. The latter two disciplines "refrain from attempting to change their object of study." To intervene, as is the *sine qua non* of education, "would in most cases be regarded as unethical" (xxv). Put differently: far more than simply an extension of the *observer effect*, where the act of measurement changes what is measured, music education practices are simultaneously a *cause*, in that they help to shape and influence future practices, and an *effect*, in that they respond to norms, expectations, and political pressures related to the role and function of music learning and teaching in schools. This interplay further complicates the picture of what is meant by "sociology of music education."

Nature and Nurture (i.e., Culture)

Nature versus nurture is a very old idea. The concept of education is virtually impossible without at least some endorsement of the belief that nurture, i.e., *socialization*, plays a role in who and what people become and how this ultimately affects society. It is unsurprising that music educators, as educationalists, would be attracted to the concept of socialization. Indeed, interest in socialization has generated a considerable body of research in music education. In my reading, however, much of this research fails to achieve the workings of the *sociological imagination* because it operates only from the perspective of "the personal troubles of milieu"

and does not account for how these personal troubles relate to larger social structures.[13] So much research on pre-service music teacher identity, for example, has stopped with the conclusion that pre-service music educators report feelings of conflict between their musician identity and educator identity (e.g., Roberts 1993). Rarely is this finding put into conversation with the processes of social reproduction responsible for socialization experiences themselves. As a result, the socialization of music educators is, perhaps ironically, reified as a natural rather than cultural phenomenon.

Berger and Luckman's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality* is perhaps given too much credit for the paradigm shift in thinking about nature versus culture. Nevertheless, there is no denying that the idea of social constructionism has been a powerful force in challenging assumptions about the naturalness of our social world. This force fomented in many areas, not least being the sociology of education, where, beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s, momentum gathered around the idea that education, and in particular, schooling, contributed to the inequalities the schools were supposed to ameliorate. Books such as *Knowledge and Control* (Young 1971), *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge* (Whitty and Young 1976) *Schooling in Capitalist America* (Bowles and Gintis 1976), and *Ideology and Curriculum* (Apple 1979) all pointed to a more critical view of the schools than the rosy optimism of the American Progressive Education era. Rather than a democratic institution of knowledge and hope, the school was claimed to perpetuate society's problems by surreptitiously undermining the very principles of meritocracy and social mobility it was claimed to represent and uphold. As Graham Vulliamy (1984) remarks, "the curricula and the processes of schooling were held responsible for helping reproduce the social and cultural hegemony of the middle classes" (19). In other words, social inequalities presumed as "natural" were in fact socially constructed by the schools themselves through both the formal and *hidden* curriculum.

Predating what I am calling sociology of music education 2.0, Graham Vulliamy, sometimes together with John Shepherd, sought to advance what Vulliamy (1984) described as a "sociological approach to music education" (18)—one that exposed the folly of thinking of music teaching as natural—as innocent and always benevolent.[14] Undergirding Vulliamy's suspicions about potentially undesirable effects of music education were his observations that (a) seemingly otherwise talented musicians were deemed "musically inept" by the school; (b) many students seemed interested in music but not in *school* music; (c) the difference between

music in and out of school seemed to represent a "cultural clash;" and (d) the musical culture of students was viewed by music teachers as "deprived" (19–20). Based on his ethnographic work in English schools, Vulliamy concluded,

> The main emphasis of the music department was to produce good all-round instrumentalists with a thorough grounding in the "discipline" of music. This definition of "what counts as music" (backed up by classroom music lessons on musical notation, history and appreciation, and traditional music theory) both made music approximate to other academic disciplines and excluded any style of music (such as rock or pop) that did not fit these criteria. (23)

Although not cited much in today's literature, Vulliamy's work arguably laid the groundwork for the familiar "music in and out of schools" idea that continues to provide the basis for critiques of school music practices (some of which are found in the *RHSME*). Problematically, however, many authors making these arguments have overlooked a similar study conducted in Canada by Vulliamy's collaborator, John Shepherd, who did not find a similar "cultural clash" between school music and students' music (Shepherd 1983). What the studies by Vulliamy and Shepherd found in common was that teachers in both countries embodied a "conception of music as equatable with musical notation" (Vulliamy 1984, 26). Vulliamy and Shepherd's (1984) conclusion was that "prior socialisation of music teachers and the normal conditions of classroom music teaching preclude all but the boldest teachers from experimenting with [approaches that go beyond the status quo]" (262).

Unlike much of the music teacher and pre-service music teacher identity research, Vulliamy and Shepherd connected socialization to processes of social reproduction. They drew attention to research that documented how government education departments selected membership of curriculum guideline committees that helped to sustain rather than challenge "established trends in music education" (Vulliamy and Shepherd 1984, 263). In other words, they demonstrated how socialization becomes so normalized and naturalized that music teachers cannot possibly imagine a conception of music education not predicated on Western staff notation. *Notation literacy is music education.*[15] No matter how many "popular music" programs manage to find their ways into school (based on the specious *us versus them* cultural argument), the underlying paradigm of music education is unlikely to change so long as notation literacy continues to be enshrined by the processes that determine how music teachers are socialized.

The Sociology of Music Education Inequality

I still look back fondly on a lecture I attended by the philosopher of science, Bruno Latour. He made a big deal of "matters of concern"—the idea that research problems are situated (and political), not naturally occurring. The notion of studying something raises a host of issues, including *what* to study, *how* to study it, and the often-overlooked question of *why* study something in the first place. To this list could be added the question of who can or should do the studying. My review of the literature suggests that the twenty-first century matters of concern in music education, or more precisely, the *social* matters of concern, skew in the direction of addressing inequality. As Karlsen (2021) similarly concludes about today's research activity, it is clear that "the main task of sociologically informed music education research should be to improve, provide implications for, and remedy the inequalities of, music education practice" (147). Indeed, at least three-quarters of the chapters in the *RHSME* take inequality, broadly construed, as their primary matter of concern. What is notable (though not necessarily surprising) is that today's sociology of music education inequality is overwhelmingly rooted in Bourdieusean theoretical frameworks—what I take Abramo (2021) to mean when he suggests our profession engages in "a particular form of sociology."

The attraction to Bourdieu is easy to understand. Music education is centrally connected to matters of culture.[16] The early years of American music education were unmistakably predicated upon a "democratization of culture" perspective that continues to provide the backbone for school music justifications.[17] As late as the early 1970s, one still finds articles in the pages of the *Journal of Research in Music Education* that speak of "the culturally deprived" (e.g., Reid 1972). In Bourdieu's concept of *cultural capital*, music educators find a seemingly straight-forward way of theorizing the ways in which music learning can map onto inequality.

Key to the cultural capital and inequality thesis is the belief that musical taste is associated with social class, what Peter Martin (2006) calls "the sound of stratification." John Mueller studied the social nature of musical taste in the 1950s,[18] but the idea has become firmly associated with Bourdieu's (1984) book, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste,* in part due to the elegant and rigorous way in which Bourdieu theorizes cultural capital, social stratification, and social mobility. The basic Bourdieusean argument utilized by researchers in music education seems to work in two ways (only one of which is usually emphasized by any given author): (1) different musical practices embody varying levels of cultural value; ergo, fluency in high-capital musics (along with other forms of high-capital culture) helps to create and sustain social inequality; or (2) musical practices are

ascribed value through association with those of different social strata; ergo, the tastes of the upper classes determine the cultural capital of various musics.[19]

I see at least two problems with the logic of the cultural capital-social stratification thesis as it is often applied in music education. In the first instance, there appears to be little empirical evidence supporting the idea that accruing cultural capital through fluency in high-capital musics leads to social mobility. As Vince Bates (2021) astutely observes, "there is little to recommend cultural refinement … as a reliable means to social mobility" (224). In the second instance, there is an inherent defeatism in this theory: if the cultural capital of music is determined by association—i.e., some musics are considered to have superior value by virtue of their association with the upper classes—it means that musics associated with the lower classes will, by definition, always be viewed as having lesser value. There is thus no way for the musics associated with the lower classes to achieve higher status and value unless these musics become associated with the upper classes, in which case they are no longer the musics of the lower classes. Jazz is probably the most obvious example of this.

The complication with applying the cultural capital-social stratification argument to music education is that the music taught in schools is no longer strongly connected with the economic elite (as it may have been in Bourdieu's France in the 1960s), but with the cultural elite as defined by university music schools—institutions that function to define what Michael Apple (1993) calls "official knowledge." In other words, Bourdieu's underlying theory of *exchange,* upon which the idea of various forms of capital is built, does not apply because developing fluency in Western classical music is only marginally connected in any way with economic mobility today. While the idea of musical status may still hold, the real matter of concern here, I argue, lies not in capital as related to social mobility, but in notions of recognition and dignity. As Bates (2021) writes, "It can be an alienating environment, in a Marxian sense, when compulsory labor in music class seems unrelated to personal interests, needs, or values" (223).[20]

There are a couple of problems with the "music not of interest" argument, however. One is that it essentializes musical tastes and preferences. It presumes that musics designated as "elite" (through their association with the music conservatory) are not of interest to anyone other than those in the middle and upper classes. The same argument could be (and has been) levelled at the entire school curriculum. Regrettably, this position would seem to imply that students shouldn't or can't learn anything unfamiliar, or that everything taught in school should relate directly

to the lived experience of every single student.[21] Another problem with the "not of interest" argument is that it assumes that elite musics such as classical and jazz *are* of interest to youth in the middle and upper classes, even though these musics, in terms of consumption (taste, interest), are marginal at best, typically constituting less than two percent of market share (MRC-Data 2021). There is really no reason to believe that elite musics taught in school music classrooms resonate with any more than a very small minority of students.

None of this is to suggest that inequality is not present in music education classrooms around the world. Research by Kenneth Elpus and Carlos Abril (2019) has shown that instrumental music classes in American secondary schools are not demographically representative, for example. That should concern us. If we believe music education is for everyone, then it needs to be for *everyone*. It should concern us that our practices help to create and sustain inequalities along any lines (gender, race, sexuality, disability, and so on). It should concern us if and when superior musical performance derives from the economic status of students and their families.[22] It should also concern us if and when music teaching helps to create cultural hierarchies that serve to celebrate some groups and denigrate others. While some hierarchies are unavoidable, in that whatever gets taught in school is automatically ascribed value, there are most certainly teaching practices that implicitly and explicitly promote cultural hierarchies (e.g., music education as notation literacy) and teaching practices that work to challenge them.

The main point of my discussion of "matters of concern" is that the Bourdieusean-based research agenda focusing on culture as the lone point of inequality may be blinding us to other important areas of investigation. Recently, for example, Abramo (2021) has offered a neo-Marxian critique in which he proposes an alternative (based on dialectical materialism) to our profession's singular emphasis on culture as the problem and the solution to inequalities in music education.

> [T]he dialectical materialist method might require educators to think more broadly than culture. From this perspective, sociology and issues of power are more multifaceted than "culture" alone and more dialectically related than simply "beginning in culture" or "culturally responsive teaching." Social interaction and inequality are more dialectical, less causational, and educators can make far fewer claims about where transformation begins. (169)

I note that Abramo's argument may find resonance with "new materialist" and posthumanist intellectual currents operating in other fields. I shall not go down that path here, but suffice it to say that there is growing interest in the idea that the

poststructural emphasis on language and discourse may have taken our eye off material realities.[23] Culturally responsive teaching is nice, but creating learning conditions where success is not dependent on economic privilege masked as meritocracy is better.

One of the other problems with the fixation on *music education as culture*, then, is that class issues tend to dominate the conversation. Over 30 years ago Vulliamy (1984) cautioned about the dangers of "concentrat[ing] on social class at the expense of other variables such as age, sex/gender, and race/ethnicity" (29). To our profession's credit, research examining race, gender, and sexuality— to which can now be added growing interest in decolonization and indigeneity—has increased markedly. Some of this work, such as that by feminist scholars in music education, has been going on for decades, but critical mass seems to have been attained only in recent years. While class may still constitute the greatest matter of concern, the sociology of music education inequality has broadened and deepened. This does not mean there isn't still work to be done.

That music education suffers from a whiteness problem is not news to anyone. Many explanations could be offered, but the simplest is probably that the academic discipline of music education, as represented by its scholarly output, reflects a White majority as a result of its demographic origins. This, however, does not completely explain our profession's lack of awareness of the tradition of Black sociology, to which Elizabeth Gould's chapter in the *RHSME* draws our attention. In critiquing the "liberal ideology on which canonical sociology is based," Gould (2021, 354) draws attention to the separate traditions of Black and White sociology (see Watson 1976). Citing the words of Patricia Hill Collins, who asserts that "differences in perspective about social issues will reflect differences in the power of those who theorize" (Collins 1998, cited in Gould, 355), Gould reminds us that, despite our good intentions, we cannot escape the fact that our scholarly endeavours reflect and reify our positionality and privilege. I am reminded here also of the words of Glaser and Strauss (1967), who, in a footnote to their explanation of the purposes of theory in sociology, add, "[O]ne cannot empirically dissociate the need to generate theory from the need to advance careers in sociology" (4, n4). Indeed, while our sociology of music education inequality efforts are laudable and necessary, we are sometimes guilty of (a) overlooking the whiteness that unavoidably colours our perspective and blinds us to the work of others, and (b) failing to acknowledge how we benefit professionally by researching inequality.[24]

Sociology of Music Education 3.0?

Today's sociologists of music education might take issue with the idea that advocating for democratic social values as part of the American Progressive Education era zeitgeist qualifies as sociology of music education. And yet, even though they did not necessarily conduct sociological studies *per se,* and their awareness of inequality was questionable by the standards of today, these early twentieth-century American music educators were clearly thinking with sociological intent—a way of thinking arguably not that far removed from the "sociologically framed critical thinking" that Panagiotis Kanellopoulos (2021) attributes to the authors in Part III of the *RHSME* (327). One can only speculate on how our profession might be different today if the concerns of the socially oriented music educators of the early twentieth century were not eclipsed by the psychology-aesthetic paradigm that came to structure our institutions and practices over the twentieth century. In the absence of "socio-historical depth" (Kanellopoulos 2021, 327), our calcified structures lead us to believe that the present is natural; *it is just the way things are*.

The growing interest in sociocultural matters in music education is encouraging (from my vantage point, at least), but music education research is still affected by the tall shadows of psychology and aesthetics—traditions that have historically claimed as *nature* (and therefore universal) what is in fact socially constructed.[25] The profession is showing signs of change, however. Scan the contents of almost any music education journal today and one finds greater awareness and emphasis on sociocultural matters. If there is a critique to be levelled at our sociological efforts in music education over the past 20 years or so, it is that we may be finding ourselves in a bit of a rut. Our particular way of doing sociology may be limiting our potential to expand our theoretical awareness and conceptual vocabulary.

Karlsen (2021) suggests that our collective omission of music sociology and cultural sociology in our research may be evidence that we see ourselves primarily as an educational field rather than a musical one (146). This could be true, but music and cultural sociology are not our only oversights. Susan Young (2021), for example, draws attention in her chapter of the Routledge handbook to how "the sociology of music education is not … deploying analytic concepts … in the sociology of childhood" and to how "very young children and early childhood education are beyond the sightlines, knowledge, and awareness of most music educationalists" (396–97). Young's point is well taken, but perhaps speaks to our limited capacity in music education research. There really are not that many of us, and we,

as a result, overlook many potentially important scholarly insights.[26] In addition to our relatively small numbers, the breadth of our lived experiences is rather narrow (i.e., predominantly White). As if that isn't enough, our field's lack of resources, combined with faculty evaluation processes that reward single-authored studies over co-authored studies and quantity over quality, tends to result in small-scale projects that can be conducted as quickly as possible. As Karlsen (2021) points out, "limited access to economic means, perhaps combined with disciplinary custom or tradition, has made smaller projects—often conducted by a single individual—the norm." The resultant "solitary knowledge creation," she suggests, has "epistemic consequences" (147).[27] One of these consequences is to discourage, implicitly or explicitly, any research that diverges from the doxa of "this is how we do sociology within the field of music education" (150).

Examining bibliographies and indexes is one of the ways to reveal how we do sociology in music education. In the *RHSME,* there is a lot of Bourdieu, Gaztambide-Fernández, Foucault, Giddens, Gramsci, Lave and Wenger, Peterson, and Small. There is not a lot of Bauman, Becker, Bernstein, Goffman, or even Kaplan (arguably our field's foremost sociologist). Many names could be added, of course, but it does seem strange not to have greater representation from, to take but one example, the Chicago School tradition (Blumer, Mead, Cooley). Generally speaking, our sociological efforts have concentrated more on the empirico-theoretical macro-level tradition than the ethnographic/anthropological micro-level interpretivist tradition of, for example, Howard Becker's *art worlds* (2008).[28] This may be limiting us.[29]

What Should One Expect?

Those familiar with Christopher Small's (2010) work know that he was highly pessimistic about school music, suggesting that the only way forward was to take the teaching of music out of schools (288). He was critical of what he perceived to be the contrived nature of school music and how it failed to properly reflect the *real* world of music—regardless of whether it be art or vernacular music (what he came to call "music of the common tongue") (Small 1977, 1987, 1998). If music taught in schools is to be "authentic" and appealing to students, the argument goes, it should reflect the world of music outside the school walls. This familiar position underlies several chapters in the *RHSME*. The logic has an intuitive appeal. It can be found in "music in and out of school" (Lamont et al. 2003), "my music" (Crafts, Cavicchi,

and Keil 1993), and the "informal learning" arguments for teaching popular music in schools (Green 2002, 2008).

The problem with the *in-school music should reflect out-of-school music* position can be traced back to the philosophy-sociology nexus and David Hume's is–ought distinction.[30] Although one can advocate for teaching one music over another, it does not logically follow that X and/or Y should be taught in school because students prefer X or because Y exists outside the school.[31] What music should be taught in schools and how it should be taught are normative matters. This does not mean that music learning and musical practices outside of school are unimportant or that we shouldn't study them sociologically, but it does mean that we should not study them *just because* they exist or because we assume that their existence carries self-evident implications for music education. If sociology of music education is to mean something different from sociology of music, the distinction surely must lie in the normative tenets of schooling as a state institution. This does not mean that "school music" should not be responsible (or responsive) to life beyond the school's walls or to the lives of students outside of school, or to what Mueller (1958) calls the "enrichment of mature life" (121). Of course it should. But school music can achieve these things while still being a set of distinctive practices that reflect the specific contexts in which a given school is situated.

Karlsen (2021) concludes her assessment by suggesting that the efforts of sociological researchers in music education would benefit from theoretical insights found in music sociology and cultural sociology and from linking together smaller scale projects through cross-institution and cross-national collaborations. If we did this, she suggests, we could go from having a "sociology *for* music education" to a "sociology *of* music education" (150; emphasis in original). I agree that empirical research in music education would benefit immeasurably from better collaborative efforts—something one might hope possible thanks to the affordances of technology today.[32] But I question whether the sociology of music and cultural sociology are our best sources for theoretical insights. There is no doubt value in these fields that we have been overlooking, and we would be remiss if we did not avail ourselves of theory with the potential to improve our practices. I worry, however, about the dangers of inadvertent is–ought miscalculations. For better or worse, schooling is a defining feature of our field. As a result, we should be mindful of the normative aspects of our discipline, aspects that demand we acknowledge schools as political and contested sites of learning. The sociology of music

education can inform our thinking about a broad range of matters of concern. What it cannot do is supply the answers.

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Notes

[1] This is not the place to engage in debates about the marketing strategies of the major academic publishers, but I think it bears mentioning that handbook production has become "big business," with companies such as Oxford University Press, Routledge, Palgrave Macmillan, and Bloomsbury (to name four publishers with interests in music and music education) all jockeying to be known as the definitive source of disciplinary knowledge. Academic libraries no longer need to purchase individual handbooks, as they once did, but can instead subscribe to entire "packages" such as Oxford Handbooks Online, Routledge Handbooks Online, etc.

[2] Making matters worse (for me), Alperson goes down the familiar path of claiming (without warrant) that *a* philosophy of music education is necessarily based on *the* philosophy of music—which, in consonance with aesthetic education proponents, is presumed (without warrant) as synonymous with aesthetics and *the* philosophy of art. As with many arguments, the logic works as long as you don't question the premises. (What if *a* philosophy of music education wasn't based on *the* philosophy of music? What if *the* philosophy of music isn't synonymous with aesthetics or *the* philosophy of art?)

[3] By this I mean music education as it is constituted in and through English-language scholarship.

[4] Sidsel Karlsen (2021) describes Bourdieu as "our field's favorite sociologist" (147).

[5] McCarthy (1997) writes, "[T]he tenets of Western aesthetics [prominent in the second half of the twentieth century] were not altogether consonant with or

receptive to the demands of sociology on music pedagogy" (79). Roger Rideout (1997) claims that psychology has always held much greater sway in education than sociology.

[6] Notably, McCarthy implies that music educators in other countries had been less slow to embrace sociology. Curiously, however, Ruth Wright's (2010) book, *Sociology and Music Education*, was published by SEMPRE's "Studies in the Psychology of Music" series—underscoring the perceived disciplinary disparity between psychology and sociology in music education.

[7] I mean this not in the narrow definition (musicologists versus composers versus music theorists, etc.), but in the larger sense that university music faculty are all, in a sense, musicologists to the extent they study music.

[8] The most well-known product of the era is arguably David Elliott's (1995) *Music Matters: A New Philosophy of Music Education*.

[9] The MayDay Group continues to promote the social values of music education. Though by now somewhat out of date, see, for example, their very helpful resources page: http://www.maydaygroup.org/resources/bibliographies/sociological-perspectives-education-music-and-music-education-literature-five-bibliographies.

[10] Volume 29:2 (2021) of *Philosophy of Music Education Review* is dedicated to exploring the connections and relationships between sociology and philosophy in music education.

[11] Froehlich (2007) similarly draws attention to Barbara Lundquist's "proposal for a [John Blacking-inspired] sociomusical research agenda for music educators" (5).

[12] I looked at the latest issues of *British Journal of Music Education, Bulletin of the Council for Research in Music Education, Journal of Research in Music Education, Journal of Music Teacher Education, Music Education Research, and Research Studies in Music Education*. There are a few articles that are decidedly psychological (e.g., using Self Determination Theory or self-efficacy) or agnostically empirical, but the majority can easily be considered as sociocultural in nature.

[13] The complete passage by C. Wright Mills (1959) is: "Perhaps the most fruitful distinction with which the sociological imagination works is between 'the personal troubles of milieu' and 'the public issues of social structure'" (9).

[14] Vulliamy got the ball rolling with a chapter ("What Counts as School Music?") in the 1976 volume, *Explorations in the Politics of School Knowledge*. This led to

a series of powerful articles, many co-authored with Shepherd, in the early to mid-1980s.

[15] Alas, it is somewhat tragic to read Snedden's caution to the profession from almost a hundred years ago: "Is it important, in view of all other needs to be met, that in the grades, we spend time in trying to teach all children to read musical notation?" (quoted in McCarthy 1997, 78).

[16] David Lines (2003) has called music educators "culture workers."

[17] I shall belabor the point here, but many instances could be cited, ranging from Peter Dykema's MSNC slogan, "music for every child; every child for music" to the music appreciation movement to the profession's continued emphasis on "quality repertoire."

[18] See Mueller's discussion in his chapter in *Basic Concepts in Music Education* (1958).

[19] I would argue that recent work developing Richard Peterson's (1997, 2005) *omnivorousness* concept is really more of a variation on a theme. Omnivorousness challenges Bourdieu's claimed association of the upper and middle classes with classical music, but does not challenge the cultural capital-social stratification thesis itself.

[20] I am admittedly twisting Bates' Bourdieusean argument to make my point.

[21] The logic of the relevancy argument, popularized by Paul Willis's (1977) *Learning to Labour* and theorized in the curricular work of Basil Bernstein, unfortunately leads to a narrowing of the curriculum that has been argued to further disempower students from lower/working class backgrounds. Rather than striving to empower students with the "abstract" knowledge of the upper classes, restricting learning to the "concrete" traps students in the cycle. Educationalist Michael Young, editor of *Knowledge and Control* and one of the early critics influenced by social constructionism, subsequently changed his position to what he calls "social realism" (see Young 2008).

[22] Probably the most obvious example of this is that children from more affluent families can afford private music lessons and, in the case of instrumental music, better-quality instruments. As a result, such children tend, in an American context at least, to sit "first chair," play the solos, etc.

[23] Part of the argument, as I understand it, is that the strong acceptance of determinism incapacitates ethics and agency. Posthumanism thus strives to resuscitate the importance of thinking and acting ethically.

[24] I offer an elaborated argument on some of these points in Mantie (2021).

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[25] Despite my critique, I am in no way suggesting that psychology and aesthetics have not contributed to music education or that ongoing research in these areas is not valuable. I do think it fair, however, to suggest that the profession's over-emphasis on psychology and aesthetics, coupled with the way those disciplines have claimed human experiences as universal, is responsible for many forms of inequality in music education. It should be noted that "aesthetics" do factor in the sociology of music (e.g., DeNora 2000) and music education (e.g., Kaplan 1966). The conception of aesthetics in sociology, however, is markedly different from the philosophical tradition that positions music as autonomous (i.e., disembodied) art.

[26] Our limited numbers make it all the more frustrating to see so many studies on the same topic while other topics, like those arising from Childhood Studies, for example, go unexplored. Can we not move on from pre-service music teacher identity?

[27] In the same issue of PMER, Sean Powell (2021) makes a similar point: "As researchers, perhaps we should ask ourselves whether we should undertake isolated, small-scale studies unless we have a good reason to believe they will allow us to connect to larger theoretical issues" (200).

[28] See the interview in Afterword in the 25th anniversary edition of *Art Worlds* for Becker's distinction of these two traditions and how he distinguishes his "worlds" from Bourdieu's "fields."

[29] Becker has shown up in Roberts (1991) and Froehlich (2007), but these appearances have focused on Becker's labeling and occupational theory.

[30] Hume discussed this issue in his book, *A Treatise of Human Nature*.

[31] In the 1950s one finds John Mueller asking about the music and culture that "should be delegated to the schools" versus those that should be left to fend for themselves (1958, 119).

[32] One small positive of the COVID-19 pandemic may be increased fluency in technology-mediated communication.