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Freirean Pedagogy in Music Education

By

Tyler T. Slamkowski

B.A., Music, International Development Studies, Calvin College, 2015

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

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Dedication

To my teachers of all grades and subjects, especially Jim Lawrence, Greg Alley, John Marchiando, Jason Boyden, Roland Hoksbergen, Tim Steele, Jo Ann Van Engen, Kurt Ver Beek, Thomas Mullens, and Regina Carlow.

To my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement.

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To Freire for his extensive work and writings that have been my constant, faithful companion on my life journey.

Freirean Pedagogy in Music Education

By

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Abstract

This is a qualitative, multiple case study rooted in grounded theory. It explores how music teachers might implement Paulo Freire's theories in their classrooms, as well as best practices in Freirean music teaching. Paulo Freire was a Brazilian educational theorist who claimed that education, rooted in dialogue and co-creation of knowledge, could confront major structural injustices, such as inequality, exploitation, and violence.

The three participants in this study worked in the same large, Southwestern district. Participants were selected based on how their teaching fit with characteristics of Freirean Pedagogy. Three music educators, Robert, Eliza, and Jackie, the participants in this study, stood out among their peers in this regard.

Per the inductive approach employed in this study, data was gathered via structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. Themes began to emerge through the data collection process, and these data categories became the main motifs in the study's findings. The themes – accessibility, conscientization, co-learning, teaching as a political act, and love – represent how Freire's theories manifested themselves in the participants' classrooms and

might suggest best practices for Freirean Pedagogy in music education. By employing Freirean Pedagogy, music teachers could begin exploring strategies to combat oppression and pursue a more socially just world.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Personal Orientation

My interest in the connection between Paulo Freire's work in social justice and music education comes from my personal, spiritual, and academic experiences. It began with my Mennonite Christian faith, which emphasizes social justice. My passion for music and justice inspired me to double major in music and international development studies as an undergraduate. During this time, I spent a semester in Honduras, where I intensively studied justice issues, lived with a host family, and learned Spanish. I spent an additional year teaching social studies in Honduras after graduating. These experiences in Honduras put me face-to-face with inequities common throughout the Global South, cultivating in me a more worldwide sense of solidarity with marginalized people. I performed and learned alongside Honduran musicians throughout this time, playing in jazz bands and churches in Tegucigalpa and La Unión. And in the space between, two siblings died unexpectedly, changing and breaking my life irreparably. Their deaths were painful and expanded my empathy with people who suffer. Losing members of my immediate family solidified my personal conviction to seek peace and hope in our world.

Because of these experiences, I think, hope, and pray for social justice. It is my passion. Yet I often wonder: what can I do? More specifically, what can I do, not as a lawyer, doctor, or aid worker, but as a musician? The following quote in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Freire (1970) gave me a glimmer of hope:

True generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the "rejects of life," to

extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving so that these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world.

In this quote, Freire suggests that education addresses the root causes of poverty, violence, and injustice. His ideas so resonated with me that I attempted to apply Freire in the working world right out of college.

I began to experiment with Freirean techniques in my professional life. I worked as a residence hall coordinator in my first full-time job after college. As a residence hall coordinator, I created and utilized Freirean materials (e.g. learning needs assessments, one-on-one mentoring, critical questions) as I managed my resident assistant (RA) employees. For example, I developed a year-long, collaborative professional development “curriculum” based on my RAs’ responses to learning needs assessments. My bosses, up to the president of the college, complimented our staff’s dedication, creativity, and positivity; in their words, we were “above and beyond.” This deepened my suspicions that Freire’s theories could make a serious difference.

My second opportunity to explore Freirean ideas was teaching in Honduras, my second extended stay in the country. I tested Freirean techniques in my work as a social studies teacher in one of the poorest bilingual schools in Honduras. My students initially resisted my attempts to teach for critical consciousness, “the ability to read the world in order to change it” (Freire, 1970). They disliked our circles of desks, seminar-style discussions, open-ended questions, writing assignments, and critical document analyses. I persisted. Slowly, they warmed up to

these practices. Eventually, my students began complaining about classes where they merely took notes, regurgitated information, and did not engage in dialogue. And they began to express admiration for my class' communal discourse about social realities.

These rudimentary attempts showed me that Paulo Freire's ideas had potential in various educational settings. But I often wondered, "How could I apply Freire to my own subject area: music?" Similarly, how might music educators in general promote social justice? No matter where I went or worked, these questions lingered in the back of my mind. To keep learning, I read books by Freire and his disciples. My research led me to graduate school, and I now present the following proposal as the next step in my learning journey.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore which aspects of Paulo Freire's philosophy are present in the secondary instrumental music classroom. I choose the term "Freirean Pedagogy" as an umbrella for the diversity of research, opinion, and practice related to his work. While "Critical Pedagogy" carries a similar meaning, this term is criticized for its overemphasis on economic/social class oppression over other issues also important to Freire, such as racism (Bond, 2014). I view Freirean Pedagogy as the union of two sub-fields: Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. These two approaches, seen together, convey the heart of Freirean education: "action and reflection upon the world in order to change it" (Freire, 1970).

These conclusions proceed from my personal beliefs, literature study, community development coursework, and teaching practice. I want readers to learn how they can

embody Freire's ideas in their own middle and high school music classes. My main research question is:

1. How might teachers already be employing Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy?

My subsidiary questions are:

2. How do teachers perceive their personal connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching?
3. What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy?

Scope of Study and Researcher Influence

This study explores the presence of Freirean Pedagogy in the secondary instrumental music classroom. I focus on instrumental music because it is my own area of expertise. My membership in this group helped me go deeper into the research because I am familiar with the patterns, jargon, and perspectives common to instrumental music teachers. Data was collected by observing and interviewing these teachers in a comfortable, professional setting – the music classroom.

My presence as an outside observer certainly skewed my data in two major ways. First, my participants likely modified their behavior in an attempt to fit their perceptions of my expectations. Second, the style of research I employed was based heavily on researcher interpretation; therefore, it was highly susceptible to my biases. I utilized a variety of strategies to mitigate this bias, discussed in-depth in Chapter 3.

The results of this study may not connect to all other contexts and situations. However, I aim to provide examples that current teachers may utilize in their own

classrooms. Further study, research, and theorizing are required in order to comprehensively generalize Freire's theories for all music classrooms. That being said, Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom may include the following practices: democratic decision-making, open writing/discussion prompts, group composition, project-based learning, and studying non-Western art music. I want to investigate how these, and other practices, could look in the secondary instrumental music classroom.

Summary

This thesis hinges on two closely-related concepts: social justice and liberation. The National Education Association (2019) defines social justice as follows:

Social justice refers to a concept in which equity or justice is achieved in every aspect of society rather than in only some aspects or for some people. A world organized around social justice principles affords individuals and groups fair treatment as well as an impartial share or distribution of the advantages and disadvantages within a society.

Social justice includes a vision of a society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole.

Social justice connotes a society marked holistically and entirely by equity. In contemporary research, this is the term that is most often used when discussing Freire's educational and societal goals. Freire frequently used the word "liberation" to indicate similar ideals.

Liberation, in Freirean thought, is a world marked by equity, communalism, and redistribution. It evokes strong connections to Marxist thought.

My personal experiences led me to wonder about the presence of Freirean Pedagogy in music education because it combines my deepest passions: justice/liberation and music. But how prevalent are Freirean ideas in the secondary instrumental music classrooms? What does Freirean theory look like in these classrooms? How might we best practice Freirean Pedagogy? The primary purpose of this study is to answer these questions. By exploring the teaching experiences of secondary instrumental music teachers in a large public school district in the southwest United States, this project aims to explore the influence of Freire on music educators.

Music education is not exempt from the call to teach for liberation and enact Freire's notion of "true generosity." My goal for teachers is the same as Freire's (1970): that "these hands – whether of individuals or entire peoples – need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world." Using Freirean Pedagogy, music educators could play an integral role in making our society more equitable.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Why is education important? How does public education address the myriad social issues of our day? Freire teaches us that education answers these problems directly. The purpose of education is to cultivate “action and reflection upon the world in order to change it”; this is what Freire called “praxis” (Freire, 1970). Praxis is the continual, reciprocal process of action and reflection. It is how learning and social transformation happen in Freire’s philosophy. This literature review shows the major research on the relationship between Freire’s theories and music education by examining three topics: philosophy, classroom practice, and world/vernacular courses (non-Western art music, including popular music).

Freirean Pedagogy has two main branches: Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Critical Pedagogy is an educational philosophy and methodology centered on critical thinking and the development of individual agency. It focuses on teaching for economic equity. While Critical Pedagogy has influenced education since Paulo Freire first published *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968, music education has only felt its impact in the past few decades, particularly via Maxine Greene’s emphasis on critical, integrated arts education. According to Jorgensen (2015), “music education is centrally connected with matters of justice because music education is a facet of cultural and public policy,” a nod toward Greene’s and Freire’s respective notions of critical consciousness and educating for agency.

Another angle of Freirean Pedagogy is Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is a system of teaching centered on student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness. Because it combines cultural relativism and reckoning with oppressive realities, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is linked to greater school-based success among students of color in US public schools (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is “specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment” that goes beyond merely conveying content to generating solidarity and social change (Bond, 2014). In short, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy expands upon the communal aspects of Freire’s philosophy by explicitly addressing issues of race and colonialism. “Freirean Pedagogy,” the focus of my research, attempts to unite Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into one main concept.

There are three main categories of research on Freirean Pedagogy in music education: philosophy, practice, and world music education. However, how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? Unlike Orff, Kodály, and other approaches to music education, Freirean Pedagogy lacks a clear-cut curriculum and universal set of materials. There are no workshops or method books for practicing Freire’s theories in music education. Exploring the literature reveals how specialists implement Freirean concepts in specific classroom situations, but there is no practical, comprehensive set of best practices for the music classroom in general, such as lesson/curriculum planning, assessment, and materials. This research will move toward these principles and strategies by answering the following

questions: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy?

Philosophy

In the literature, we see a significant amount of philosophical inquiry on Freirean thought in music education. Freire acknowledged inequity in society and actively tried to correct it through education. In education, it is a teaching approach which seeks to help students recognize, reflect upon, and act to change systems of oppression. Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is the seminal text on his philosophy. He laid out the fundamental principles of liberatory education, such as praxis, thematic exploration, conscientization, and dialogue. Freire also presented the case for his theories, explaining its necessity and role in serving humanity. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an indispensable resource that lays the groundwork for Freirean Pedagogy and fully introduces it.

Greene (1995) comprehensively explored the intersection of the arts, aesthetic education, and Critical Pedagogy in *Releasing the Imagination*. Her many essays, articles, and publications examined these topics from a variety of angles. *Releasing the Imagination* introduced each component of her philosophy and built the foundation for her argument that integrated arts education plays an essential role in cultivating imagination in service to social reform. Greene offered a strong case that imagination and critical consciousness are uniquely cultivated by engagement with the arts, especially music. Like *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Greene's book is essential to understand the connection between music education and Freire's ideas.

Allsup (2003) explored various definitions of “praxis,” depending on the philosopher, and explained how Maxine Greene’s emphasis on imagination leads to praxis through the arts. The author provided examples of how aesthetic experiences cultivate praxis with particular emphasis on how Maxine Greene’s ideas lead to an ideal expression of praxis in the music classroom. Allsup also walked through his application of Greene’s philosophies with his music students in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks. This article combines theory and practice in an applicable fashion.

Benedict (2006) discussed the US National Music Standards through the lens of Critical Pedagogy and compared them with national standards in other subject areas. The author concluded that the US National Music Standards were incongruent with Critical Pedagogy because they failed to engage in praxis at the institutional and grassroots levels. Benedict extended Critical Pedagogy to the structures of education themselves. For example, the author suggested that the “Music Standards are a manifestation of an oppressed society because “schools . . . dictate what and whose knowledge is most worth having.” This reveals the holistic nature of Critical Pedagogy and how teachers must embody its philosophy in their educational advocacy and politics, opening a new way to ponder Critical Pedagogy’s scope.

Kress and Lake (2017) juxtaposed Maxine Greene and Paulo Freire in order to mutually reinforce and deepen Critical Pedagogy in the midst of contemporary social issues. By exploring parallels in the ideas of each philosopher, the authors showed how Greene and Freire had the same vision, often employing different terms for the same concepts. This article introduces more nuanced ideas in Critical Pedagogy and how to internalize the

philosophy by examining terminology and contextualizing it by time period, author, and influence.

Hess (2017) argued that Critical Pedagogy ought to guide music teachers, but for all its benefits, there were paradoxes and educational casualties in its implementation. Likewise, some scholars have suggested that Critical Pedagogy does not adequately address racism or the impacts of colonialism. The author based these conclusions on research and observation among elementary music teachers attempting to implement Critical Pedagogy. It was not enough to adopt Critical Pedagogy; teachers needed to reflect deeply upon their own complicity in oppression/privilege and consider what students may gain/lose by not engaging Western music in a traditional sense. For example, by studying African diasporic musics instead of European art music, students may lose knowledge that will give them cultural capital, but they will gain contextualization and critical thinking skills. This article discusses serious flaws in Critical Pedagogy with which teachers must reckon, regardless of the particular philosophical brand they espouse. Few critical pedagogues explicitly research the imperfections of this philosophy, making this article exceptionally useful in a discussion of Critical Pedagogy's realistic impact.

Ladson-Billings (1995) presented the first major push toward a theory of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Her research followed eight African American public school teachers and collected a list of exemplary practices these teachers implemented in cross-cultural classroom situations. Ultimately, Ladson-Billings concluded that emphasizing student learning, cultural competence, and critical consciousness were the key components to enacting culturally responsive pedagogy. This is a fundamental resource at the heart of all

contemporary research and discussion on Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. For example, Martinez (2012), Shaw (2012), Bond (2014), and Schmidt/Smith (2017) all discussed Ladson-Billings' findings extensively and discussed unique situations, such as secondary choral ensembles or elementary mariachi groups, where they, too, saw the principles in her study at work. Ladson-Billings' work lies at the root of many attempts to make education accessible and relevant for all students.

Lind and McKoy (2016) presented Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in a comprehensive fashion for pre-service music educators. This textbook has three main topics: theoretical/philosophical frameworks of equity; practical examples of transferring theory into practice; and examples of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in music education. This resource took the theory of Ladson-Billings from a general, theoretical context through to specific, comprehensive application in the music classroom. It is a thorough but lengthy introduction to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in music education.

Practice

There are many studies in music that explore the connection of Critical Pedagogy to ensemble and classroom experiences. This section explores studies that show an awareness of Freirean influence in the music classroom. Heuser (2001) offered an in-depth example of how traditional performing ensembles cultivated imagination and liberation. Through a case study of North Park Middle School in Los Angeles, Heuser described the curriculum, community partnerships, and teacher disposition that develop critical consciousness in students while still maintaining the traditional ensemble model. This article illuminates

holistic methods of Critical Pedagogy without dismantling the current structure of music education in the United States.

Abrahams (2005) provided a comprehensive yet simple introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the music classroom with an emphasis on lesson planning. Abrahams explained the philosophy behind Critical Pedagogy and provided lesson examples, such as a theatrical production examining the relationship between Madonna and Mozart, that met various components of the National Standards. Music researchers interested in exploring Critical Pedagogy and the history behind Maxine Greene's ideas would find this source an excellent first read.

Baxter (2007) explored how undergraduate and graduate students responded to art/music, with a social justice emphasis, in a course taught at the Crane School of Music. This article describes methods of experiencing art with a critical eye and how teachers can guide students to utilize imagination in the rich sense that Maxine Greene espoused. In many ways, it evokes Greene's experiencing multiple perspectives when discussing Medieval art with an African American teenager from the Bronx, a moment that brought her to realize that critically experiencing art happens from many viewpoints and in community (Greene, 1995). It also shares how students may react in a critical classroom, shedding light on the potential outcomes of utilizing Greene's philosophy in particular.

Hess (2014) discussed best practices of Critical Pedagogy in the elementary music classroom. The author outlined lesson plans, methodologies, and themes employed by these teachers, explaining the specific social injustices they challenged and the impact on student

learning. This article provides explicit and practical examples that are applicable to teaching elementary music via Critical Pedagogy.

Haycock (2015) asserted that engagement in protest music, also known as political popular music, can be a powerful force for public pedagogy. The author explained various methods for using protest music in adult education and discussed best practices/philosophies on the part of teachers. While Haycock talked primarily about music from the West, his ideas apply to all political popular music. This article focuses more on Freire's original intention with his pedagogical/curricular ideas: adult education. As community music education expands in the US, this article gives a good introduction to using music education as a vehicle for adult liberatory education.

Shevock (2015) explored Freirean Pedagogy in an undergraduate jazz combo. Shevock found that his students were performing poorly in traditional audition situations that emphasized Western art music. The author employed Freirean strategies to help his students, then measured the effectiveness of his methods in helping students play jazz and become critically conscious. Shevock especially emphasized the connection between improvisation and critical consciousness. Shevock evinces a fine example of Freirean Pedagogy creating an alternate approach and reality to dominant culture in music and music education. This is also one of the few items in the research literature that refers specifically to "Freirean Pedagogy" instead of Critical Pedagogy or Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

Sears (2016) connected Socrates' "aporia" and Greene's "wide awakeness." "Wide awakeness" refers to Greene's assertion that "morality in education depends upon educators' commitment to problematize transparent and oppressive norms by calling into question long

held beliefs.” “Aporia” means a “state of confusion that occurs when previously held assumptions are challenged and new understandings are formed.” In this narrative study, the author wrote from a personal vantage point, highlighting her experience as a female collegiate band director in a traditionally male-dominated field. Sears suggested that pre-service teachers must be confronted with similar sensations, to be woken up to painful realities and how to challenge these difficulties. The ideas she discussed are not limited to collegiate music education; Greene’s ultimate goals are evinced as general principles that can be applied to any music teaching situation.

Vernacular Music Instruction

Taking practical applications a step further, a small number of researchers focus on the relationship between various non-Western art music pedagogies and Critical Pedagogy. Milam and Sandlin (2008) provided concrete examples of critical public pedagogy in practice via community world and popular music ensembles. These ensembles included West African drumming ensembles, songwriting classes, electronic composition groups, and rock bands. Milam and Sandlin discussed music’s ability both to challenge dominant cultural norms and its propensity to be co-opted by market capitalism. The authors especially emphasized the participatory transformation that music can foment in urban and marginalized communities. Public pedagogy in this vein demonstrates how non-Western art pedagogy could be framed such that students engage popular music and critically engage the world around them.

Garofalo (2011) discussed HONK! Pedagogy, a radical, political style of music teaching that has mixed with local social movements in Somerville, Massachusetts. The author explored the importance of aural learning, improvisation, alternative ensembles, and

connecting with local politics in the pursuit of social justice through artistic collaboration. Additionally, Garofalo explained that centralizing Western art music at the top of the music curriculum ultimately marginalizes students of diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. HONK! relied heavily on both world music curriculum and Critical Pedagogy, demonstrating how the two can be linked in community education and with a focus on wider social issues.

Kruger (2011) argued that music education ought to concurrently “acknowledge universal musicality” and question “dominant elitist concepts in musical learning in the West,” which will ultimately lead to greater tolerance, democratic thinking, and equity in students’ lives and world. Kruger emphasized that music education should form compassionate, critically-conscious citizens. The author’s arguments lay a firm foundation the connection between vernacular music and Critical Pedagogy, demonstrating that there is a qualitative difference between vernacular music and Western art music that lends itself to dialogical education.

Govender and Ruggunan’s (2013) article focused on the use of West African drumming in celebrating diversity and promoting multicultural unity in post-apartheid South Africa. While this article is not focused on public school music, it contains excellent ideas for using West African drumming to cultivate robust community and general practices for teaching a general world drumming class that leans on Freirean ideas. The authors found that West African drumming encouraged “open and honest communication around sensitive issues,” which translates well into the mixture of constructivist pedagogy in the diverse world music classroom.

Hess (2013) discussed ethical engagement in “world” (non-Western) music with an emphasis on Critical Pedagogy. Hess revealed issues of identity and ownership of “world music” as compared to white, dominant music and world music’s appropriation into dominant culture. Hess concluded that teachers and students must dismantle colonial underpinnings and power structures, co-learn, and develop cross-cultural relationships as they approach world music in the classroom. Teachers should present world music as dynamic and alive. This helps students and teachers cultivate a critical, lifelong relationship of learning. Process is more important than mental mastery. This article expands Critical Pedagogy from its more materialistic, Marxist roots into a wider web of postcolonial and pluralistic thought. It also invites questions about the labels we place on non-Western music. Is “world music” too broad to hold concrete meaning? Does this label “other” all music outside North America and Europe? Where does popular music fit?

Summary

Current research on Freirean theory in music education is severely limited. At the same time, research on Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is widespread but undirected. A great deal of philosophical analysis of Critical Pedagogy in music education has been written, and researchers have certainly explored Critical Pedagogy in their own specific fields of practice. However, a comprehensive approach to Freirean Pedagogy in music education, listing specific approaches and their relationship to philosophical principles, does not exist. Unlike Orff, Kodály, or Music Learning Theory, Freirean Pedagogy in music education has not received the attention, standardization, or exploration required for it to receive widespread, intensive use by music teachers anywhere

in the world. The existing research is a smattering of ideas and principles applied provincially. The purpose of my research is to pursue a common set of practices, perceptions, and situations specific to music education, practices that can be differentiated depending on the context. I hope that this research will guide music teachers to genuinely applying, understanding, and embracing the nature of Freirean Pedagogy.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

Music classrooms bustle with activity, sound, energy, and passion. They serve multitudes of students throughout the United States, and music teachers play a vital role in their students' lives. Likely without intention, they sometimes also entrench cultural elitism, income inequality, and racism because they tend to be rooted in the hegemonic Western art tradition. In this world, classical music is considered the apex of musical achievement to the detriment of other musics. I want to respond to these problems by expanding and understanding social justice in the music classroom. My research seeks to do this by examining, and possibly extending, Paulo Freire's influence in music education.

My study centers on the following research questions: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? To begin answering these questions, I embarked on a journey of research that brought me face-to-face with three extraordinary music educators who helped me frame this multiple case study, informed and interpreted through grounded theory. A multiple case study "involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases" in order to provide a "holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, my "cases" were three public school music teachers whose experiences helped me better understand how a Freirean approach to music education might be practiced.

The framework for analyzing these cases was grounded theory, a naturalistic approach to data gathering and interpretation. DePoy and Gitlin (2005) describe grounded theory in the following way:

Grounded theory is a method in naturalistic research that is used primarily to generate theory. The researcher begins with a broad query in a particular topic area and then collects relevant information about the topic. As the action processes of data collection continue, each piece of information is reviewed, compared, and contrasted with other information. From this constant comparison process, commonalities and dissimilarities among categories of information become clear, and ultimately a theory that explains observations is inductively developed. Thus, queries that will be answered through grounded theory do not relate to specific domains but rather to the structure of how the researcher wants to organize the findings

In order to develop a theory of Freirean Pedagogy in secondary instrumental music classes, I sought to examine, inductively and naturalistically, three music teachers' work and interactions in their classrooms. Before conducting field research, I explored how Freire's theories are currently discussed and implemented in music classrooms. Several approaches to Freire's ideas are influential in contemporary education and reveal how Freirean Pedagogy is understood by prominent educators: Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

Critical Pedagogy is an educational philosophy and methodology centered on critical thinking and the development of individual agency. In music education, it may be marked by open discussion/writing prompts, group decision-making, learning needs/resources assessments, communal composition, or other activities in which students and teachers co-

learn and explore social issues/realities. Classrooms may also have a democratic power structure in which students and teachers determine curriculum together.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy emphasizes collective empowerment as a component of Freire's ideas. Students should have three major experiences in a classroom guided by Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: academic success, developed cultural competence, and critical consciousness that impels them to challenge the current social order (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Music educators have taken Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and re-designed it for use in their classes. There are seven ways that teachers practice Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in the music classroom (Bond, 2014):

1. Know the students
2. Build on student strengths
3. Connect home and school experiences
4. Use a wide variety of musics
5. Present music in its social and political context
6. Acknowledge and share multiple perspectives
7. Encourage a sense of community with high expectations for all

Ultimately, I chose the term "Freirean Pedagogy" as an umbrella to encapsulate the main ideas of both Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.

I observed secondary music teachers whose practices suggested Freire's impact. The participants did not cite Freire as an influence, but they used methods that implied a connection with Freirean ideology, such as an expressed commitment to social justice, an

emphasis on positive relationships with students, and an understanding of critical questioning.

Participants were selected through observations of more than 20 music educators; I watched them teach, rehearse, and perform. All of them work in the same large Southwestern school district. To prepare for participant selection, I studied Freire's writings and drafted a description of what Freirean Pedagogy might look like in the music classroom. Then, I began to observe teachers who appeared to embody these characteristics throughout the school district.

Three teachers fit this description closely and were invited to participate in the study. I gathered data via structured interviews, document analysis, and observation. To reflect Freire's ideals, such as dialogue, praxis, and social justice, I chose to collect and analyze data using a qualitative approach rooted in grounded theory. Essentially, I wanted to create meaning alongside the participants, growing in understanding together. The ultimate purpose of this study was to gain deeper understanding of the prevalence of Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom with special emphasis on expanding its practice.

Participants

This study centered on the teaching practice and philosophies (stated and implied) of three secondary instrumental music teachers. I spent time observing teachers throughout the same school district, looking for music educators with identified teaching practices or personal commitments that evoked Freirean Pedagogy. Based on my review of relevant literature, Freirean influence might involve some or all of the following teaching practices: an emphasis on social justice, democratic teaching practices, dialogue and discussion,

meaningful relationships between teacher and students, and safe learning environments. Each participant had at least five years of teaching experience and demonstrated some level of commitment to social justice in education either through stated intent or classroom practice. Finally, the teachers perceived that they had employed classroom activities focused on the development of critical consciousness, cultural awareness, and other activities that may be broadly construed as having a “social justice” purpose. The three participants in this study did not claim Freire as an influence, but they taught as though they might have. Their lived experience as teachers impacted by Freire fit neatly with my research questions; together, we grew in our understanding of Freirean Pedagogy in the secondary music classroom.

Setting

The settings for this study were the secondary classrooms of the selected teacher-participants. The schools were part of a large public-school district in the southwestern United States. At the time of the study, the school district statistics stated that 68.2% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch. 128 out of 142 schools were Title I. The student demographics broke down as follows:

- Hispanic: 65.8%
- Anglo: 22.9%
- American Indian: 5.5%
- African American: 3.2%
- Asian: 2.3%

This school district was one of the largest and most demographically diverse in the state. It was a good setting for study because it brought together a wide range of human experiences in one location.

Procedure

Because of my interest in Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom, I decided to employ a qualitative research paradigm. Qualitative research seeks to gather information related to perceptions, personalities, and narratives. It is a naturalistic model focused on description, process, and meaning gained through inductive means (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). In other words, qualitative research is an organic approach that emphasizes immersion and participant-observation in a situation, place, or people in order to observe and draw whichever conclusions make themselves apparent.

Grounded theory is the sub-field of qualitative research that I decided to use in this study. It focuses on constantly comparing and organizing data in order to generate a theory. This design fit well with my research goal: to develop of a theory of Freirean Pedagogy in the secondary music classroom based on observations, interviews, and document analysis from three participants. The inductive strategy I employed for this research guided my data collection and analysis and ultimately helped me generate main themes of Freirean Pedagogy in the secondary music classroom.

Data Collection

Data collection involved classroom observations, email exchanges, classroom material analysis, and face-to-face interviews. I distributed and received informed consent forms for all activities included in the study, then was approved by the UNM Main Campus

Internal Review Board prior to conducting observations. While observing, I discreetly placed myself in the classroom and wrote field notes. The participants introduced me to their students, but otherwise, I was not included in rehearsals or classroom activities.

I conducted structured interviews with an interview guide and attempted to answer specific questions about Freirean teaching methods. Unstructured interviews took place after each class observation and were open-ended, leaving room for the teacher to discuss whatever he/she desired. Participants were interviewed in both ways, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. Consent was always requested before recording to encourage a sense of mutual respect and co-learning between myself and the participants.

My goal was to approach interviews with a Freirean mindset. As Freire (1970) said, “At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only people who are attempting, together, to learn more than they now know.” The data collection process sought to embody this notion by viewing data collection as an open-process where the participants had as much say as the researcher.

Once data collection was finished, the data was analyzed and interpreted, including primary and secondary source material. I transcribed all materials myself, and transcriptions were shared with teachers immediately after completion. Teachers had full latitude to suggest edits/revisions to what they said in interviews. The purpose, again, was to cultivate a spirit of teamwork and collaboration between myself and the participants.

There was also access to a wide variety of primary sources, including personal and official documents related to the teacher, students, class, school, and community. To gain access to personal documents, requests were issued to the teacher, explaining their

significance to the study. Documents were read and analyzed as soon as they were accessed. These documents were important to corroborate teacher-participants' interview answers and/or to demonstrate changes in curricula over the course of the project. Overall, the research process focused on collaborating with the participants to better understand how they might be employing Freirean Pedagogy in their classrooms.

Researcher Influence

Inevitably, my presence altered the dynamic of the classroom. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) noted, "The interdependency between the observer and the observed may bring about changes in both parties' behaviors. The question, then, is not whether the process of observing affects what is observed but how the researcher can identify those effects and account for them in interpreting the data." I sought to temper my impact in three ways.

First, I kept a fieldwork journal, "an introspective record of . . . ideas, fears, mistakes, confusion, and reactions . . . and can include thoughts about the research methodology itself" (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016). Among other speculations, the point of my fieldwork journal was to reflect on how my presence might have influenced my participants' behavior and to guide me as I prepared for additional observations.

Second, I discussed my data and fieldwork journal with my primary investigator. The purpose of this practice was to cultivate dependability within the research itself ("What is Qualitative Research?"):

Dependability may be determined through an audit with the "auditor" or peer reviewer examining the process of the research inquiry and the product, namely the data, findings, interpretations and recommendations. The review confirms that the

results, finding, and conclusions, are supported by the data and is internally coherent and establishes the confirmability.

Throughout the data collection process, I regularly met with my primary investigator and presented my data and interpretations up to that moment. She suggested modifications to my interpretations and data collection procedures, shared resources to help me consider the data in new ways, and gave me specific phenomena to investigate in additional observations and interviews.

Third, I shared my data and interpretations with the participants. This gave them “an opportunity to correct errors of fact and to challenge interpretations that to them seem incorrect” (“What is Qualitative Research?”). We were able to engage in a dialogue about my research and draw conclusions “together . . . to learn more” (Freire, 1970). Through my fieldwork journal, collaboration with my primary investigator, and involving participants in the research process, I sought to enhance the validity of my findings. This strategy is called “triangulation”; essentially, I used “multiple investigators, multiple sources of data, and multiple methods to confirm . . . findings” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My personal judgments still affect the outcome of this project, but via these efforts toward validity, I hope that my interpretations were consistent and credible.

Timeline

Participants were observed, selected, and invited to participate in the study from March to May, 2019. Fieldwork took place over the span of one semester. I observed each classroom three times and formally interviewed each teacher once. Following the period of fieldwork, I spent approximately one month coding and analyzing data, returning

occasionally to continue observing and corroborate my data and conclusions before writing the final iteration of the entire study. The second semester was spent writing the thesis.

<u>Time Period</u>	<u>Activities</u>
March – May	-Observed various classrooms -Selected/invited teacher-participants to join study -Completed research approval process with Internal Review Board
May – August	-Prepared interview guides
August – September	-Conducted observations and interviews -Broached access to receipt of other primary sources, including teaching materials
September – December	-Coded and analyzed data -Wrote and defended thesis

Summary

The purpose of this study was to answer three questions: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? To answer these questions, I employed a multiple case study of secondary school music teachers in a large public district. I delved into Freire's theories through his writings and relevant research literature, then drafted a loose description of how music teachers might employ Freirean techniques in their classrooms. Before selecting participants, I observed a wide variety of music teachers from one school district and compared them with my tentative description; ultimately, I invited three teachers to join my study. These teachers, this study's participants, exhibited characteristics that I felt were Freirean, such as democratic classroom practices and building meaningful relationships with students. I gathered data in four forms: interviews, observations, participant reflection

journals, and classroom material analysis. My goal was to investigate strategies and perceptions of Freirean Pedagogy in the secondary music classroom. This research was needed in order to encourage social reform through the music classroom and further liberation, dialogue, and justice in our schools and nation.

Chapter 4: Teacher Cases

Introduction

Three questions guide this project: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? To answer these questions, I conducted research centered on the teaching experiences of three individuals whose work reflected characteristics of Freirean Pedagogy. The following section shares biographical information, teaching philosophy, and observations about each of the three study participants. The data in this section is derived from observations, interviews, written reflections, and primary source documents.

This section offers short biographical sketches of each participant in the study: Eliza Davis, Robert Cole, and Jackie DuPont. The purpose of these sketches is to give the reader a more personal understanding of the participants. By learning about Eliza, Robert, and Jackie, I hope that readers will more clearly see the connections between the participants and Paulo Freire's theories.

Eliza Davis

Eliza Davis is one of the most well-known middle school band teachers in her state. She has received numerous teaching awards, hosts student teachers from around the region, and holds a reputation for emphasizing creativity in the classroom.

Biographical Sketch.

Eliza wears her graying hair in a stern bun, like Professor McGonagall from *Harry Potter*. Eliza told me her musical journey started out as a “band kid” from the East Coast,

where she endured a tough family situation but found refuge in music class (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). According to Eliza, things changed when she began playing in band. “When I was in the 6th grade, they had a tuba at my elementary school. They said, ‘Can somebody play this tuba? It’s free.’ We had to stand up. I was the tallest kid in 6th grade...It was between me and this other kid, and I got it.” Eliza shared that practicing became her new obsession. Playing the tuba also connected Eliza with music teachers who changed her life. Eliza said her music teachers “saved me from a really hard home situation,” which increased her passion for tuba.

In college, Eliza majored in music education, but she considered herself a performer, not a teacher, until mid-career. While she taught in public schools, Eliza actively sought and took professional performance opportunities. Discussing her early career, Eliza said, “My dad was really sick at the time . . . I decided to teach because I wanted to be where he was because I knew he didn’t have a lot of time left” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). Throughout our discussions, Eliza emphasized the importance of family in her life. This value on family seemed to push her toward teaching over performing.

Eliza’s collegiate tuba instructor also encouraged her to teach. “I remember saying to my college tuba teacher, ‘I think I could teach’ . . . he said, ‘I would want you to be my child’s band director.’ That was one of the nicest comments I’ve ever gotten” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). Yet, for many years, Eliza “would have identified [herself], above everything else, as a tuba player.” Then something changed. Eliza was offered two jobs at the same time, one to play in a brass quintet and one to teach. She flew to Georgia for a week-long trial with the quintet; Eliza said, “I knew a couple hours in

that I wanted to teach.” In later conversations, Eliza relayed that there was a relationship component that her tuba career lacked. She accepted the job teaching middle school, and since then, has committed to a career as a music educator.

Eliza implied that her goal is making a difference through teaching. “For me, I feel like I give more to the world as a teacher than I would have as a performing tuba player” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). Now, she is recognized as one of the finest music educators in her state; she has won several major teaching awards in the past decade and student teachers in her city clamor to have Eliza as their cooperating teacher. Eliza appears to put her whole self into the act of teaching, letting go of an equally promising tuba career to embrace a vocation that she feels better serves others.

Eliza listed three core concepts of her teaching philosophy: connecting students to music, creating a supportive learning environment, and equity. She explained that the crux of her philosophy is “getting students to find a place in music” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). Eliza encourages every student to discover how to include music in his/her life, to love and appreciate the musical person he/she could become. She beams and laughs when students shared music from diverse genres, and many of her assignments invited students to perform or arrange their favorite music. Eliza expressed worry for students who “close the door to music in middle school.” Her goal is to give students a positive musical experience to encourage them to continue studying, playing, and enjoying music.

Eliza expressed strong anti-competitive sentiments. She noted that music should center on love and passion, not winning or beating opponents. While Eliza said she does

teach using competitive games and activities, via Kahoot or Jeopardy, she does not bring her groups to band competitions. She noted (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019):

That was a conscious decision I made as part of my philosophy. To not involve in group competition, like a state band contest or something like that . . . kids often come back from those experiences feeling like, “I’ve lost” if they don’t get first place. I just don’t think that’s necessary in music. I really don’t. It’s not a sports team. We don’t have to lose. We can all win! At the end of the day, people are going to clap for them.

During our meetings, Eliza frequently honored students who she described as hard workers. She actively encourages students who invest their energy into her classes. However, she never compromised cooperation as a guiding principle in order to recognize individuals.

Eliza claimed that “equity” is a benchmark of her beliefs about teaching. According to Merriam-Webster’s dictionary, equity is “justice according to natural law or right; freedom from bias or favoritism” (“Equity”). However, Eliza defines equity as “giving students what they need when they need it” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019). She strives to rotate parts in her ensembles. Additionally, when students struggle with basic needs, like food or housing, Eliza tries to connect them with resources that can help them. Her goal is “giving kids a comfortable, safe environment where they can grow and learn.” As discussed above, she had an experience in school where her band director “rescued her”; Eliza “never wants to do that as a teacher because that’s too much responsibility.” But Eliza consistently asserted that she wants students to know she is there for them.

The following is a narrative from my fieldwork journal. It expounds upon her expressed commitment to help students “find their place in music” (E. Davis, personal communication, September 11, 2019):

Eliza said something today that revealed a little of her self-perception as a teacher: “Who listens to music every day? I want to know what music you like. If it’s band music, that’s great! But I don’t expect that. It can be anything, any genre or artist. Tell me songs, artists, or however you think about it.” This quote seems to clarify Eliza’s teaching philosophy as focused on building up student music-making and love for music on their own terms.

Eliza frequently moves around the classroom to help students. This appears to demonstrate a motivation for one-on-one, individualized instruction centered on caring.

Eliza, of course, did amazing teaching today. She stood with the percussion section for at least 20 minutes, helping them 1-on-1 and as a section during warm-ups (admittedly, a luxury possible because she has an assistant teacher in the room). Her system of practice and individual learning, centered on Smart Music, is organized and clear.

In one telling moment, she led an activity centered on “Sweet Child of Mine” by Guns ‘n Roses. The music was playing as students entered the room. Once class started, they watched several YouTube covers of “Sweet Child of Mine” and briefly discussed the similarities and differences. Eliza claimed to love this song and showed it to students. After class, she shared that this activity played into her desire for students to find music they love. It is emblematic of her goal to help each student build his/her own relationship with music.

Eliza has a tremendous reputation as a band teacher in her community. While she began her career as a tuba performer, Eliza slowly saw her passion shift toward teaching because it allowed her to be near family and feel like she was making a difference in the world. Eliza asserts that her philosophy centers on connecting students to music, particularly by rejecting competition and cultivating a learning environment “where all students get what they need when they need it.” Eliza frequently employs “choose your favorite music” activities in her classroom to foster her students’ individual passion for music. She prioritizes students’ own relationships with music and found many ways to invite students in a deeper discourse with music by saying, “I want to know what music *you* like.”

Robert Cole

Robert Cole is a high school band director with over two decades of teaching experience. As a member of the band community in Robert’s city, I have some slightly extra insight on his reputation. He is viewed as a strong, stalwart personality who wants the best possible experience for his students.

Biographical Sketch.

Robert attended a small public school in rural Kansas. He had the same band teacher from fifth grade through his senior year in high school. Robert calls himself an accomplished tuba player and general “low brass guy”; during high school, he made All-State Band every year (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). He also won Kansas’ highest musical honor for students, the Honor Medallion. Performing has been an important part of Robert’s story. In his own words, “I remember my first concert, my first solo in sixth grade, that and how it all felt. The success. It really shapes a lot of my philosophy to this day.”

Western art music plays a fundamental role in Robert's identity. With emotion in his voice, he relayed the following story surrounding his grandmother's death: "When my grandmother, with whom I was very close, passed away, I fought through the school day. I went home, I put on Brahms' *German Requiem*, and I cried for two hours straight . . . That music was healing" (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). He continually spoke about the role classical music played in his life, noting, "I've had profound experiences with Western art music. I love it." This statement is just one of many that showed Robert's love for classical music. Robert plainly told me that other genres of music sparked his emotions as well. He spoke passionately about his interest in the unjust racial politics surrounding jazz. At one moment, he became agitated about this perceived injustice and had to take a moment to calm himself. This conversation demonstrated Robert's profound emotional reaction to music and everything surrounding it.

Robert has taught in public schools for two decades. He describes the highlights of his teaching career in the following narrative (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019):

As a teacher, I think my highlight reels would be not necessarily what you would expect. The first thing that I would put on there would be just me working with the students and, even more specifically, students who went on to be educators, music educators or other educators. And then, student teachers. People that I've mentored. That's always been – I was very blessed. I had a really, really good – well now, they call them cooperating teachers. Back then, they called them master teachers. I had a really good master teacher. I learned so much from him. I really wanted to make sure

that I was providing the best that I could – and I really have enjoyed working with them.

Robert implied that relationships play a major role in his story as an educator. He spoke with great reverence both for his own master teacher and the many student teachers he mentored over the years. Robert continued:

And then, let's see, there's other stuff. Well, this is weird, I think most people would've put this first. Throughout the years, there have been some really musical moments that we've accomplished together, the students and I.

Finally, as a sort of tongue-in-cheek send-off, I guess I'd have some of the wackier moments of the marching program. Like last year's band staggering drunkenly as pirates onto the field, singing a song that was entirely, "Yargh!" An old, warped sea shanty. Things like that.

These anecdotes helped me see how Robert's professional identity was strongly connected to his relationship with students, audiences, and even me. He knew I would share these words in this study, and he encouraged me to give a full accounting of his "wackier moments." Robert seemed to take great pride in these experiences with his students. Through these stories, Robert appeared delighted at the unique personality of his students and the adventures he has shared with them.

Robert's philosophy of education is built on three pillars: cooperation, accessibility, and citizenship. Robert feels that school band has become "over-competitive" and focused on "personal glory" (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). Taking it further, Robert claimed that band directors in competitive programs simply wanted to win and beat

other directors. But Robert does not see music as a contest; instead, he explained that he just wants students to love music for its own sake and to continue playing after graduating high school. Thus, Robert avoids ranked competitions and instead “focuses on excellence.”

Robert’s teacher talk tends to rely heavily on collective pronouns, such as “we” and “us.” His instruction centers on the possibilities of the group rather than negative aspects of the learning process. For example, after his ensemble struggled with a difficult passage, Robert positioned himself close to his students and confidently said, “We will fix it. We can do this. We shall rise triumphant!” (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). Cooperation appears to drive Robert’s pedagogical decisions. His teaching choices suggest that, at the end of the day, he values healthy, supportive community over winning trophies or proving his program in others’ eyes. For Robert, it seems apparent that his pedagogy centers on collaborative, collective learning.

In our discussions, I perceived that Robert’s classroom narrative seemed to center on issues of accessibility. He emphasized that there is a “place for everyone” in his band (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). He continued, “If you are super serious about band, there is a place for you. If you are here for the social aspect, there is still a place for you.” He also shared his desire for every student to find a “home” somewhere in their high school experience. The course offerings in his music program give students a wide variety of musical options, from steel pan and jazz to traditional band. These options were consistent with a central theme I saw in Robert’s teaching: expanding the musical canon in high school repertoire and course offerings. “We all need to be more focused on embracing music that isn’t western art. It’s exclusionary.” He noted that overemphasis on traditional

ensembles, like band, choir, and orchestra, “perpetuates elitism.” Without explicitly bringing up race or class, Robert asserted that traditional ensembles glorify people from only one “background.” This notion, combined with his efforts to make his program financially feasible, suggest Robert’s commitment to accessibility.

While all band programs have operating costs and require certain student fees, Robert strives to make certain that money is not an obstacle to full participation in his classes. Robert makes an effort through personal encounters with students to financially level the playing field. For example, Robert offers scholarship opportunities through his booster program with as few obstacles as possible. When he learns that a student might need financial assistance, Robert told me, “There’s no shaming, no rings you have to jump through. I just make it clear to the parents that are able to pay: the state doesn’t give us anything, our district doesn’t give us anything” (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). It seemed important to Robert that anyone desiring a music education could easily find a place in his program regardless of the cost.

Robert claimed that music education develops citizenship. Teamwork, inclusion, democratic decision-making, and working through differences all seem to play a major role in Robert’s program. He contended that he wants students to learn to “cope with life” and “work together,” which he expressed are fundamental aspects of citizenship. Robert reflected that this is about “shaping the next generation” to make society better (R. Cole, personal communication, September 6, 2019). In his syllabus, Robert wrote, “Another tenet of this class is the use of the medium of music to instill or reinforce values of character, drive, and resilience. This class is more than MUSIC alone; it IS LIFE EXPERIENCE.” At his core,

Robert appears to want every student to have the chance to be “part of something” and develop what he calls “citizenship skills.”

Robert’s ensembles played with great technical and musical proficiency when I observed him. His rehearsals appeared organized and efficient to me, and he employed a wide range of strategies to help students learn to make music at a higher level. The following is a narrative from my journal:

It was a standard day of running new music, working out hard sections, and working on general musicality. Most of the period was spent working on an arrangement of *Africa* by Toto. Robert again emphasized cooperation, like every previous class. He used “us” language, and in one interesting moment, Robert switched places with a student, having her keep tempo while he played her part. Robert uses his physical presence in a very positive way, putting himself near students who are struggling and offering support. Robert also used questioning to get students to understand what was happening in the music. Finally, Robert gave the students “freeform” time, or practice time.

Robert’s groups frequently play student-arranged music, and he seemed consistently, joyously engaged with his students whenever they were near him. Each time I visited his classroom, I witnessed Robert laughing, talking, discussing, and engaging with students in a variety of formal and informal situations. These actions reminded me of Freire (Horton et al., 1990), who said, “The great difficulty (or the great adventure!) is how to make education something which, in being serious, rigorous, methodical, and having a process, also creates

happiness and joy.” In summary, I saw in Robert an authentic, community-minded teacher putting his full effort into the act of teaching.

Based on my observations of his teaching, examination of his teaching materials, interviews and conversations, a picture of Robert as a genuinely radical teacher began to emerge. This coalescing portrait of Robert, his patterns and discourse, led me to infer that his most central teaching characteristic is authenticity. His small-town Kansas upbringing shows in his emphasis on cooperation, accessibility, and citizenship. Music seems to have shaped Robert’s life, and he speaks with joy and passion about the wide spectrum of music he loves. Robert integrates cooperation, accessibility, and citizenship into his pedagogy out of love for his classroom community. Robert’s students appear to seek him out as a mentor, friend, and counselor, and he seems to welcome them whenever they seek his attention. In sum, Robert is respected for the passion he pours into his work, for seeing the best in students and tearing down barriers to student growth.

Jackie DuPont

This section introduces Jackie DuPont, a high school orchestra teacher and professional cellist. Jackie brings a strong focus on interpersonal relationships to her work as a teacher.

Biographical Sketch.

Jackie began her musical journey studying piano but quickly moved to cello. She grew up in a musical household where her father “played piano every day” (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019). After high school, Jackie attended two large Midwestern universities for her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in music education. Jackie

learned from major figures in music education, such as Bennett Reimer and Shinichi Suzuki, but she developed a reputation for challenging authorities who did not align with her philosophy. As Jackie always told me, her students were people first, and she pushed back at anyone who treated them more like commodities or performers only.

Jackie performed in professional orchestras and taught concurrently for many years. She worked in a variety of different public and private schools, and she taught a large studio of cellists. Ten years ago, however, she fell down a flight of stairs. This fall badly injured Jackie's upper body. Cellists need healthy arms, shoulders, and wrists in order to play efficiently and with a good sound. The ensuing injuries from Jackie's fall "ended [her] career as a performer" because one of her arms was completely shattered (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019). Even today, Jackie rarely conducts her groups because it hurts so much to raise her right arm.

Years of rehabilitation brought Jackie to the point where she again can teach private cello lessons and play occasionally. She struggles with the identity shift that happened when playing became a peripheral part of her musicianship; performing, for many musicians, is how we first connect to music and identify ourselves. Interestingly, knitting appears to have taken her cello's role as her primary activity beyond teaching. Jackie knits constantly, always tries new patterns, and throughout our conversations, she related it to whatever topic may be at hand. Additionally, Jackie told me with pride and determination in her voice, "I can teach," implying teaching as her highest musical calling (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019). This optimistic attitude appears to pervade everything that Jackie does.

A prominent aspect of Jackie's teaching identity is her association with various musical institutions. She is an active member of the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), and for many years, Jackie taught Junior String Orchestra at the prestigious Interlochen Center for the Arts. This is one of the premier ensembles at Interlochen, composed of students from grades three through six. She noted that her inspiration comes from personal encounters with Yo-Yo Ma and Shinichi Suzuki, as well as summer institutes and conferences. She relayed the following narrative about Yo-Yo Ma's visit with her junior orchestra (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019):

So, whereas for every other event where a man like that comes – you know, has to have days and days of preparation – some of the cellists were walking in that morning, and I said, “Hey, want to play for Yo-Yo Ma?” and they said, “Oh yeah.” Because they're 8 years old! What do they know? It was one of the most life-changing experiences for me to watch an artist like that. One kid was playing the “Square Tarantella” – it's just a wonderful piece – so he was talking to them about what a tarantula is. Then he said, “So what we have to learn in performances is how to give our music to the audience. I'm going to crawl around like a Tarantula” – this is Yo-Yo Ma – “I'm going to crawl around like a tarantula around the orchestra, and I want you to play to me.”

Jackie told dozens of stories in our time together. While she narrated, Jackie smiled, laughed, and leaned forward to lock eye contact as she spoke. Jackie's story about Yo-Yo Ma encapsulates Jackie's continuous delight as a music educator living in her own story. From her work as a high school orchestra teacher to her university teaching experiences, Jackie's

tales helped me understand how stories, narratives, and inspirational moments have profound personal meaning for her.

Jackie described her philosophy of education in four words: “teach children, not cellos” (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019). She expressed that relationships are the crux of quality pedagogy. Our conversations were punctuated with stories about her students’ joys, concerns, hopes, and dreams. Throughout our encounters, I saw a teacher who actively seeks to know her students. Her tiny office was regularly occupied by students asking her advice, knitting, and simply trying to be near her. Jackie told me that she strives to be a positive, consistent presence in her students’ lives and to cultivate love of learning in her students. Her classroom was filled with her students’ art, posters of their favorite musicians, and school colors. It appeared to be a place where students are free to express themselves, to grow as musicians and people on their own terms. For example, Jackie encouraged a young violist, who expressed a love for heavy metal, to model after electro-acoustic violist, Martha Mooke. Jackie found ways to encourage students to be genuine and true to themselves, both as musicians and people.

In other words, Jackie seems to have built her curriculum around self-directed learning. Freire (1978) said, “Teachers and students, co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators.” Jackie seemed to do this by actively decentralizing herself by delegating, presenting generative themes, and asking open-ended questions. Jackie often said that the best teachers are the best

learners. “You’ll never teach better than you can learn,” she told me several times (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019). Jackie’s attitude and choices imply her desire to cultivate a safe community for students to support each other, learn together, and grow as human beings. In her own words (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019):

Teach children, not cellos . . . I wrote that for the first time many, many years ago. I don’t think it’s ever changed. I think that it is our job to know. It is my job to be the best pedagogue that I can be. To know exactly what a bow hand should look like. Exactly what a left hand should do. Exactly what a finger pattern is. But ultimately, I’m not teaching those things. I’m teaching children. I’m teaching humans. I think if you keep that in perspective, you can do just about anything.

Jackie shared that, in her eyes, her students are people first; while she cares about teaching her subject matter well, it is merely the conduit by which she conveys her compassion. Jackie continued (J. DuPont, personal communication, September 9, 2019):

I think what goes along with that is the same thing that I tell children when I’m working with them one-on-one or in small groups. I can give you all the knowledge you need to do something, but you have to decide to do it. My job is to help you feel safe enough and empowered enough to do it. I can’t do it. I can teach you.

Jackie explained that she does not have the power to make others learn. She simply can facilitate the process by empowering students and making them feel safe.

When I first entered Jackie's classroom, she greeted me enthusiastically and gave me a hug. I saw students eagerly knitting in her office and a half-eaten lunch on her desk. On first impression, Jackie struck me as kind, warm, engaging, and full of life. I felt positive and

upbeat whenever I observed Jackie's class. Her classes had the same routines as any music class I had experienced, but Jackie sparkled as she taught. Here are some observations from my journal:

When I accidentally walked into her classroom an hour early, there she was, surrounded by ten students during her lunch/plan. They just gravitate toward her, like a matriarch, a wise woman, an advocate/counselor/friend . . . Jackie told me about her love of knitting, that she tried a new heel on some socks this weekend but realized "at the beginning of the year, I just don't have the ability to learn something new yet". Implying, of course, how much she pours into her work. Jackie told me how she spent one of her periods with a bassist who was having a bad day, even though she "probably had 15 other things to do today, being with him was the most important". I learned that she shares a letter with students at the beginning of the year, and then has each of them write a letter back to her that she reads. I read the letter, and it talked about all the things she learned and all the mistakes she made over the summer. I think Jackie wants her students to know that she loves to learn and wants that to rub off on them.

I can't help but perceive . . . compassion when I watch her teach. She values her students profoundly. Knowing her students is so important to how she works . . . I think relationship is at the core of Jackie's self-perception as a teacher, knowing her students as subjects and trying to encourage them to be their own free selves.

After my time spent with Jackie and her primary source materials, I felt that Jackie teaches from her heart. She consistently tells stories from her life, stories which coalesce into

a her focus on relationships, love of learning, and self-directed learning. Jackie evinces a positive attitude and gives each student her attention and compassion. Her obvious enthusiasm explains the many smiles I saw on her students' faces as they entered her classroom. I saw these students learn and grow under her careful tutelage.

Conclusion

In this section, I introduced three exemplary teachers. Each of them has a unique story, philosophy, and teaching style. And while none of them expressed to me any explicit prior knowledge of Paulo Freire, the words and deeds of these educators certainly reflect many of Freire's ideas. For example, Jackie's emphasis on self-directed learning is reminiscent of Freire's notion that we should be subjects of our own education. I would not call any of these teachers explicitly Freirean. However, perhaps Freire would have preferred, a la "the death of the professor," that teachers implement his methods without feeling indebted to him.

By sharing each participant's individual narrative, I seek to provide data relevant to the research questions guiding this project: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? The following chapter attempts to answer these questions explicitly by breaking the data into themes: inclusion, conscientization, co-learning, and love.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the following questions: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? In short, this thesis seeks to explain the extent of Freire's influence among music educators and how his techniques ideally might look in music classrooms.

There is no comprehensive study of Freirean Pedagogy's role in music education. Various researchers, such as Maxine Greene, have discussed the essential connection between Freire and the arts. However, no research focuses on music and Freire with comprehensive specificity. This study attempts to fill that knowledge gap by telling the stories of three practicing instrumental music teachers. This narrative approach to research emphasizes "the ways humans experience the world" as a reflection of reality (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990).

I collected data through observations, personal journaling, and participant interviews. From the data, larger themes or categories emerged in relationship to my research questions. These themes became the lens by which data were examined. The findings were reorganized them after each new observation, interview, or other data collection. The themes that emerged were accessibility, conscientization, co-learning, love, and teaching as a political act. Each heading in this section represents one of these themes, which are answers to my research questions. The answers to each question overlapped as I gathered data, and they emphasize

the first two questions; best practices, the final question, will be discussed in greater depth in the final chapter of this study.

Accessibility

For the purposes of this study, accessibility means cultivating classrooms where students have equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Freire (1998b) called for teachers to be accessible when he said, “In reality, we do not have children who drop out of school for no reason at all, as if they just decide not to stay. What we do have are conditions that either prevent them from coming to school or prevent them from staying in school.” In a music classroom, these “conditions” might be an unsafe learning environment, culturally uniform repertoire/ensemble options, perfectionism, excessive financial expectations, or an inauthentic teacher (Clayton, 2003). The presence of these barriers in the music classroom prevents dialogue, which is key to understanding the world and acting in it (Freire, 1978). Jackie, Robert, and Eliza demonstrated various ways that music educators might be accessible in their practice, reflecting Freirean Pedagogy and including all students.

The first thing I noticed as I began this study was a feeling of *safety* in each participant’s classroom. It was the most evident commonality between Robert’s, Eliza’s, and Jackie’s pedagogies. In their classrooms, everyone seemed welcome to share, learn, and grow. For example, each teacher decorated their room with signage supporting members of the LGBT community and persons of color. Robert shared, “Any category that you can put someone in, I want them in the program and to have the opportunity to succeed.” Eliza stayed in her classroom before and after school, making it possible for students to practice, use computers, and ask for help. And Jackie organized fundraisers every month to give students

the opportunity to raise money for new instruments and class trips. Clearly, Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom means accessibility, an absence of financial and cultural barriers, and a sense of inclusion and camaraderie. In other words, every student should have the opportunity to participate in music programs free of limiting factors.

Learning is a *process*. Robert once commented during rehearsal, “I don’t care if you make a mistake. Be brave. We will fix it.” Teachers using Freire’s pedagogy embrace mistakes as integral parts of the learning process. Eliza encouraged her students to make mistakes because they are evidence of the attempt to grow. When I watched the teacher-participants employ these supportive words, I saw students bounce back from missed key changes, botched chromatic runs, and poor intonation. They appeared excited to give it another chance. This proved to me the efficacy of a process-oriented approach to music teaching, which supports Freire’s theory that learning is about “acts of cognition, not transferals of knowledge” (Freire, 1970). Viewing learning as a process embraces the “cognition” at work in the classroom, not the result. Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom is about consistently exercising and creating new things with the mind.

Authenticity is another facet of accessibility in the music classroom. Robert epitomizes this point. Robert has lived with various noticeable physical ailments, such as a drooping eyelid and a prosthetic leg, because he “was born premature.” Robert was very upfront about this, but he told me, “I’m comfortable in my own skin . . . if you gave me the opportunity to go back in time and prevent myself from being born prematurely, I wouldn’t do it.” Robert showed confidence in himself, the diverse being he brings to the table, and he emanated this acceptance as he moved about the music classroom.

I saw his students respond to Robert's authenticity. They appeared to feel safe enough to talk with him about all manner of subjects, from politics to high fantasy novels. I believe it is because he accepts them for who they are, their uniqueness, because he embraces his own distinct self. They gave him complete attention as he shuffled around the classroom, never expressing judgment of any kind. It reminds me of what Freire (1998a) wrote: "The climate of respect that is born of just, serious, humble, and generous relationships, in which both the authority of the teacher and the freedom of the students are ethically grounded, is what converts pedagogical space into authentic educational experience." Robert's genuineness made an impression on his students in such a way that everyone in his classroom can be his/her true self.

Repertoire diversity encourages accessibility as well. Robert called the "primacy" of Western art music "elitist" and criticized contemporary music publishers prioritizing the music of white males over composers of other "backgrounds." Similarly, Jackie had her students play music from as many genres as possible and even started a jazz orchestra to diversify her school's course offerings. Eliza frequently played popular music in her classes because, as it appeared to me, she believed it is the music that her students enjoy outside of school. When any student can play or study music from his/her culture, by a composer of the same background, it dignifies and invites students to see music as part of themselves. From a Freirean angle, this shows students that they are part of history and can indeed act to change it.

Accessibility in music education means that every student has the equal opportunity to learn music. Teachers that prioritize accessibility actively develop classrooms where each

student is welcome and supported. Robert, Eliza, and Jackie demonstrate this principle through their teaching foci on process, authenticity, and repertoire diversity. By emphasizing accessibility, the teacher-participants' students may be more likely to continue in school music. Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom is not possible if students are not present. Dialogue requires everyone to be at the table, and as I observed them, Robert, Eliza, and Jackie strove to welcome all students.

Conscientization

Conscientization signifies fully comprehending reality and feeling empowered to act within it. It is an ever-deepening process and the ultimate goal of Freirean Pedagogy. In a posthumous publication, Freire (2004) wrote, "Consciousness about the world, which implies consciousness about myself in the world, with it and with others, which also implies our ability to realize the world, to understand it...is a totality – reason, feelings, emotions, desires; my body, conscious of the world and myself, seizes the world toward which it has an intention." In other words, conscious people see the world, understand it, and act accordingly. When the oppressed experience conscientization, they pursue justice and equity, the ultimate goal of education.

All three participants employed several teaching methods, such as student projects and classroom dialogue, which encouraged conscientization. *Creativity* appeared in all of their classrooms. For example, Eliza regularly invited her students to compose their own music. She allowed them to choose whichever style interested them and provided class time for them to reflect on why it mattered to them. Robert asked students to arrange music for his ensembles, and Jackie made time in class for students to paint, knit, and pursue other arts.

These pedagogical choices, by all three teachers, invited students to think for themselves and create their own reality. They are acting in the world, making something new, and reflecting as they go. As Freire (1998b) said, “From the very first day of class, [teachers] must demonstrate to students the importance of imagination for life. . . . The imagination that takes us to possible and impossible dreams is always necessary.” Creativity promotes this transcendental imagination and draws students closer to conscientization.

Democracy is another tenet of conscientization. Democracy is an essential component of Freirean thought, for as Freire (1970) said, “To glorify democracy and to silence the people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and to negate people is a lie.” Robert regularly employed democratic methods in his classes. For instance, his students craft their own marching show concepts, present them to the class, and vote on their favorite. Robert promises his students that he will honor whichever show they choose and teach it to the best of his abilities. He sets up a blind ballot system to make sure that all his students vote without fear of reprisal from him or other students. Through these democratic practices, Robert’s students exercise creativity and see their choices making a concrete impact on their classroom community. Jackie also pursued democracy in her classroom by inviting students to conduct, rehearse, and interpret music on concerts. Democratic classroom practices communicate that students can make choices that will be honored, that they can mold their worlds to fit their needs in a peaceful, collaborative manner. Students must think about their choices because they will affect change; in other words, they become conscious in the world.

Critical thinking is central to conscientization. In this study, critical thinking is defined as “thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and people. . .

thinking which perceives reality as process...thinking which does not separate itself from action” (Freire, 1970). Among the teacher-participants, question-and-answer dialogue served as a common strategy to encourage critical thinking. Jackie is heavily Socratic in her teaching, relying on discussion questions to stimulate critical thinking and to draw out ideas and underlying presuppositions. She employs open, multi-layered questions to get her students to discuss ideas at length. For example, I watched Jackie teach a lesson on bow holds. She showed pictures of different bow holds and asked question after question: “What do you notice? Why do bow holds matter? How would you compare these two bow holds?” When Jackie asked these questions, her students responded energetically, dialoguing about the concepts she brought up and essentially teaching the lesson to each other.

This question-and-answer technique changes up the power dynamic in the classroom. Learning, not the teacher’s knowledge, becomes the central focus on the lesson. Eliza and Robert employ question-and-answer dialogue in their classrooms as well, and the results are similar. For example, in a lesson on the *Star Spangled Banner*, Eliza asked her students a series of questions about the piece’s context and meaning in society. These approaches suggest that Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom involves critical, communal thinking; as Freire (2004) said, “I cannot make myself alone, nor can I do things alone. I make myself with others, and with others, I can do things.” This style of teaching encourages students talk to each other, think about what they see, and create their own realities together.

Conscientization is a state of consciousness where one *understands the world*, critically reflects *upon the world*, and acts to *change the world*. The goal of Freirean Pedagogy is for students to become critically conscious. Robert, Eliza, and Jackie employ

various methods to encourage conscientization in their classrooms, especially creativity, democracy, and critical thinking. These practices push their students to think deeply and act on that thinking. By promoting conscientization in the music classroom, music teachers do serious work for social justice because their students will go into the world with faith in their thought and action.

Co-Learning

In this study, co-learning means when two or more people attempt to learn something together. It occurs when teacher and student “become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow” (Freire, 1970). For this to happen, teachers and students must engage in serious dialogue, an exchange where the learner feels fully comfortable questioning, challenging, and debating with the teacher. Freire called this “the death of the professor.” In other words, Freirean educators do not claim to know it all. They try to cultivate dialogue in their classrooms where everyone feels comfortable questioning, learning, and growing together without fear.

Freire also questioned competition as a learning method. He said that oppressors stoke competition among the oppressed in order to keep them divided. Teachers should instead pursue pedagogies of “unity, organization, and struggle . . . for their realization is necessary to actions of liberation” (Freire, 1970). Therefore, teachers practicing Freirean Pedagogy may emphasize teamwork, collaborative projects, or attitudes of anti-competition. Eliza, Robert, and Jackie each evinced these co-learning sub-themes throughout the course of this study.

The “*death of the professor*” was a prominent theme throughout the course of this study. Jackie aggressively pursued this line of pedagogy when I observed her. She consistently delegates core components of her lesson to students. For example, Jackie often invites students to conduct in rehearsal and concerts. Additionally, she leaves room for students to discuss the music, what needs to be improved, and how to get there. Finally, Jackie frequently acknowledges her limited knowledge and capacity to make mistakes. As I observed her, Jackie appeared to value her students’ input and dialogue equally to her own words. Eliza and Robert decentralize their power in different ways. They often move among their students, playing and struggling alongside them during rehearsal.

Robert epitomized Freire’s notion of *cooperation* over “divide and rule” (Freire, 1970). He intentionally did not involve his bands in competitions. Robert explicitly spoke his disdain for competitive marching band as “about . . . personal glory” and questioned other band teachers’ motives, asking, “Are you doing this for the students or are you doing this for yourself?” In other words, Robert made a conscious choice not to use his students’ performance to advance his career or self-concept. Instead, learning is the focus of his classes, regardless of how his bands fare in contests. Robert made clear choices to unite his students in a mutual love of music instead of a quest to “defeat” other bands.

Eliza, Robert, and Jackie all pursued co-learning in some capacity. Eliza and Jackie relinquished power over their students; Robert clearly built his curriculum around cooperation over competition. As an outside observer, this frequently appeared to cultivate more overt learning acts on the part of the students, such as active participation in discussion, asking questions, practicing difficult musical passages, and smiling/laughing while engaging

with course material. Students appeared to feel more comfortable and involved with their own learning process. These pedagogical choices also made me feel safe as an observer-learner. Co-learning is a clear component of Freirean Pedagogy in music education for these reasons.

Love

Throughout his works, Freire consistently calls “love” the root of his philosophy. Freire said, “Dialogue cannot exist . . . in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people” (Freire, 1970). To Freire, the heart of revolution was deep, living compassion for others and an accompanying desire for them to live freely and happily. In Freirean thought, love can have many expressions. One form is “taking into consideration the conditions in which [students] are living and the importance of the knowledge derived from life experience”; in other words, loving students by knowing them (Freire, 1998a). Interpersonal relationships convey to students that they, and their ideas, matter to their teachers. This is essential in co-learning to construct a more equitable, peaceful world. I saw this when Robert, Eliza, and Jackie taught with passion for teaching and their students.

Freire’s work draws a connection between *passion for teaching and passion for learning*. Freire (1998a) asserted, “There is something mysterious, something called ‘vocation,’ that explains why so many teachers persist with so much devotion in spite of the immortal salaries they receive. Not only do they remain, but they fulfill as best they can their commitment. And do it with love.” Passion for the teaching profession feeds into every lesson and interaction. It expresses belief in the great work of justice at the root of education. Robert, Eliza, and Jackie showed love in their work as music teachers as I studied them.

The participants made it clear that developing a *personal relationship with students* is central to their pedagogies. This was evident with Jackie. Each time I observed her, Jackie was talking, eating, knitting, or just sitting with her students before class started. For example, Jackie told me how she spent one of her periods with a bassist who was having a bad day, even though she “probably had fifteen other things to do today, being with him was the most important.” Jackie proudly showed her love for her students in numerous ways. Most poignant to me was the letter she penned for her students at the start of the year. Jackie wrote, “I am most interested in getting to know all of you for your unique individuality.” This demonstrated her desire to build a meaningful relationship with each of her students.

Jackie’s desire to build interpersonal relationships with her students showed that she valued them as people first, not just instrumentalists in her program. This practice communicated to her students that they were worth far more than their playing abilities or how increased her program’s enrollment. Her respectful dialogue and appreciation of her students was fundamentally Freirean because it conveyed to students, “You are valuable because you are human.” Such dialogue demonstrated a sense of solidarity between students and teacher. Robert and Eliza echoed these sentiments in our interviews, showing how important relationships are to practicing Freirean love in the music classroom.

Each teacher-participant expressed passion for the teaching profession. Jackie described herself as “ruthlessly passionate about learning” and went on to say that the best teachers love learning. Robert shared that he wants to pay forward his own teachers’ investment in him as a student. Eliza gave up a promising career as a tuba virtuoso to work as a middle school music teacher, a challenging and unsung profession. The effort that each

teacher-participant pours into his/her work demonstrates love for students, music, and public education. This love emphasized the seriousness with which Robert, Jackie, and Eliza view teaching. They clearly believed in their work as teachers.

Ernesto “Che” Guevara claimed that “the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love” (Guevara & Gerassi, 1968). In Freirean Pedagogy, love is expressed by interpersonal relationships and passion for teaching. Robert, Jackie, and Eliza each showed love by these very actions in the classroom. They spend long hours preparing for classes, listening to students, and engaging in professional development opportunities; their students appear to matter a great deal to the participants. This is fundamental to Freirean Pedagogy. Without love, what is education? Freire said that dialogue only exists when love is present. Love for teaching and students fosters dialogue, true education, and ushers Freirean Pedagogy into the music classroom in a potent fashion.

Teaching as a Political Act

Education is political. Knowledge facilitates influence in society, and schools are the institutions by which this knowledge-power is conveyed. Every act of teaching is political, whether an educator claims to teach for a certain ideology or not, because students *will* be influenced by their teachers. Freire (Freire & Shore, 1987) said, “This is a great discovery, education is politics! After that, when a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician too, the teacher has to ask, what kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher?” Teachers who ignore their political role may inadvertently support the status quo, while critically conscious teachers seek to use education to bring about social change.

To put him in context, Freire was significantly influenced by liberation theology, with its syncretic approach to Catholicism and Marxism. He espoused a radical ideology and expressed his desire for all teachers, through conscientization, to reach similar political conclusions. Freire felt that teachers ought to join the oppressed in their “necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation” (Freire, 1970). Education is politics, and Freirean teachers embrace radical politics. Some contemporary exponents of Freire’s ideas take a more flexible approach on political stance; however, because this study focuses on Freire specifically, it is important to view the teacher-participants’ from what might have been his perspective.

I observed numerous instances where the participants in this study grappled with these ideas. Each participant, in his/her own way, stated that music class is about developing citizenship. At the same time, however, Robert, Jackie, and Eliza were hesitant to talk explicitly about their political beliefs or political role as teachers in that they would not declare their parties or ideologies.

Citizenship was discussed with each teacher-participant. Jackie said that her students should “be able to express and make judgments . . . to be better citizens, communicators.” She shared that democratic music classes build problem-solving, acceptance, and understanding. Eliza claimed she “loves it when kids talk about current events” and find answers “through deductive reasoning, through conversation, through discussion.” I did see Eliza employ these methods to an extent when she showed music videos and discussed their context, origins, meanings, and purposes with students. Robert explicitly said that music class teaches “how to be a responsible citizen” and brought up his frequent “philosophical”

conversations with students after school. Civic skills, then, appeared as a unanimous point of agreement among the teacher-participants.

The emphasis on citizenship by the participants is about succeeding in society. Why is citizenship important? While none of the participants explored this question, they all exhibited behavior that seemed to support a desire that students function well in society. Civics, like problem-solving and communication, are fundamental components of US political culture. Proper use of these skills facilitates one's ability to make changes in society. By focusing on citizenship in the music classroom, the participants help their students take on the language of power and, in so doing, empower them to act for change in society.

“Education as politics” divided the teacher-participants (Freire, 1987). None of the teacher-participants discussed their own political beliefs, even after several promptings. When presented with the Freire & Shore quote at the beginning of this section, Eliza said that “those quotes do not resonate with me” but that she did not disagree with them. To me, this indicated ambivalence about the role of politics in her classroom. Jackie was silent on her political beliefs as well. Robert wrote at length on this topic:

Though education may be politics, it need not be political. . . . The role of education (in my estimation) is not to tell students what to think, but – rather – to show them how to learn (and love doing so) in such a way that they can construct their own core philosophies and make their own decisions.

Taking Robert's line of reasoning, educators should prioritize their students' developing opinions. He wrote in a later reflection, “I have found little issue instructing in a way that encourages students to form and express beliefs on their own while insulating my own

viewpoints to avoid indoctrination.” Freire, in his later writings, concurred with some of Robert’s sentiments. He talked about the fine line between inculcation (telling students what to think) and dangerous neutrality (choosing never to challenge the status quo). Might Eliza fit into the latter category? Freire (1985) spoke at length on this issue’s complexity:

Because education is politicized, it is never neutral. When we try to be neutral, like Pilate, we support the dominant ideology. Not being neutral, education must be either liberating or domesticating. (Yet I also recognize that we probably never experience it as purely one or the other but rather a mixture of both.) Thus, we have to recognize ourselves as politicians. This does not mean that we have the right to impose on students our political choice. But we do have the duty not to hide our choice. Students have the right to know what our political dream is. They are then free to accept it, reject it, or modify it. Our task is not to impose our dreams on them, but to challenge them to have their own dreams, to define their choices, not just to uncritically assume them.

It seems that Freire would question teachers for *not* frankly sharing their political ideas with students. While I would describe the participants’ hesitance to talk politics as non-Freirean, their emphasis on allowing others to formulate their own beliefs fits Freire’s later ideas.

Freire emphasized that teachers cannot be neutral, that teaching empowers or weakens students to think, act, and work to change the world in service to some groups to the exclusion of others; in other words, teaching is political. The participants focus heavily on developing citizenship in their classes, which they primarily define as problem-solving and conversation skills. In this way, they are political. Yet their hesitance to clearly state their

ideologies is not quite in line with Freirean philosophy. They care deeply about letting students make their own conclusions, however. Ultimately, these music educators are political, but I was left asking Freire's questions of the teacher-participants: "What kind of politics [are they] doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom [are they] being a teacher?" (Freire, 1983).

Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to understand how Freirean Pedagogy might look in music classrooms. In particular, I wanted to understand if music teachers might already be practicing Freirean Pedagogy and to what extent they might perceive their connection to Freirean Pedagogy. Robert, Eliza, and Jackie revealed themselves as exemplary music teachers whose work evinced many answers to my questions. The main themes of Freirean Pedagogy in their classrooms are accessibility, conscientization, co-learning, love, and teaching as political act. Each teacher engaged with the themes in slightly different ways, but together, these findings paint a portrait of how a music teacher could adopt Freirean Pedagogy as their primary method and philosophy of teaching. The following chapter draws final conclusions about the implications of this research and directions for further study.

Chapter 6: Concluding Thoughts

Introduction

“How can music teachers promote social justice through music education?” Fundamentally, this is the question that sparked my research. With so much exploitation, inequality, and injustice in the world, every person must work to fight for a better society. Music educators are no exception. I want all readers, especially practicing music teachers, to consider how they might promote social justice through their teaching. I was motivated to do this by viewing three educators’ teaching practices through the lens of Paulo Freire’s theories.

Three questions guided my project: how might teachers already employ Freirean Pedagogy with or without explicit knowledge of the pedagogy? How do teachers perceive their own connection to Freirean Pedagogy in their own teaching? What are best practices for Freirean Pedagogy? This study was done using a multiple case study methodology rooted in grounded theory and narrative research methods. In other words, I took an inductive approach, “where the researcher begins with as few preconceptions as possible, allowing theory to emerge from the data” (O’Reilly, 2009). Chapter Five lays out the main findings that make up this study’s theory.

Ultimately, five themes came to the forefront and represent the answers to my research questions: accessibility, conscientization, co-learning, love, and teaching as politics. I chose these as the core marks of Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom and as a potential answer to my initial, personal question: “How can music teachers promote social justice through music?” Freirean Pedagogy represents a potential avenue for music teachers

to seek social justice through their work. These findings have major implications for the future of music education and the direction of further research.

Implications for Music Education

In his article, *Music Education at the Tipping Point*, John Kratus (2007) argues that contemporary music education lacks relevance and applicability to the lived musical experiences of students. He connects music education's stagnant posture to its decline in public schools across the United States. In order to remedy this issue, Kratus explains that music educators must be willing to explore and champion new ways of teaching music apart from the traditional band/choir/orchestra system. I believe Freirean Pedagogy suggests one direction that music educators could travel to teach music in a fresh, relevant fashion.

Contemporary society faces major issues, like climate change and racism, which require a broad response from all sectors of humanity. Music teachers can join this good work by adopting Freirean classroom techniques. Yet, as chapter 2 discusses, Freire's influence on music education is limited. How might we foment a greater emphasis on Freirean Pedagogy in music education? I suggest two major avenues to apply the results of this study in music education: pre-service training and professional development.

Freirean Pedagogy could play a major role in pre-service music teacher training. Aspiring music teachers might study Freire's works, and those from closely related approaches like Critical Pedagogy and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, throughout their undergraduate teacher training. This might look like an in-depth study of one book each school year, a Freirean project in a methods course, or a full course on Freire and how to apply his ideas in the music classroom. At the very least, Freire should be a focal point of

study in relevant music classes, such as “Philosophy of Music Education” or “Introduction to Music Education.” Music education faculty could also strive to teach their courses in a Freirean way. For example, they might employ Jane Vella’s “Dialogue Education” practices, which synthesizes the radical learning approaches by Paulo Freire, Kurt Lewin, Malcolm Knowles, and Benjamin Bloom (Vella, 2002). Or they could take a close look at Maxine Greene’s theories on Freire in the arts, which look at how the arts might play a foundational role in promoting Freire’s ideals. Integrating Freire and his exponents into pre-service music teacher training could greatly expand Freirean Pedagogy’s influence on music education.

Another option to promote Freirean Pedagogy in music education would be professional development opportunities for practicing teachers. Every summer, thousands of music teachers attend workshops on influential music pedagogies, like World Music Drumming or those developed by Carl Orff, Zoltán Kodály, and Émile Jaques-Dalcroze. These pedagogies focus on music learning. Clearly, there is a strong demand by music teachers for opportunities to refine their craft.

Could not Paulo Freire’s name be added to this list of influences on contemporary music education? While Freirean Pedagogy is focused on discourse and teaching for freedom, his ideas are no less applicable to the day-to-day music teacher. Music teachers could study Freire in summer workshops, learning how to implement Freire’s theories and sharing experiences from the field. These teachers might find ways to use Freire’s focus on solidarity among all teachers to help unify music educators, regardless of their theories of music learning, in a communal pursuit of social justice. Public schools could integrate Freirean Pedagogy into the professional development they offer teachers of all subject areas,

encouraging interdisciplinary study among their faculties. Freire also has a strong influence in community/international development theory; perhaps local universities or even neighborhood associations might generate retreats or book studies centered on Freire. By expanding learning opportunities in Freirean Pedagogy through these and other ideas, music education could significantly grow in its connection to Freire and his mission to promote justice through education.

Directions for Further Research

The research on the potential connections between Freire's theories and music education is far from over. There must be more research to corroborate the findings of this initial research. By studying additional music teachers, researchers could cultivate a more nuanced and profound theory of Freirean Pedagogy in music education. Would geographical location, age, student age group (elementary school, middle school, high school), or level of education influence the findings of these studies? None of the participants in this study expressed an explicit knowledge of Paulo Freire. Perhaps there might be teachers in the field who have studied Freire and actively, consciously teach with his theories in mind.

Research methods outside grounded theory, my approach in this study, could also corroborate or challenge my study, such as a phenomenological study of Freirean music teachers or historical research into his influence across the arts. For example, I likely perceived that Robert, Eliza, and Jackie taught most effectively when they appeared to use Freire's ideas because I am biased in favor of Freire. But might their perceived effectiveness, in my eyes, simply have been force of personality? Additionally, my research does not fully examine how the participants' pedagogies contrast with or go against Freire. How might the

participants, for example, have more deeply entrenched oppression through their classroom practices? My research inches toward a theory for Freirean Pedagogy in the music classroom, building on previous studies that focus on philosophy or general applications of Freire's theories to specific music courses. How might various research models yield new insight into the relationship between Freirean Pedagogy and music education? How might they encourage us toward different ways of seeing, perceiving, and understanding Freire in the music classroom?

Other direction in research could focus on application and evaluation. Practicing music teachers and professors could build curriculum based on Freire's philosophy. Curricular design projects would help take Freirean Pedagogy from being primarily theory to a practice. Research into the effectiveness of these projects would help music teachers understand how Freirean Pedagogy might impact their students' learning. Finally, researchers could critique Freirean Pedagogy, finding its limitations and flaws; this will help music educators see where Freire's approach might not serve them best, and practitioners of Freirean Pedagogy could use these critiques to implement the pedagogy more effectively. Further research will ensure that Freirean Pedagogy grows in its influence, credibility, and efficacy in music classrooms.

Final Conclusion

Ever since my extended period of study, reflection, and teaching in Honduras, I knew my life's purpose was to pursue justice and liberation. Corruption, exploitation, violence, and marginalization plagued my Central American students, friends, family, and home community; this is a struggle I had to join. Paulo Freire, particularly in *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed, showed me that education could play a major role in this struggle, and as a musician, I wanted to be a music teacher rooted in Freire's theories. The purpose of this study is to help me, and all music teachers with similar passions, teach for a more just, equitable world. Robert, Eliza, and Jackie, the participants in this study, demonstrated pathways toward a Freirean approach to music education. I sincerely hope that we all can take their lessons into rehearsal halls, studios, and concerts that we might all share in a better world.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Some people would say that education is mostly about passing down essential knowledge from teacher to student. How would you respond to them?
2. Suppose there were a highlight reel of your music and teaching career. What would viewers see?
3. How would you describe your philosophy of music education?
4. What does the term “social justice” mean to you?
5. How would you say that “social justice” fits into your understanding of music education?
6. How do you define your identity?

Appendix B: Quote Reflection Assignment

The following quotes come from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Indignation*, *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to those Who Dare Teach*, and *Pedagogy of Hope*. Please read over the following statements, and write a brief response to them.

Quotes

1. "We must dare so that we can continue to teach for a long time under conditions that we know well: low salaries, lack of respect, and the ever-present risk of becoming prey to cynicism. We must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed every day."
2. "It is fundamental for us to know that without certain qualities or virtues, such as a generous loving heart, respect for others, tolerance, humility, a joyful disposition, love of life, openness to what is new, a disposition to welcome change, perseverance in the struggle, a refusal of determinism, a spirit of hope, and openness to justice, progressive pedagogical practice is not possible. It is something that the merely scientific, technical mind cannot accomplish."
3. "We can learn a great deal from the very students we teach. For this to happen it is necessary that we transcend the monotonous, arrogant, and elitist traditionalism where the teacher knows all and the student does not know anything."
4. "It is my belief that today the progressive kind of teacher needs to watch out as never before for the clever uses of the dominant ideology of our time, especially its insidious capacity for spreading the idea that it is possible for education to be neutral."

5. “This is a great discovery, education is politics! After that, when a teacher discovers that he or she is a politician too, the teacher has to ask, what kind of politics am I doing in the classroom? That is, in favor of whom am I being a teacher?”