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Students' music versus teachers' music – Who holds the power of definition?

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Or,

**Who holds the power in
the Blackboard Jungle?**



Why can't kids make up their own styles of music these days? They seem to be stuck listening to their parents' music for the first time since electrification . . . Yes, there are new bands, but they almost always sound just like old bands—really old bands. “Mainstream” (white) kids are listening to the youth music of the baby boomers, which at this point is often the music their grandparents listened to. They accept either the originals or pale contemporary copies. Black or “urban” music hasn't been stuck in freeze frame for as long, but it's still stuck.

(Lanier 2008, 385–386)

From Sound Unbound



Listening to heavy metal music seems hardly to constitute a form of resistance that is likely to undermine the larger social forces that reproduce class inequalities.

(McDonough 1993)



Questions related to power in music education

- Where does the need arise to define what kind of music other people should listen to or make, and how?
- Is our work showing and telling people what they should do, musically speaking?
- Who are we to define people's musical futures?
- Do we really hold power for that? On what basis?



More questions related to power in music education

- How can we analyze power in a musical classroom?
- What concepts are involved?
- What kinds of perspectives are possible in examining the role of power in music class?
- How can we benefit of this knowledge as educators?



1. *What is power?*
2. *What does it have to do with music education?*
3. *How can we study it?*



1. What is Power?

Foucault:

- Action that influences action
- Pervades all social systems at all levels
- Is at the heart of becoming a subject



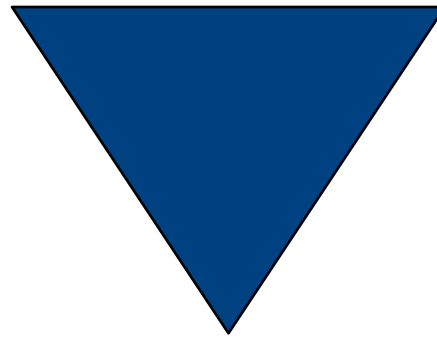
- **Power pervades social practice**
 - It does not always necessitate overt conflict
 - It can “exist as a complex structural feature of a normal, ongoing, social relationship” (Tanabe 1998)
- **No power without resistance**
 - “Power can be subverted, undercut, and transformed” (Bingham 1998)
- **Foucauldian perspective implies a change of perspective from**
 - The power *of* music education **to**
 - Power *in* music education



2. Power *in* music education: three dimensions

Power

Freedom



Responsibility



Power, freedom and responsibility: historical perspectives

- 1. Premodern*
- 2. Modern*
- 3. Foucauldian postmodern*



1. Premodern view of education

- Responsibility as top priority
- Power needed in order to show one's place in society
- *Paideia*: education for noble character (ethos)
- Liberal education: Freedom for those who are worth it



(1.) In music education

- **Music theory:** music has a place in the fixed world-order
- **Musical practice:** music is practiced as a liberal art, a pastime for the freemen
 - Practiced rightly, music has ethical import, it builds noble character



2. Modern idea of education

- Freedom as priority
- Kant's pedagogical paradox
 - Coercion (power) needed to realize 'positive' liberty in human life (Berlin 1969)
- Responsibility of free subject to others based on the ideal of cosmopolitan liberty
 - 'Negative' liberty (Berlin 1969)



(2.) In music education

- General music education as aesthetic education: subjective aesthetic experience as focus
- Musical genius as the privileged creator
- As performing art, music requires specialized professional training of musicians as mediators
 - Shift of emphasis from 'virtue' to 'virtuoso'



3. Foucauldian postmodern idea of education

- Power as priority
- Power forms the subject and frames its freedom
- Acknowledging this introduces new kind of responsibility for educator
 - To become conscious of the ways of power
 - To build on this knowledge and to empower people that would be otherwise marginalized



(3.) In music education

- As social practice, music education is also built on power relations
- Like all social practices, music education involves political control (governmentality)
- However, it also involves resistance
 - Music education can also be subversive



The three perspectives applied to music education

- **Responsibility** to musical tradition
- **Freedom** through subjective aesthetic experience
- **Power** residing in, and driving music as social practice



...and three central foci:

- *Authority* of musical practice
- *Authenticity* of musical experience
- Musical *agency* as political force



Social practice as focus of power in music education

- It is useful to examine Foucault's philosophy of power from the standpoint of social practice (Alhanen 2007)
- Practice-focussed perspective has also been popular in contemporary philosophy of music education (praxialism, pragmatism)
- How do these perspectives meet?



Three interpretations of music as social practice

- Music as aristotelian praxis
- Music as transformative praxis
- Music as empowering praxis



Music as Aristotelian praxis

- "Something that people do, and know they do, and are known to do" (Sparshott, in Elliott 1995)
- Musical practices involve their own cultural norms, standards and values
- Musical values are realized through enacting of musical 'virtue' (*phronesis*) that informs musical praxis, contributing to 'life goals'
- Pedagogically, emphasis on master-apprenticeship model (novice-expert continuum): education *for* music



Music as transformative praxis

- As communicative action, music can amount to expansion of cultural meaning
- In music education, values are realized as functions of educational situations, as these are transformed into new, more determined situations through inquiry (Dewey)
- Emphasis on experience as a field of interactions
- Pedagogically, implies a manifold of values and methods, and a student-focussed approach
- Education *through* music



Music as empowering praxis

- Music is a tensional field of forces pervaded by power
- Music contributes to governmentality through its habituated power relationships -> responsibility
- However, music also involves resistance as possibility
- Education *despite of* music, as function of individual's power to influence (to a certain degree) to power relations and to become conscious of them (critical pedagogy)



3. How can it be studied?

- "Power comes from below" (Foucault)
 - Empirical studies at the grassroots level, genealogy
- "Communication always comes too early or too late, and when it comes to creating, conversation is always superfluous" (Deleuze and Guattari)
 - Rhizomatic research:
 - » allows for multiple, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation



Analysis of power in music education: modalities of power

- Materiality of power
- Symbolic power
- Ideological power (dominant discourse)



Music education examined through the modalities

- Material - - -disciplining the body
- Symbolic - - -disciplining meanings
- Ideological - - -disciplining thought-systems

Resistance?



Example cases

- The Schumann case, or, disciplining of the musical body through the finger-strenghtener
- Claiming the soundscape with music
- Musicianship as ideological construction
- Digital music as virtual field of resistance
- The case of Vapaa säestys – keyboard accompaniment



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Questions to reflect on:

- Describe an experience where you felt power was involved in a music education situation, and share with the group
- Compare your experiences and discuss on what level power emerged: material, symbolic, or ideological?
- Discuss, through cases, various ways in which music education research could meet Foucault's insistence that "power comes from below"