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Teaching Back: Navigating Oppressive Encounters in Music Teacher Education

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Abstract

This article explores the possibility that preservice teachers may encounter oppressive ideas during their education. I draw upon a teaching opportunity provoked by a guest speaker who utilized salvationist and deficit discourses when presenting to undergraduate music education students. Focusing on my pedagogical response to the situation which included careful consideration of salvationism, I employ autoethnography to reflect upon this experience through a theoretical framework of anti-colonialism and anti-racism. Data examined includes my teaching journal about the experience and students' unmediated written responses to a writing prompt about the presentation completed in five minutes the following day. The discussion section explores possibilities for teacher candidates to engage Freirian critical pedagogy in their future classes. This article offers implications for explicitly teaching critical thinking in teacher education, and considering what it means to formulate and execute a pedagogical response based on both intense emotion and a theoretical orientation.

Keywords: music education, critical pedagogy, equity, oppression, teacher education, social justice, salvationism

Teacher education provides a powerful opportunity to teach critical thinking and engage with social justice and equity issues. This article explores the possibility that preservice teachers may have encounters during their education which include oppressive ideas that require unpacking. Teacher educators' responses to such encounters may provide useful opportunities to prepare teacher candidates to use critical thinking in future classrooms. Drawing upon an experience at a previous institution, this article examines how critical analysis of an oppressive encounter may be employed in music teacher education to foster critical pedagogy.

The encounter. At a private university in the northeastern United States, I taught a course that brought together all fifty music education students to interact with multiple guest presenters about educational issues once a week for an hour. Music education students in this School of Music were predominantly White and middle class with a slightly greater percentage of women-identified students. At this school, students committed deeply to equity principles and the program prioritized this initiative. Courageous conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2006) comprised a routine part of my engagements with teacher candidates. That October, we hosted a guest speaker who founded an organization that provided instrumental instruction to children she identified as orphans in [an African country][i] to speak to all of the music education majors. As a scholar and pedagogue who focuses on equity work and anti-racism education, the presentation troubled me. Salvationist narratives and stereotypes rippled through the discourse that evening. I was also disturbed by the negation of youth agency and lack of interrogation of power dynamics. Toward the end of the presentation, the presenter imitated the accent of a youth in her program, further exacerbating stereotypes. Many of the older students were uncomfortable following the presentation and wanted to talk to make sense of the experience.

This article explores the complexities of the pedagogical and critical work the students and I did together in response to this presentation. Outside of the professional development

space, I worked with sophomores and juniors extensively; given our discussions of equity, I was confident in their ability to critique. Nonetheless, I knew after the presentation that I needed to facilitate a debrief with students the following day. My emotions ran high after witnessing the discourses shared, and I immediately formulated a response.

This paper first points to critical pedagogy as a possibility and explains the anti-colonial and anti-racist theoretical framework I employed in teaching. I examine themes from the literature on discussions of race and racism in postsecondary education. Within this pedagogical and theoretical framework, I outline my pedagogical response. I position this work as an authoethnography—a self-study of my pedagogy and an act of writing to make sense of the world. I describe my teacher-response to the guest speaker, which included considering salvationism and Delbo's "useless knowledge" (as explicated in Razack, 2007) in order to explore ways to help preservice teachers navigate and critique future oppressive encounters. Subsequently, I analyze students' unmediated responses to the presentation based on their social justice coursework before my teaching intervention and explore differences between sophomore and junior reactions. These responses serve as rationale for implementing critical pedagogy in music teacher education. The discussion section explores possibilities for teacher candidates to employ critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000/1970) in future classes. This article offers implications for explicitly teaching critical thinking in teacher education, and considering what it means to formulate and execute a pedagogical response based on both intense emotion and a theoretical orientation.

Employing Critical Pedagogy through an Anti-Colonial and Anti-Racist Orientation

Ideals from critical pedagogy shaped my pedagogical response to this presentation. Freirian critical pedagogy (Freire, 2000/1970) emphasizes fostering critical consciousness (*conscientization*) and ability to critique among students. Considering their lived experiences,

critical pedagogues call upon students to "name their worlds" and consider the conditions that shape their lives. Freire positions critical pedagogy in opposition to "banking education." While the former involves active meaning-making in dialogue with all educational participants, the latter views students as empty vessels ready to receive knowledge. Larger goals of critical pedagogy include facilitating education in which students recognize, critique, and challenge oppression, combining reflection and action as praxis. My response focused on encouraging critique and challenging oppression through dialogue with students.

Music education scholars have engaged critical pedagogy in multiple ways. In the early 2000s, critical pedagogy became a focus for some in music education. Abrahams' (2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007) and Schmidt's (2001, 2005) work was central to this turn. Both scholars considered what Freirian critical pedagogy might offer music education. This early work on critical pedagogy in music education often specifically targeted music education for critique. I distinguish my work from this early work by employing critical pedagogy in music education to critique not just music and music education but the larger global context. Within music education scholarship, my work thus aligns more with the work of Allsup (2003), Gaztambide-Fernández (2008), Vaugeois (2009) and Kaschub (2009), who position music as a means to engage the world. Moreover, given critical pedagogy's focus on accounting for youth's lived experiences, discourse and literature on culturally responsive teaching both within and beyond music education informs critical pedagogy in music education. Scholarship on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009, 2015), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017) calls upon educators to honor youth's experiences and make them an important aspect of classroom culture. Music education scholars urge these same pedagogical moves to honor students' identities and their musical choices

(Gurgel, 2016; Hess, 2014, 2015; Hoffman, 2012; Koza, 2006; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Martignetti, Talbot, Clauhs, Hawkins, & Niknafs, 2013).

In music education, while many scholars engage with critical pedagogy, we have fewer examples of practical enactments of critical pedagogy. DeLorenzo (2003) prioritizes critical thinking as an aspect of democratic music education practice and offers examples of ways that teachers might foster criticality in the classroom. Similarly, Philpott and Kubilis (2015) emphasize criticality and reflection and call students and teachers to co-construct knowledge and pedagogy, challenge cultural "givens" and possible futures, and reflect upon curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment (pp. 429-430). Students, they suggest, can serve as cultural and educational critics. Benedict (2007) also calls upon students to help construct the narrative about their experiences. She seeks a pedagogy that "serves to 'illuminate the nature of social reality' (Giroux, 1983, p. 21) rather than to reproduce it" (p. 30). Other scholars point to various pedagogical mechanisms to illuminate power dynamics, providing opportunities for high school students to critique issues of power, identity, and privilege embedded in popular music (Abramo, 2015), for graduate students to grapple with Whiteness through literature, discussion, and journaling (Bradley, Golner, & Hanson, 2007), and for teachers to challenge their own dominant positionality in relation to musics shared in the classroom (Mackinlay, 2002). Encouraging preservice music educators to engage with community musics and position these musics to drive curricular planning heightened students' awareness of community challenges and altered their inclinations about curriculum (Marsh, 2007). Ultimately, critical pedagogues might find ways to foster agency through musicking (Cohen & Duncan, 2015) and create opportunities for students to music their critique and analysis (Kaschub, 2009). This article offers my pedagogical response as an imperfect example of critical pedagogy in practice. Two theoretical frameworks underpinned my pedagogy in this instance. I argue that critical pedagogy requires a theoretical

orientation to facilitate anti-oppressive outcomes. Anti-colonialism and anti-racism thus framed my pedagogy.

Anti-colonialism. Philanthropic work in a post-colonial African country that overthrew British colonial rule in the 1960s requires a framework that addresses and resists colonialism and its inherent power relations. Anti-colonialism theorizes "colonial and re-colonial relations and the implications of imperial structures on the processes of knowledge production and validation, the understanding of indigeneity, and the pursuit of agency, resistance and subjective politics" (Dei, 2006, p. 2). This direct approach to colonial relations provides a mechanism to examine Western classical music programs in a post-colonial African country. Importantly, Dei identifies the effects of imperial structures on knowledge production and understanding in a way that may allow us to consider Western classical impositions of knowledge. Dei (2006) also offers an expanded definition of colonialism. "Colonial," he argues, "refers to anything imposed and dominating rather than that which is simply foreign and alien" (p. 3). This expanded meaning beyond imperial understandings allows examination of education's implication in colonial imposition. Anti-colonialism facilitates recognizing alternative epistemologies—ways of knowing music that may be more prevalent in the country in question. Honoring indigenous perspectives is central to anti-colonialism (Dei, 2006; Memmi, 1965). Moreover, anti-colonialism involves resisting colonial dominance and imposition (Césaire, 1972/2000; Fanon, 1963; Gandhi & Dalton, 1996; Memmi, 1965).[ii]

Anti-racism. An anti-racist theoretical framework highlights racism's ubiquity and normalization in society and its embeddedness in the institutions, structures, and systems that shape our lives (Dei & Calliste, 2000a). Anti-racism "sees race and racism as central to how we claim, occupy and defend spaces. The task of anti-racism is to identify, challenge and change the

values, structures and behaviours that perpetuate systemic racism and other forms of societal

oppression" (Dei & Calliste, 2000a, p. 21). Anti-racism is

> an action-oriented educational strategy for institutional, systemic change to address racism and interlocking systems of social oppression. It is a critical discourse of race and racism in society that challenges the continuance of racializing social groups for differential and unequal treatment. Anti-racism explicitly names the issues of race and social difference as issues of power and equity, rather than as matters of cultural and ethnic variety. (Dei, 2000, p. 27)

Anti-racism focuses on power and dominance and orients toward change. It critiques Whiteness,

neoliberalism, and Eurocentricity (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Dei, 2000; Dei & Calliste, 2000a,

2000b). In considering both a Western classical music education program implemented in an

African country and the presentation of this program to U.S. undergraduate music education

majors, anti-racism facilitates examining the mechanisms that privilege Eurocentric music

education models alongside explicitly recognizing the racism embedded in systems and

institutions that include teacher education programs and philanthropic organizations.

Both anti-colonialism and anti-racism facilitate analysis of power dynamics inherent in

both the work of the organization in this complex political context and the presentation of this

work to future music teachers. As I explore my pedagogical response to the presentation

alongside student responses and provide implications for music education, these frameworks

provide mechanisms to analyze power relations and issues of colonialism and racism. I

formulated my teaching response between 10 p.m. and 10 a.m. the next morning. As a result,

these frameworks were implicit, not explicit. I employ anti-racism and anti-colonialism

frequently as theoretical frameworks; as such, they shaped my pedagogy and emotional response

in ways I could not articulate until after the event.

Talking race and Whiteness in postsecondary education. Following the presentation, I

engaged predominantly White music education students in critical discussions about race and

power. Scholars who examine how Whiteness operates in discussions of race in higher education

argue that such conversations often avoid direct language, cloaking these issues in "niceness" (Applebaum, 2010; Baumgartner, 2010; Hytten & Warren, 2003). Castagno (2014) and Pollock (2004) similarly assert the aversion to naming race in education contexts distinct from postsecondary education. Scholars also point to the operation of colorblindness in race discussions (Applebaum, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Frankenberg, 1993). Students may assert, for example, that they "do not see color." Such conversations also frequently lack power analysis and often privilege discussing individuals over systemic critique (Applebaum, 2010; Baumgartner, 2010; Frankenberg, 1993). Race scholars further note that White students often become immobilized after becoming aware of racial oppression and their complicity therein (Baumgartner, 2010; Warren & Hytten, 2004). White students may also demonstrate tendencies to relate racial oppression to their own experiences of oppression across different identities—a strategy that may redirect the conversation away from race (Hytten & Warren, 2003). Ultimately, White students often fail to notice their own complicity in discussions of racism (Applebaum, 2010; Hytten & Warren, 2003). Music education scholars similarly note music education participants' reticence to explicitly name race in discussions (Bradley, 2006; Hess 2017b).

Autoethnography as Methodology: Writing to Make Sense of the World

I turn to autoethnography as a means to make sense of the presentation and my response to account for the integral nature of emotion and my personal experience to this pedagogical response. Ellis (2004) identifies autoethnography as "research, writing, story, that connects the autobiographical and central to the cultural, social, and political" (p. xix). Like Richardson and St. Pierre (2005), I understand writing as a method of inquiry that serves as a "viable way in which to learn about [myself] and [my] research topic" (p. 959). As both researcher and "subject," this work is deeply rooted in my own subjectivity. "No textual staging is ever innocent" (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005, p. 960); the way I responded to these events was

situated and contextual. Like hooks (1994), I look to theory to understand and make meaning of the world around me (p. 59). Typically written as first-person accounts of experiences (Davis & Ellis, 2008, p. 285), autoethnographic accounts are evocative and emotional (p. 285). Moreover, the social world is "an interpreted one" (Altheide & Johnson, 2011, p. 593); this account is admittedly partial and privileges my voice over others (Davis & Ellis, 2008, p. 285).

Data generation, collection, and analysis. The intensity of the experience and my desire to respond substantively led me to journal about the presentation, students' responses, and my pedagogical response. Much of the recounting in this article draws on a journal entry written the day after the presentation. That day, I provided a (mostly) unmediated opportunity for sophomore and junior students to respond to the presentation in writing. Students were given five minutes at the beginning of class to respond to a prompt about the presentation (described below). Many sophomores and juniors did not attend the presentation, as it conflicted with a major ensemble concert. Only participants who were present both at the presentation and at class the following day (five sophomores and five juniors) qualified as participants and their responses are included and analyzed in their entirety. Their responses and my records of their responses were anonymous. It is impossible to attach any student's identity to responses provided. The following guiding research questions informed consideration of their responses: (1) How do students critique educational encounters?; and (2) What (if any) are the implications for critical pedagogy in music teacher education?. Analysis of responses drew upon anti-racist and anti-colonial theoretical orientations to consider how students noticed and/or addressed any issues of race, power, stereotyping, and colonialism. Autoethnographic sources about this experience thus include anonymous written responses from students and my teaching journal. In retelling this experience as a means of reflection, I put forward writing as a method of inquiry, following Richardson and St. Pierre (2005).

Ethical concerns. In alignment with ethical research practice, I contacted all students in the then sophomore and junior classes—23 students total—to remind them of the preliminary written response and explain both how I was using the responses and that their comments were anonymous both to me and in the article. I invited them to read the article and raise any concerns about the content or my analysis. Eight students requested the paper. Of the eight students, one noted that she did not attend the presentation but was present at the debrief. Sophomore and junior students who read the article responded favorably to my analysis.[iii]

The larger ethical question in this analysis relates to the representation of the presentation. As a researcher, I portray this presenter. Research, knowledge construction, and writing is an act of power, as I have noted elsewhere (Hess, 2018). The speaker's intentions were philanthropic, but as Applebaum (2010) points out, intentions and action do not always align. How then do I explore the pedagogical implications of responding to her presentation without negating her intentions? Given concerns about negative portrayal of the presenter, I have limited the discussion of the presentation to general categories of concern and share specifics only through student responses with changes to generalize and anonymize both context and organization. I focus on the pedagogy, not the presentation.

Teaching Back: Responding to an Oppressive Encounter in Music Teacher Education

On the date of the presentation, I had worked intensively with sophomore students for two months and junior students for 14 months. Class discussions often focused on equity and shaping instruction to address students' needs. Conversations about equity included discussions of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and disability and juniors had more experience than sophomores with such conversations. Two months into the semester, sophomores had encountered critical pedagogy and discussed people and topics missing from music education spaces and the importance of looking for such absences.

My pedagogical response to the presentation the following day challenged issues I found problematic. The response encompassed three facets with sophomore students and four facets with juniors. I began both classes by asking students to answer two questions:

1. Please reflect on two positive aspects of the work of this organization.

2. Please list two concerns you have after seeing the presentation.

These unmediated written response comprised the first aspect of the process. I analyze their responses in depth later in this paper to position critical pedagogy as integral to music teacher education. Following their brief written responses, which I read later that day, I initiated a discussion that focused first on what I called "defining moments"—moments that occur in our lives that define us in others' eyes. The presentation highlighted multiple moments of crisis for youth in the program. The presenter described poverty and drug use among youth and identified incidents of violence in their lives. Recognizing how White postsecondary students often engage in discussions about race, I focused my attention on the lack of power analysis in the presentation. While Hytten and Warren (2003) do not view personalizing or making discussions of oppression about students' own feelings as overly helpful, I employed this strategy to ensure that students would not dismiss these discourses as occurring "over there," and instead recognize themselves within the actions shared. I wanted to make students aware that these issues manifest ubiquitously in education.

> I asked students to think of a time in their childhood, elementary school or beyond, that was a defining moment for them—an experience they had that was significant in that it shaped how others viewed them (i.e. a mother being sick or something of that nature). I framed it so that this moment made them "that kid who…" in discourse about them. With the students I've taught for over a year, I gave them a personal example after I had them do the exercise themselves. I described a moment that defined me as a child and then described the multi-faceted child I was (a voracious reader, a chorister, a pianist, and someone who adored math). The connection I attempted to make is that we, as human beings, are much more than those defining moments (noting the privilege inherent in such a perspective). I connected that idea to the way that this type of organization frames these children. … Linking the discussion to education, I asked them to

consider the multi-faceted groups of students they will have in front of them—the different hats they wear, the responsibilities they have, and the diverse sets of skills and abilities that every child has. I finished that portion of the class with the notion that it is flawed thinking to frame an individual solely based on a defining moment. (Journal excerpt)

Both groups had rich discussions. They drew upon their experiences and their peers' experiences to consider how some events can define a person. They challenged the educational implications of basing an understanding of a student on one life event. At the beginning of their sophomore years, both classes reflected on the different roles they play in different situations in their lives. They noted their desire to understand the different roles their future students play and bring that understanding to their work with students. Students identified the stereotypes in the presentation and intended to push past stereotypes in their teaching to consider the whole students in their classrooms. Dei (2003) argues that anti-racism education helps the public "unlearn" stereotypes (p. 92). Students clearly understood that youth's struggles as described comprised part but not the sum of who they are.

The third component of my response involved a class discourse analysis of the website of a similar organization mentioned by the presenter. I thought that examining a different organization would allow for rich critique that perhaps felt somewhat removed. We analyzed three components of the website: (i) the problematics of the name and motto of the organization ("music to the rescue"); (ii) the mission statement; and (iii) the history of the organization. In small groups and collectively, we conducted a discourse analysis.

Looking first at the name and the motto, students identified the salvationist undercurrent in an organization that facilitated "destitution alleviation" and positioned music as "to the rescue." The mission statement of the organization asserts two goals: (i) the intention to reduce the number of children living on the streets in this African country by providing homes,

education, and protection; and (ii) the aim to "restore dignity" and foster self-confidence in "vulnerable children" through teaching music, the arts, and life skills.[iv]

Collectively, we decided the first aspect of the "mission" was solid; homes and education were good goals. We did not address that even this narrative carries overtones of salvationism and an assumption that these children need Westernized education. Our analysis, however, critiqued the second aim. I asked them to think about a difficult time in their lives and whether someone got to dictate whether they had "dignity." Students argued that an external determination of dignity was demeaning.

We also examined the organization's history on the website, which described the experiences of a 12-year-old boy living on the streets with three younger sisters. The preteen encountered students playing brass instruments at a private school and asked school administrators for lessons. When they refused, he persisted, and returned to the school until they agreed to teach him and eight other youth living on the street. After several months, they had gained the skills as musicians to support themselves. A sponsor rented two rooms where they slept and stored instruments. They ultimately opened their rooms to other children living on the streets and began this music-oriented children's organization. In selecting this section for analysis, I noted:

> I found this narrative interesting. I was expecting a salvationist narrative. But that is not what this is. This kid found something that would be good for him. It happened to be music. He tried to participate. He was denied access and he persisted. His agency was the most important aspect of his story. And that was my point with the students. I relied on their deep connection to music as music students. I asked them to consider if there was a time in their lives when music was a lifeline—when they got through whatever they were going through because of band or because of guitar, etc. I suggested that it wasn't music that "saved" them even though perhaps it was a life-force at the time. Rather, I suggested that as individuals, they knew what they needed to get through and made it happen. It was thus about agency, not an act of bestowal. (Journal excerpt)

The sophomores and juniors all recognized themselves in this experience. As music majors with profound connections to music, they all noted that music had, at times, been a lifeline. We discussed agency and the distinction between saying "this organization/experience saved my life" and "I knew what I needed to help myself." In doing so, students analyzed power dynamics operating in an organization with a similar mission to the organization presented to them. This organization itself was founded through youth agency.

The final component of my pedagogical response involved extending the discussion of "defining moments" with junior students. I wrote:

> In the discussion last night, [the presenter] mentioned a child whose family member had been decapitated in front of him. I talked to them about Delbo's (1995/2014) "useless knowledge" or knowledge not to be used.[v] We talked about which people might need to have this information about this child. I suggested that that child's health professionals may need that information. Beyond that, I stressed that we need to be very careful about how we use knowledge that constitutes life-defining moments. I can't begin to fathom that atrocity. That child's atrocity is "useless knowledge." It is knowledge appropriate for people who care for that child. It is not and never an anecdote. (Journal excerpt)

Juniors spoke passionately about the necessity of a school psychologist having such information about a child. Most students opposed casual mention of this horrendous story. They did not further analyze how sharing such experiences further exacerbates stereotypes about the African continent. Their analysis, however, recognized the power in possessing that information about a child and the importance of treating such personal information ethically and carefully.

Students' Unmediated Responses to the Presentation: An Argument for Critical Pedagogy

Sophomores' and juniors' experiences vastly differed given their time in the program and their analysis of the presentation was thus qualitatively different. This section explores students' unmediated responses as a rationale for critical pedagogy. I include all responses in their entirety from the 10 students who attended both the presentation and class the following day. Because I examine how students critique their educational encounters, including all responses unmodified

allows a more quantitative perspective on the types of analysis offered by these students. In this case, the frequency of particular kinds of responses informs the need for critical pedagogy. Students' initial reflections on two positive aspects and two concerns they had about the organization as noted above were mostly unmediated. The night of the presentation, however, I went for frozen yogurt with four students upset by the experience who wanted to talk. Our discussion likely influenced their responses. While I critique student responses, I note that all students engaged in rich discussion following this initial reflection.

Sophomore music education majors. Some responses from the five sophomore students analyzed the presentation at "face value":

> It helps kids get off the street to keep safe and warm. It gives kids the ability to learn music and feel like they can accomplish something. The variety of music is minimal because of only brass. The costs to ship instruments over as well as finding instruments is hard.

> It gives children in [African country] an opportunity to learn music and feel like they matter in society. It gives children great opportunities to learn about music and brass instruments, and possibly have a career in music in the future. You never discussed financial assistance to help those who want to go to help the children out.

These responses indicate a consideration of the material as presented rather than deeper analysis of power dynamics. The attention to financial issues indicate beginning problematizations of some of the difficulties of enacting such philanthropy. These two analyses remind music teacher educators of the power we hold with future music educators. While I did not choose to host the presentation, its presence in my course indicated a tacit endorsement. Anti-colonial and anti-racist theoretical frameworks center power relations and provide important reminders to encourage future teachers to challenge material encountered through their education.

> Another student challenged aspects of the program:

> 2 positives: Getting children out of harmful lifestyles. Using music as a safe place. 2 negatives: It was mentioned that several children's homes applied for one of the programs but only one was selected. I don't believe this "winners/losers"

mentality with children in such delicate situations. Though I understand that the funds for music repair are practically non-existent, I feel children should have more instrumental options.

While the student challenged the number of homes the program served and instrument limitations, this critique did not examine larger power relations enacted by the program, again accepting the program's efforts at "face value" while critiquing some of its "micro-actions."

Two of the five sophomore students offered a deeper, critical analysis attentive to power dynamics:

It helps provide music experience to children and exposure for children's homes. The savior complex is problematic and the politically incorrect ideals.

It brings music to children who benefit from it. It educates people that would put kids in places like [Name Redacted] Home. There are plenty of kids here who would benefit from a program like this. It's great that they go abroad and do this, but what if they did an afterschool program here?

The first comment critiques the salvationist narrative one student observed in the presentation. Drawing on anti-colonialism, this student offers preliminary analysis of the complex power relations in salvationist narratives. The second student notices a local need for community music education programs. The recognition of local need demonstrates an analysis of both local and global needs, and perhaps challenges the appropriateness of a U.S. music education organization offering music education abroad instead of in the U.S.

Junior music education majors. The five juniors offered more nuanced responses that engaged power relations in the organization. Four of the five students critiqued salvationism, and three of those students used the word "savior" or "salvation" in their analysis.

Music education is being spread and providing the opportunity to learn music is great. Helping children get off the streets into a supportive environment is also great. However, we can't assume that "all Africans need help." Using an accent in the presentation to mimic/quote ANYONE is disrespectful.

The organization is bringing music to areas of the world that may not experience it. It seeks to include university students in its mission. The points of concern are: Music is not the ultimate 'salvation'—people save people or people save

> themselves. Music is <u>not</u> the only means of establishing a sense of purpose in an individual/"glue sniffer."

> Providing music education to anyone that wouldn't normally have access to it is a great thing. There is opportunity for other students and community members to get involved. It is problematic as a 'white savior' presentation. The accent mocking [the] man from [African country] was problematic.

> As a future music educator, I was excited to learn about an organization that offers opportunities for music education to children. As the presentation began, I started to notice that although this organization is built on principles of good intent, I was offended by many of the things that were said. Overall, the organization was portrayed as a group of white saviors. These children were presented as if they were lost without music and it was even said that without music these children would be glue-sniffers on the streets. These assumptions and the criminalization of these children were extremely offensive, and it is often these assumptions that perpetuate stereotypes of all people regardless of race, gender, class, etc. One of the most offensive parts of this presentation was when the presenter put on an accent to imitate the voice of man from [an African country]. It is not okay to do this in any circumstance.

These students explicitly challenged the presentation's salvationist narrative. The imitation of an accent troubled three of the four students enough to write about it. Their responses indicate an analysis of the power relations entrenched in the mission of this type of organization. The final commentary notices the organization's good intentions, but distinguishes between good intentions and the effect of the intentions and actions (Applebaum, 2010). Two comments also explicitly named the Whiteness embedded in the organization's endeavors. Naming race in a culture of colormuteness (Pollock, 2004) and politeness (Castagno, 2014; Hytten & Warren, 2003) is hopeful. Frank discussions of different identities in music education classes hopefully encourage such explicit naming.

The final comment from a junior challenged exoticization and using music as an intervention:

> The peer teaching: Not only having students learn to play but teach is great. There are great intentions. Music is fun and inspiring. Don't exoticize Africa. "They all have parents murdered in front of them and they live on the street." Is music what is needed? Why spend $ on instruments when that $ can be used to take more kids in and feed them?

This student's comment identifies the generalizations s/he saw in the presentation. S/he also

challenged whether this program was the best use of the money targeted to support that

community. Juniors' more nuanced responses to the presentation demonstrated analysis both of

power relations in salvationist narratives and of the racism inherent in imitating an accent. They

named race, and offered a more contextualized understanding of the organization. It is

impossible to know whether the additional year of engagement with equity issues in classes

contributed to this deeper analysis, but the presence of explicit equity discussion in their

education perhaps provided some language and critical thinking strategies that students could

employ in their analysis of this presentation.

Following our class discussion, I asked two junior students to write longer responses to

the presentation, that I hoped to share with the university connection to the organization. These

students shared complex analysis that drew upon and extended the class discussion:

> At first glance I could see all the great things that [the organization] does.
> Bringing and sharing a love of music with others is the reason I want to be a
> music teacher. However, I am disappointed in some of the finer details that
> define the organization. The first problem I see is that it is believed that [the
> organization] can save lives through music. I believe that music can make
> someone happier, and give a child something to live for, but it will not save their
> life. Because [the organization] believes it saves lives, [it] gives off the feel of a
> savior complex. In the presentation, a claim was made that without [the
> organization] many children would still be on the streets, sniffing glue. I believe
> this claim degrades the work of [the children's home] and assumes the futures and
> identities of the children [the organization] is trying to help. Defining another
> human being by an assumption of their future is not acceptable. However, the
> presentation did not only define and identify someone based on assumptions, but
> it minimized the identities of almost everyone involved. The statements
> describing the girl who lost her father, the music teacher who wasn't educated,
> and the boy with no arm who "wouldn't have anything to live for" without the
> harmonica diminished who they are as humans. A person should not be defined
> by their worst moment and their greatest disability. The final problem I see within
> [the organization] is how much money is wasted transporting instruments. I
> wonder if the money would go to better use making room for more children to
> move into the [children's home]. I encourage this organization to continue its
> work adding "passion" to other's lives instead of "saving" them. However, I
> suggest that [the organization's] presentations be reviewed and carefully planned

so that they do not support stereotypes, degrade identities, and give off a superiority complex.

Music is a wonderful thing, no doubt—it is an important mode of self-expression, to explain that which cannot be communicated simply by spoken word. Music, however, is not a means of salvation. It may give purpose to one's life, but it is not a means to arise from "destitution." Who are we to determine what "destitution" is? If anything, people save people, or people save themselves. I took great issue with many portions of the presentation. In one situation, the presenter described as a student as "the girl who woke up to her father decapitated"; in another situation, she referred to a boy as "that glue sniffer in the corner"; and yet again, when referencing a student without arms playing the harmonica, she said "without music, without this instrument, this child would be nothing." Defining a child by an incident in their life is completely inappropriate; in addition, the presenter made sweeping generalizations about the students enrolled in her program, when we know that each student is an individual and must be recognized as such. At one point, the presenter spoke in an offensive dialect - it is NEVER acceptable to "put on an accent." Overall, I took great offense to the white-salvationist discourse running throughout the presentation. I believe a statement was made that shipping a brass instrument would cost about $400 - instead, why couldn't that money be donated to a reputable charity, where a child could be sent to school for an entire year?

These students' responses capture themes from our class conversation, and extend the ideas to challenge use of money for this project, and the assumption of the limited value of children's lives without music. The first student also critiqued the stereotypes and limitations placed upon children's futures. S/he further called for vetting future presentations for the kinds of stereotypes shared in this presentation. While I organized our post-presentation discussion to communicate particular ideas, the subsequent written responses of these two students drew upon teacher-directed ideas alongside their own analysis. The distinctions between sophomore and junior responses and these two responses that followed our discussion provide a rationale for employing critical pedagogy in music teacher education—a point I further discuss in the following section.

Discussion: Critical Pedagogy and Oppressive Encounters *Through* Teacher Education

Anti-colonialism and anti-racism informed my pedagogical response to this presentation. My pedagogy with sophomores and juniors following the presentation asked them to analyze

power dynamics and consider recolonial relations and salvationism inherent in this organization's work. Together, we troubled the assumption that Western organizations know more about the needs of [African] peoples than they know themselves. Moreover, my pedagogical response demanded that they consider their own experiences in relation to what the presenter shared about youth participants in the program. In doing so, I encouraged recognition of commonalities between communities and possible discrepancies between how this organization represented program participants and how they themselves wanted to be represented. In this final section, I use writing to make sense of this experience.

The importance of oppressive encounters in teacher education. The salvationist narratives and stereotypes that future music educators encountered through their coursework upset me. Upon considering the presentation alongside students' responses and my own pedagogical response, I wonder if this experience served a purpose. Sophomores learned about critical pedagogy through reading Freire (2000/1970, Chapter 1) and Vaugeois (2009) the previous month and juniors engaged critical pedagogy concepts formally as sophomores, and informally on an on-going basis through their classes. The presentation afforded the opportunity to both model critical pedagogy and demonstrate a potential response to problematic discourses encountered in education. While exposing students to oppressive discourses in their education is not desirable because these discourses marginalize, this particular presentation allowed me to advocate through example for employing critical pedagogy in teaching. I also modeled responding to problematic situations in ways that students might replicate in future classrooms. I did not, however, name my response as critical pedagogy or make explicit implications for teacher candidates' engagement in critique with future students.

Upon reflection, I realize that I rooted my pedagogy in my emotional upset following the presentation. While I created space for students to respond unmediated in writing and share ideas

in discussion, I had an agenda of points to communicate. As such, the response, was perhaps more teacher-centered than was appropriate. Retrospectively, I would reconfigure my pedagogy to attend to students' concerns. I also would explicitly connect my response to critical pedagogy and identify its place in their future classrooms.

The imperative of teaching critical thinking. The responses from sophomores in particular point to the importance of teaching critical thinking and employing critical pedagogy in teacher education. Sophomore students initially mostly accepted the presentation's content as presented. The juniors' deeper analysis, after an additional year engaging issues critically, illuminates the benefits of explicitly practicing critique in education. If sophomores' unmediated responses only critiqued within the confines of what was presented, rather than through larger analysis of power relations, as music teacher educators, we need to ensure that future music teachers attain the ability to critique materials they encounter. Their future classrooms may contain textbooks, images, and music that exclude certain populations and propagate particular discourses and ideologies including discourses of White supremacy and the privileging of Eurocentric and ethnocentric perspectives. School and school district mission statements and policies may also reinscribe exclusionary practices. Moreover, as presented, this organization's intent and execution misalign. Explicit analysis of power relations allowed students to distinguish between intent and effect—an important distinction in equity work (Applebaum, 2010). Practicing such analysis allows future teachers to consider the intent and effect of programs they wish to implement and programs and policies that affect their schools. After contacting the students involved to request permission and feedback, one sophomore student shared the following in her e-mail requesting the paper:

> I still think about that presentation sometimes and the dialogue that we had after. It was really important for me, because I was definitely in the habit of accepting most all information that was presented to me as true. It was big for me to hear your critique of it, and I began to take in information from a much more critical

and conscious place. (personal correspondence, November 5, 2017, used with permission)

In a subsequent e-mail, she noted that this experience had prompted her to critique the deficit "city school" discourse she encountered in her student teaching placement (personal correspondence, November 15, 2017, used with permission). Developing a practice of thinking critically allowed her to challenge deficit ideologies circulating about the students she taught.

Talking race in postsecondary education. I emphasized power analysis in my pedagogy and utilized personalizing strategies to create local context for the power dynamics operating in this organization. Upon reflection, I realize I would now be more explicit about my intentions in this conversation. While many of my points with students involved analyzing how these dynamics occur locally, I did not explicitly challenge salvationism's ubiquity in U.S. contexts. My attempts to personalize some of the problematic discourses through discussing defining moments, for example, made clear that understanding youth based on one significant experience in their lives often fails to recognize their potential; I did not make explicit, however, the pervasiveness of salvationist discourse that frequently frames education in "urban schools." While I implicitly did not want students to understand the problematics of the presentation as removed from their realities, the emotional nature of my response meant I taught more instinctively and less intentionally. Moreover, literature examining postsecondary students' responses to encountering racism notes a predilection toward action (any action) and dichotomizing action and reflection (Hytten & Warren, 2003). I expected the presenter to offer a power analysis of the dynamics of a U.S. organization engaging in work with [African] youth. The presentation did not offer the type of reflection so crucial to informed action. I missed an opportunity with preservice teachers to underscore the importance of integrating reflection and action in educational praxis (Freire, 2000/1970). Action without reflection upon power relations, in this case, reinscribed racism and oppression. Analysis with students about the lack of

reflection would have enriched that immediate conversation and offered implications for engaging in reflection in all education endeavors.

Teaching and emotion. Intense emotion framed my response to this presentation. I was upset and somewhat shocked by the discursive and representational reinscription of racism. Retrospectively, I believe my emotion allowed me to seize a teaching opportunity to foster discussion, while also limiting my ability to distance myself and explicitly frame the conversation. Without a doubt, students recognized that I felt intense emotion in response to the presentation, perhaps communicating to them the appropriateness of strong feelings in response to oppressive discourses. Dolloff (2007) argues that we must bring "all that we are to our role as music educators" (p. 3) and explicitly includes emotions in theorizing identity. Given the presentation's subject matter, a more reasoned response proved impossible for me, but may also have been inappropriate. As a social justice educator, I want future teachers to think deeply about their encounters and react accordingly.

While I felt my emotional response was appropriate, I retrospectively note that it limited my ability to teach to the larger picture. Although my instinctual response addressed some contextual issues and connected this organization to local contexts, my emotion likely prevented me from clarifying the larger context. My responses operated through an anti-racist, anti-colonial theoretical orientation, but I did not make the motivation behind my pedagogy explicit. Given that my response imperfectly modeled critical pedagogy in action, making my rationales clear likely would aid teacher candidates in efforts to employ critique and analysis with future students.

Students' written responses, particularly from the juniors, indicated that they too reacted emotionally to the presentation. Their writing identified issues in the presentation that upset them and their words often demonstrated intense feeling and reactivity. As a teacher, I had a choice

not to engage immediately and to let our emotions settle. Doing so, however, would have allowed the problematic discourses to stand unchallenged—a possibility I did not entertain.

Employing a theoretical orientation. Anti-racist and anti-colonial frameworks informed my analysis of the presentation and my pedagogical response. While my emotions ran high, I relied instinctively upon my philosophical orientation to move to action. The frameworks highlighted the aspects of the presentation I selected for examination. My developed habit of critique through these frameworks presents an argument for employing a theoretical orientation when teaching. Emotion influenced my reaction, but my theoretical framework allowed me to clearly organize my response. A well-informed philosophical orientation may similarly assist future teachers to quickly respond to their encounters (Hess, 2015).

Final words. Ultimately, as teacher educators, positioning and preparing future music educators to engage critically will help them challenge material they encounter that negatively frames and excludes particular populations. Such oppressive encounters can be useful, as they provide opportunities to enact critical pedagogy and foster critique with students. This presentation offered a chance to model ways to be critical in the classroom. Activities such as discourse analysis may prepare teachers to address problematic discourses and representations both personally and with students. Students' responses to this experience further clarify the imperative of explicitly teaching critical thinking in teacher education. The ability to critically analyze and challenge oppression will position future teachers to advocate for justice for future students and to critically engage music, music education, and education policy and programming.

In music education, critical pedagogy is frequently taken up in the literature (see for example Abrahams, 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2007; Abramo, 2015; Kaschub, 2009; Martignetti et al., 2013; Philpott & Kubilius, 2015; Schmidt, 2001, 2005; Spruce, 2015, Hess, 2017a), and I put

forward one imperfect response to a difficult situation as a specific practical example of critical pedagogy. My emotional entanglement in my pedagogy points to the inherent messiness of equity work. The two days these events took place involved intense feelings and perhaps made me overlook the "forest for the trees"—missing the opportunity to make my pedagogical moves and the overarching context explicit. To wait to respond, however, may have reduced the experience to a memory and allowed oppressive discourses to remain unchallenged. In this case, emotion, both mine and the students', fueled our conversations and shaped our analysis. My pedagogical response, while imperfect, modeled for students both the messiness of equity work and the intense emotion connected intrinsically to injustice. As a teacher educator, I want to feel injustice profoundly in a way that propels me to action. I hope that the students who attended the presentation not only engaged oppressive discourses and representations critically, but further recognized the appropriateness of reacting to oppression, both emotionally and through action. Given the current political and educational climate of the United States, these future teachers will likely regularly face injustice and oppression early in their teaching careers. Critical pedagogy may indeed serve as a crucial pedagogical tool to shift from complicity to action and allow teacher candidates to work alongside students to stand against injustice.

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[i] I use square brackets to denote the country in question to provide anonymity to the country and organization. The ideas raised by the presentation in question apply more broadly to other organizations making similar interventions, as well as to education interventions in the U.S.

[ii] Leigh Patel (2016) draws a distinction between anticolonial and decolonial work. She notes, "I use anticolonial in most of this book as a way to draw into relief the ways in which coloniality must be known to be countered, and decolonial should always address material changes. However, I also address decolonial moves that become available once anticolonial and decolonial praxis is not consecutive, but to decolonize does require the apprehension and unsettling of coloniality" (p. 7). In the context of the discussion of this organization, anti-colonialism is the appropriate framework.

[iii] The ethical review board at my institution deemed this research non-human subject research because the responses from students were untraceable. I had proposed to contact students for explicit permission to use the data. The IRB opposed this move because doing so would mean that students would have to identify their words. Understanding this rationale, but not comfortable with not contacting the students, I invited all students to read and respond to the paper.

[iv] I present this organization anonymously and have paraphrased these statements and those that follow because my focus is pedagogical and not intended to target an organization.

[v] See also Razack (2007).

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