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Where do teachers and learners stand in music education research? A multi-voiced call for a new ethos of music education research

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Abstract

We offer a multi-voiced performance autoethnography where contemporary music education practices are informed and imbued with the voices of teachers and learners. By dialogically and musically engaging with the very people who live, make music, and engage with learners in music classrooms, we promote contemporary qualitative forms of research and the (re)conception of a sociology of music education as a political and an ethical construction that needs to be grounded in serving communities of music practitioners. Through a pedagogical story, told from the perspectives of music teachers using their own voices, we begin an open conversation about the nature of power structures and struggles in music education research. We invite new possibilities in developing understandings of the complex socio-cultural dynamic of music making, music learning, music teaching, and music researching in all facets of contemporary society. By embracing a broader set of traditions—Arts-Based Educational Research and Creative Analytical Practices—that enable us to go beyond socio-cultural frameworks and orthodox beliefs that currently exist in the music education profession, we seek to (re)form a culturally contextualized, ethos-rooted, sociology of music education.

Allegro non troppo

In 2010, Gouzouasis presented a paper at the MayDay Colloquium regarding the existence of a possible ethos¹ in music education, or lack thereof, and focused on the inherent disconnect between the music curriculum, traditional music pedagogies, and 21st century youth culture (see Gouzouasis, 2013a). He speculated that since the profession seems to lack an ethos—with regard to acknowledging adolescent music preferences, practices and music culture in a 21st century music curriculum—we risk acting unethically in the promotion and proliferation of outdated, outmoded music curricula that predominantly use teacher-centered and teacher-

¹ There are two aspects of ethos, each having different spelling and pronunciation in Greek: being a part of a particular culture (i.e., ethos, ἔθος), and character of being (eethos, ἦθος). For a detailed discussion, see Gouzouasis (2013a) and Gouzouasis & Ryu (in press).

directed pedagogies in most North American schools. In other words, without a music curriculum that is inclusive of contemporary music culture—as well as the implementation of creative, inclusive pedagogies—we may be acting unethically.

That stance also speaks to the notion that music education research can be conceived not merely as a traditional act but as a contemporary act. Moreover, it may be conceptualized as both an ethical act and a political act. The MayDay Action Ideal 3² is focused on music and social justice. In the present inquiry, we are pointing toward music research, and the (re)conception of a sociology of music education, as a political construction that needs to be grounded in serving the communities of music practitioners rather than music academics who profess to each other. When we speak of music educators and how they may be able to shape public opinions, we seem to have taken a top down, academia-centered approach. We have silenced the majority of our profession by ‘professing’ to teachers from the university classroom and providing realist (Sparkes, 2002) philosophical arguments and positivist research conclusions that come from us, the academics, but not from them, the very people who live, make music, and work in music classrooms. These perspectives are shared by Zandén (2010), who draws from the work of Dale (2010), to call not only for reform in music teaching and learning pedagogies, but also the importance of including teachers as dialogic partners in the enterprise of music education research.

We may speak of democratic ideals and social justice, yet we expect teachers to implement *our* research—which is often convoluted, inaccessible, abstract, and not generalizable—without their input or influence, to promote educational ideals and music programs in schools. In Sweden, Zandén (2010) acknowledges that the issues are compounded by the fact that much of the literature is in English, and Swedish research traditions are quite different from North American, British, and Australian research paradigms.

During numerous rewrites of the paper on ethos over the past three years and the composition of another group of papers (Gouzouasis, 2014, 2013a, 2013b; Gouzouasis & Ryu, in press; Gouzouasis & Regier, in press; Gouzouasis & Nobbs-Theissen, in review; Gouzouasis & Ihnatovych, in review) that employ autoethnography and performative autoethnography (Denzin, 2003) to explore music making in a variety of contexts, Gouzouasis came to other startling realizations regarding fundamental notions of ethos that cross over into other pertinent, relevant realms. First, the politics of music education research, and the suffocating

² More information on the MayDay Group action ideals can be found at <http://maydaygroup.org/about-us/action-for-change-in-music-education/>

orthodoxy on what constitutes research in our profession is much different from what is written and read across the social sciences. This phenomenon has restricted our ability to grow as a profession and to communicate the importance and relevance of our findings to our main audiences—music teachers and learners. While this was recognized by Bressler (1992) in a discussion on traditional forms of qualitative research, by Regelski (1996) with regard to the predominance of the quantitative research paradigm, and reiterated by Upitis (1999) in a more forward thinking manner regarding artistic approaches to research, very little has changed in music education research over two decades.

Second, across contemporary educational research journals over the past two decades, countless educational researchers have recognized and realized the power of story—written from personal perspectives—in socially constructed research (Sparkes, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2007). Based on hundreds of studies written using contemporary qualitative methods, it is easy to recognize that without the voices of teachers and students represented in genuine, authentic ways in our research literature, we cannot begin to construct an ethos-rooted, sociology of music education. In other words, the sociology of music education takes place in music classrooms, private music studios, in home basements, and many other contexts that include teachers, youth, and adults who live “every day” (DeNora, 2000) musical lives. Everyday people use every day language to express their every day music experiences. Thus, only stories—told from the perspectives of music teachers and learners using their own voices—can help (re)form a culturally contextualized, living, contemporary sociology of music education.

Perhaps, for political reasons, storytelling and tales fused in state of the arts research methods cannot be part of the sociology of music education—perhaps we need to (re)consider it as a *sociosophy* of music education where the wisdom in our understanding of contemporary music education practices are informed and imbued with the voices of teachers and learners. Sociosophy can then be used as a term to signify a socially infused wisdom that comes from those of us who choose to dialogically and musically engage *with* teachers and learners *for* teachers and learners. This approach also opens up possibilities for ways of knowing that embrace a broader set of contemporary traditions of inquiry that may enable us to go beyond socio-cultural frameworks and orthodox beliefs that currently exist in our profession. Thus, we may be able to reconsider the relevance of affective, emotional, social, and motivational constructs in contemporary music making contexts, both in and out of school.

If you viewed your project as closer to art than science, then your goal would not be so much to portray the *facts* . . . but instead to convey the meanings you attached to the experience. You'd want to tell a story that readers could enter and feel a part of. You'd write in a way to evoke readers to feel and think about

your life and their lives in relation to yours. You'd want them to experience your experience as if it were happening to them (Ellis, 2004, p. 116).

As such, our paper prominently features the voices of music teachers in a creative non-fiction story that is composed as a performative autoethnography. We hope to address the question of how we might begin to develop a teacher and learner centered sociology, or sociosophy, of music education. Using this approach, we seek to share the lived experiences of teachers and students, and to take into account the phenomenological and everyday subjective experiences of teacher and learner meaning making as they engage in music activities. Sparkes (1999) suggests that one way is to focus on the “body narratives,” or stories, told by real people—in our case, actual music teachers and music learners.

There is one recent example in arts education (Gouzouasis, Irwin, Gordon, & Miles, 2013) that may provide a model for constructing these new ways of knowing that can enable the music profession to gain new insights in the effect and affect of music making, teaching, and learning. It employs theory, interviews, digital media, and the recounting of an actual event to craft a tale³ of how teachers “learn to teach” and “learn to learn” (p. 8)—it is a story of becoming pedagogical that embraces the participants (i.e., ‘subjects’ in traditional music education research) as coauthors in expanding knowledge on the preparation of reflective-reflexive practitioners.

The question is not whether we will write the lives of people—as social scientists that is what we do—but *how* and for *whom*. We choose how we write, and the choices we make do make a difference to ourselves to social science, and to the people we write about. (Richardson, 1990, p. 9)

In the present inquiry, we use both choral and polyphonic speaking that includes the voices of our music practitioner colleagues to begin to unpack a complicated, conflicting issue. Our approach is influenced by duoethnography (Norris, Sawyer, & Lund, 2012; also see Gouzouasis & Lee, 2002, 2007; Gouzouasis, 2008; Lee & Gouzouasis, 2008), a relatively new research methodology where two or more writer-researchers co-create an inquiry as story and provide numerous understandings of social phenomena. We hope to begin an open conversation about the nature of power structures and struggles in music education research, and open the windows to new possibilities in developing understandings of the complex

³ For explication of the use of the term ‘tale,’ see Van Maanen, 1988.

socio-cultural dynamic of music making, music learning, music teaching, and music researching in all facets of contemporary society.

Do we hear what they hear? Listening to teachers talk about research

The past semester I led a graduate course in the review of research in music education. The prior semester, Fall 2012, the same group of 22 teacher-students worked with me through massive amounts of literature on the psychology of music education and the sociology of music education. Most of my classes primarily consist of 20-30 minutes of a personal overview of the week's readings followed by small group discussions, intragroup discussions, reconfigured small group discussions, consultation lines, gallery walks, and other assessment activities that use a wide variety of creative tactics, strategies, and graphics organizers such as placements and mindmaps to unpack the readings (see Bennett & Rohlheiser, 2002; Gouzouasis, 2011). The learning environment can be described as a mixture of teacher guided, student led, and student centered activities.

During the Fall semester, through classroom discussions and reading various student assignments and papers, I recognized an ongoing, underlying, building sense of frustration. I do not intend to over generalize, but after reading what may be considered some of the most important papers written over the past 50 years in the psychology of music education and of the past 15 years in the sociology of music education, I recognized a vast disconnect between the accessibility of the research and the comprehension skills of my teacher-learners in my courses, as well as a similar disconnect between the what the research 'says' and what practice 'is' in our schools. But these were intelligent, keen learner-teachers. So this time around, I decided to neither blame the teachers for lack of knowledge and attention to detail, nor debase my teaching and explanatory skills.

Whereas I had planned to present and reveal a somewhat traditionalist review of research practices in music education, that is, review a handful of select papers from quantitative designs for differences, designs for relationships, and descriptive research designs, and typical qualitative approaches in music education such as history, philosophy, traditional narrative, and observational research, I decided to change course during the Christmas break.

I just couldn't do it. I could neither present them with, nor teach them the status quo. I saw the frustration in the faces of my graduate students and felt it through their essays, and heard it from Danny, my 'other' set of ears and eyes, heart, and mind. So, for the last 8 weeks of the second course I cautiously decided to abandon the conservative plan and take what may be considered to be a somewhat progressive music education research text (Green, 2008) and juxtapose it with an even more progressive research text outside of music education (Ellis, 2004).

I should have chucked it all as I had a three years ago when I taught this ‘Review of Music Education Research’ as an arts-based educational research (ABER) course, but something made me think I needed to take this particular group of music teachers through the rigours of ‘Music Education Research.’

I picked up the phone and called Danny, my teaching assistant.

“I can’t do this Danny. I don’t believe in it anymore. And I can’t pretend to teach something I don’t believe in. The story is all wrong. The big picture is distorted. If the devil is in the details, we should all go to hell.”

“Yeah, Peter, how can they decode statistical analyses without a stats background? And how can they read and write a traditional research problem, or questions and hypotheses, when so many of the models in the literature are so poorly written?”

“Not only that, Danny, how can we talk about philosophy without a basic background in some kind, any kind of philosophy?”

“Don’t do it, Pete. They don’t get the jargon, most of the language in these studies is so obtuse that they don’t see how the research findings relate to their classroom practice. And you’re heart isn’t into preaching from a false gospel.”

Danny was right. After 13 weeks of psychology and sociology of music education, and another 5 weeks of trying to facilitate and painstakingly edit numerous revisions of clear, clean purposes and problems and methodology sections and structured abstracts of a broad cross-section of articles using traditional ‘music education’ language, Danny also saw and understood the disconnect and dilemma.

So, before a total rigor mortis of ‘rigorous research’ set in, I threw it all out the window. We began by reading Lucy Green’s *Informal Learning* (2008) and Carolyn Ellis’s *Ethnographic I* (2004) side-by-side, week-by-week. At first, Green’s work seemed refreshing and grabbed the group’s collective interests. But as we delved deeper into Ellis’s notions of autoethnography, midway through the book, the teachers’ voices changed.

It happened in a *flash* one evening.

“I like it a lot. It’s like a soap opera and I can’t put it down. In comparison with Ellis, the Green is so stilted,” said Helen, a classroom teacher of over 30 years.

“Yeah, I can’t put the Ellis down, I want to keep reading it!” Diana chimed in. Helen was nodding affirmatively as Diana spoke. Diana is a concert pianist and has her own teaching studio, so she opened with the following comments.

“The more I read, the more I want to keep on reading. As the characters share their questions and stories about their lives, I want to know more about them.”

Helen politely interrupted, “For me, reading the book is like being a student in her class. I feel like I’m part of their discussion, part of their autoethnographic journey.”

Those comments really got the group going. After a few seconds of chatter among the teachers, I looked back to my left and Helen continued.

“Well, for me, the autoethnographic *form* is the *hook*. Ellis situates herself within the research, making the information resonate. I engage with the story, more as a participant, rather than an observer. The information comes alive, accessible, identifiable, and relevant.”

Looking around the room from the perch of my padded guitar stool, everyone is nodding affirmatively as Helen speaks.

“Most music education research seems to be presented as *scholar-speak*, aimed primarily at academics. I had to develop a new set of skills to comprehend the abstract ideas presented in the books and articles we read this year. Maybe this is part of the development of a scholar to get a masters’ degree, but I think the problem lies in the difficulty of engaging with the music research literature as a *reflective* practitioner. And putting it into practice as a *reflexive* practitioner. While reading the articles and books were valuable, the real learning in our seminars is experiencing the exchange of ideas between my classmates. The *class* is the evolving ethnographic story, and it seems that *we* are *all* situated in it as characters. Is it any surprise then, that we’re all so engaged with Ellis’s autoethnography?”

I smile as Helen makes that point. I purposely set up the seminars so that small groups of students could engage with the readings and exchange ideas. Her enthusiasm propels her stream of thought.

“It seems that there’s an opportunity for scholars to consider a different approach for research, one that compliments and expands work of the past 40 years. While I enjoyed reading all the scholarly material in our classes, at the end of the day, the greatest reflective impact is based on my classmates’ stories and how *they* relate the research we read to *their* practical

experiences. That's a gold mine of information around praxis that isn't abstract, but easily accessible. And because of its contemporary nature, it's personally identifiable. I think we are a gauge for scholars to see the realities of how published research directly impacts learners—both teachers like me and our students.”

I could have interpreted Helen's comments to mean that the perspectives shared in my weekly introductory comments weren't valued, but I knew better. When the professor stops lecturing, it *seems* like the valued information comes only from peers, but because I set up all the reading and discussion activities, I knew I was guiding the ways they were interacting and promoting the ways and directions of learning.

Matt, an elementary school music teacher who's an excellent thinker and writer, is usually quiet in class, but he motioned his hand to speak.

“I see this book as being similar to a reality series, not a soap opera. It reminds me of television shows like *The Real Housewives of Orange County*, *Housewives of Beverly Hills*, or even *The Real Housewives of Vancouver*. You know, those shows follow a format where dialogue is presented, followed by personal reflections of the characters. Although Ellis avoids describing extravagant parties that feature mean spirited ‘cat’ fights, her characters are real people, with real world problems.”

A number of people chortled when Matt mentioned ‘the fights,’ but he continued.

“As Helen said, ‘She can't put the book down.’ That's because Ellis has energized qualitative research by providing a format that has evolved with our society. She easily grabs attention through the drama she evokes.”

I knew attitudes were changing over the weeks we were reading the Ellis and Green texts, but I was surprised that they felt *that* strongly about autoethnography.

“How about someone else's perspectives?” I asked to keep the conversation going.

David, a new doctoral student who teaches media analysis at another local university in Vancouver, shared his perspective. “As a teacher, Ellis gives me real insights into the ways we can represent multiple experiences that can happen in a classroom. She helps me realize how important it is to understand the emotions and thought processes of myself as a teacher and of each of my individual students ... I get so caught up in the stories, I don't realize I'm learning autoethnography as research method.”

Zoltan, a general music and elementary school band teacher, immediately spoke up. “When I first started reading the Ellis, I thought the whole approach was a bit hokey. I mean, why does she need to weave all the details into a story when she can just give the facts, plain and simple? But, once I really started reading, I got drawn into the conflict between and within the characters, and I was eager to see what would become of them. And at the same time, I was learning about approaches to autoethnographic research from ‘real’ people in different situations and disciplines.”

“Can you elaborate a bit more?” I asked.

“Yeah. This past summer I read a book, *Moonwalking with Einstein*, by Joshua Foer (2011). It’s about the way our memory works. I learned that the human memory is linear, and people remember things better when associated to places in sequence, or as with autoethnography, a progression of an unfolding story. This further convinced me that if I’d been served the traditional meat and potatoes approach of research, Ellis’s results and conclusions would not have left such a lasting imprint in my memory.

“It was only when I used this technique myself that I realized the potential of autoethnographic research. One of the stories that I wrote for you was about the importance of parent-teacher-student relationships in the classroom, a topic that’s problematic to measure or describe traditionally. It’s more suitable for a story. In the process, not only did I get a chance to reflect on my practice without having to run an extensive, exhausting study, I felt very empowered once the assignment was completed. I felt justified with how I’m doing in my professional career, and I felt encouraged to share with other teachers who may benefit from my experience.”

Yes, Zoltan’s story of the disgruntled band parent and her daughter’s flute experience was so similar to parents I’d dealt with in my past. His story reverberated with the entire class when he read it to us a week ago. I felt vindicated for making the choice on the Ellis text.

David followed without missing a beat, “I think Ellis sometimes forgoes her curricular intentions for sake of a good story. And, she uses personal narratives to reveal very human characteristics of herself and her students. To me, that demonstrates the importance of bringing emotion into educational research.”

‘Importance of emotion in research?’ I thought to myself. I can just see the looks on the faces of some of my colleagues at a music research conference hearing that comment. David continued.

“Ellis shows how sharing *her* personal stories creates trust with her students. She *allows* and *enables* them to share their stories. We hear their voices. This reciprocal relationship is the foundation to the healthy learning environment Ellis actively promotes.”

That was my ‘ah ha’ moment, and I nodded approvingly. As we read Ellis, we all became more open with sharing ideas and opinions on the readings. And I had subconsciously adopted Ellis’s facilitative role in the book to transform our own seminar.

But what about Lucy Green’s book? No one’s talking about informal learning. My new doctoral student, Jee Yeon, must have been reading my mind and jumped into the conversation, “Well, although I’m fascinated by Green’s work, Ellis’s book has a greater impact on me. When I’m reading Ellis, I become more emotional, more engaged.”

Looking at the focused faces listening to Jee Yeon as she spoke, we were *all* more engaged.

“Storytelling helps me to better visualize the content *and* context of what I’m reading. When I’m reading Ellis, I can picture her having a discussion with her graduate students. Ellis draws me into the stories. I feel much closer in understanding her student’s experiences. Compared to Green, it’s much more personal. It moves me much more than Green’s bland interview transcripts.”

“Ah ha, good point, Jee. Can you elaborate more on the Green?” I asked, knowing that Jee Yeon is a keen thinker who has impressed my colleagues in her doctoral seminars.

Jee Yeon elaborated, “Although Green observed, discovered, and shared critical and fascinating aspects of informal learning, it’s harder for me to connect with her students and their experiences. Ellis’s composite, ‘fictional’ characters feel more real to me than Green’s ‘factual’ interview transcripts.”

David added another crucial point, “Well, when I started Lucy Green's book I thought, ‘Finally, someone has described a pedagogy that’ll bring a school-based music curriculum into the 21st century.’ But half way through the book, I began to have my doubts. And by the end of the book, I was convinced Green doesn’t think pop or rock are legitimate music genres, and that they’re only gateways to learning about classical music. This way of thinking is exactly what is wrong and outdated with most music education curricula.”

Diana reentered the conversation, “Yeah, and reading Ellis and Green side by side helps me to realize the importance of *how* we write, express, and communicate our research. Just as her

stories engage me and draw me closer to her work, she invites me to (re)consider alternative ways of writing my papers and thesis.”

‘That’s an amazing revelation,’ I thought to myself, nodding affirmatively and smiling as she continues to speak. She’s on a roll, so I don’t dare interrupt.

“Ellis is showing me that how I write and present my research is critical to making differences for a wider community—teachers, parents, and students. It affirms what you’ve been doing, Peter—solo, and with Karen Lee. Writing research as a form of storytelling can be a powerful tool to connect researchers, teachers, and anyone else interested in learning and teaching about music. It can help us reach beyond a scholarly audience. It brings theory and practice together in a holistic way.”

I can’t agree more. And Jee Yeon wasn’t finished.

“Peter, you’ve been saying since last term, we need to write for the people who can use, benefit, and learn from our research. We can reach a wider audience and help more teachers, students, and parents by framing and writing our research in ways that are accessible, engaging, and informative. You said, ‘if a sociology of music education doesn’t come from the music classroom and other music making contexts, then how can it be meaningful to music teachers?’”

Yes, I said that and much more over the course of two semesters, but this evening, the students—*my teachers*—said it with all their splendid wisdom.

‘Σοφία ορθοί. Πρόσχωμε.⁴

Coda

If social science has learned anything from the 20th century philosophical and political debates that have resounded through progressive journals and books, it is that research, and knowledge itself, is not a neutral, apolitical, and unbiased endeavour. Notions of truth and objectivity have been unmasked and re-evaluated (Gouzouasis, 2008) since the 1940s, and the

⁴ “Sophia orthi. Proshome,” translated from the Greek means, “Wisdom arise. Let us attend.” This is what the priest sings in the Eastern Orthodox Church when he brings the bible out from the altar and reads the Holy Gospel to the congregation.

politics of knowledge production in most fields of social science have been exposed, like naked emperors paradeing proudly in their finest imaginary robes.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) identified a historical movement of eight moments in qualitative research in the English-speaking world. These mappings trace the influence of the post-modern, feminist, critical, post-colonial, indigenous, hermeneutic, and semiotic perspectives on research methodology. They place our current exploration of research and science in the “methodologically contested present”. This moment is in an ongoing process of redefinition as methodology, and epistemology, continues to be critiqued.

In our current moment, many researchers engage in a wide range of what Richardson (2000) has termed Creative Analytical Practices (CAP), that include methods such as autoethnography, duoethnography, autobiography, poetic inquiry, arts-based inquiry, a/r/tography, performative ethnography, narrative, ethnodrama, and other creative methods of inquiry (p. 929). Autoethnography, and storied approaches to research represented in our paper, traces its lineage largely from ethnography, narrative theory, and other approaches to social science that were influenced by the “crisis of representation” and the “interpretive turn” in qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Erickson, 2011; Richardson, 2000; Reyna, 2010; Sparkes, 2002). This is not an apolitical act—in fact it is frequently and appropriately framed as a necessary act of resistance to hegemonic bias and a courageous attempt to speak truth to power (Finley, 2005, 2008; hooks, 1990, 1994; Diversi & Moreira, 2009). The interpretive turn fostered radically different ways of knowing and communicating human experience, and of challenging un-reflexive assumptions of power and “truth.” The scholarly tone and distant *othering* of the *scientificized* ‘subject’ of traditional academic study holds epistemological assumptions that echo positivistic and colonial understandings of what knowledge is and how we study and articulate it (Bishop, 2005).

The interpretive turn brought a crisis of representation to the scholarly world that marked a rite of passage toward our contested present (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). “The crisis of representation drew attention to the absence of human stories, aesthetic considerations, emotions, and embodied experiences in research projects” (Jones, Adams & Bochner, 2013, p. 29). In that turn, postmodern, hermeneutic, feminist, post-colonial, and post-structural theorists claimed that “theory is a story” and demonstrated that not only is the “personal the political, the personal is the grounding for theory” (Richardson, 2000, p. 927).

Subjectivity, emotion, feeling, and reflection were embraced in the research process. This nurtured the recovery of first-person story and other forms of creatively written texts in academe. The centrality of the self in the research text is supported by theories that place reflexivity and examination of meta-narrative as essential and inseparable. Many varieties of

scholarly practice have emerged that reinstate the author as subject, embrace creative and storied means of representation, and deny ‘objectivity’ from the practice of fieldwork. Scholars have been encouraged to “show” rather than “tell” (Leggo, 2005, p. 11). Today, a qualitative researcher is invited to not only place themselves *in* the text but also to problematize the form of academic discourse itself, and to use alternative and engaging approaches to create an art of scholarly inquiry.

Tierney (2002) notes that qualitative research shifted from scientist-oriented approaches to a “... more dynamic representational strategy that explicitly locates the author in the text” (p. 385). The “postmodern, poststructural, postcolonial, and feminist analyses, as well as other theoretical formulations, questioned how academics knew what they knew and how they presented these findings in their texts” (p. 387). The pundits of a ‘new ethnography’ gathered around a central notion of an ontology of interpretation. Ethnographical writing was as much a semiotic documentation of meaning as that which it presumed to report. “The idea that an anthropologist might simply sail to a faraway island, study the natives, and write an account of their lives was repudiated” (p. 387).

The reassessment of representation that emerged in the social sciences during the past three decades leads us to ask numerous overarching questions about political agency, scholarship, ownership, and direction of research.

- Who is research supposed to serve? Does it serve the “scientists” in their laboratories and classrooms who study their objectified, faceless participants or does it work to break down barriers to access, empower democracy, and support cosmopolitan perspectives that empower and support communities and populations without colonizing them to a dominant perspective?
- How has the “publish or perish” and external funding model of the tenure driven neo-liberal university supported out of touch, epistemologically questionable, and perhaps unethical pursuits of out-dated epistemologies?⁵ Who benefits from these pursuits? How does hegemony render silent the subaltern voices of real-life music makers, students, and teachers?
- How does the very form of our research, and the scientifically biased funding models and publication “gate-keeping” that reinforces it, continue to stifle creative, storied,

⁵ Sparks (2007) has written an illuminating critique on this topic.

and performative ways of knowing that might offer fundamental challenges to hegemonic models of what music is, what music education is, and the meaning ‘learning music’ has for those who teach and learn it?

- Does the research of our profession unwittingly support an over-arching, meta-narrative of social control, privilege, and epistemological bias that enforces compliance and normalization by silencing the voices of music makers and music teachers who have been excluded from a discourse that is inherently colonial in its viewpoint?

Those questions influence our reconceptualization of a sociology of music education and introduction of an alternative model—sociosophy—suggested in the present paper, and our use of autoethnography to address issues of the accessibility of research in music education. As is justly critiqued in several of the essays in *Music Education for Changing Times* (Regelski & Gates, 2009), music education research is well behind other trends in education in terms of its self-reflexivity, feminist critique, and post-colonial analysis (Colwell, 2009; Elliott, 2009; Johnson, 2009). As pointed to by several far-sighted theorists, due to the dominance of the aesthetic philosophy and positivist research practices, music education research has been stagnant for decades. Elliott (2009) argues that as a result of MENC’s (Music Educators National Conference) dominant aesthetic philosophical stance, standards have been developed which take no position on the rich long-term values of music to individuals and society. They focus on outward, testable results that are essentially positivistic in epistemology. Elliot writes that the standards movement represents conformity and compliance with conservative forces in education, and is un-reflexive in its values and assumptions. “Although it is possible to measure whether a child is singing in tune doing so tells us very little about assessing a child’s growth in musical understanding and nothing about the deeper benefits that musical achievements may or may not contribute to the child’s life” (Elliott, 2009, p. 167-8).

As Bartel (2004) writes, “Music education today is perhaps more teacher directed than any other aspect of schooling” (p. xii). Bartel goes on to point out that systemic problems in the profession encourage this teacher centered, controlling approach to music practices. These include noise and class size factors, architectural issues in school building design, grade and age based divisions of educational institutions, rehearsal-performance driven models of music curriculum and pedagogy, and an underlying meta-narrative that music is best taught in formal, structured classes and lessons (Gouzouasis & Nobbs-Theissen, in review). That

teacher-directed, methodolotrist⁶-driven model has not only had detrimental results on music education, it has also had an effect on the conceptualization of music education research. It has produced a body of music education research that focuses on quantifiable evidence of performed “musicianship” and “excellence,” reductionist cognitive models, mechanistic pedagogies, and learning outcomes, results, and conclusions that reflect a corresponding epistemology.

Interestingly, in musicology and ethnomusicology, challenges to modernity have been somewhat more readily embraced. But most researchers in our profession often work in isolation from broader intellectual trends. And most music education researchers lack adequate training necessary for a post-modern (Colwell, 2009) and now, amodern world (Gouzouasis, 2013). Generally, graduates of music schools are not fluent in research across the social sciences, and music education researchers are frequently not versed in critique. In fact, graduates from classical music conservatories are often extremely invested in the compliance exacted by the form (Gouzouasis, 2013). They maintain authoritative distance from the subject and are unaware of the underlying problems of text and scholarship that are at the heart of the challenges to research paradigms that were grappled with in the late 20th century. Major journals of music education research in the USA barely acknowledge issues of representation and epistemological bias in their research methods.

Traditional research designs in music education are grounded in objectivism: research data are accepted as largely autonomous from researchers in so far as they are (allegedly) objectified to the use of experimental or descriptive methods. Furthermore, there is acceptance of the verifiability principle: a statement or research finding is only meaningful if it is empirically verifiable. (Phelps, Sadoff, Warburton, & Ferrara, 2005, p. 123)

Even much of the qualitative research in music education literature reflects the dualist paradigm that is a symptom of modernist and post-modernist thought. Qualitative music education research is dominated by pedagogical action research and case studies, many of which are focused on outcomes, goals, and achievement in traditional music education settings. And it seems music educators are mired in the notion that they must recapitulate the history of the 8 moments of qualitative research⁷ to catch up to our colleagues in the social

⁶ See Regelski, 2002.

sciences. Narrative researchers in music education quote texts that are over 20 years old. These all reflect the lingering positivistic assumptions of the field of what music research, music learning, music teaching, and music itself *is, is not, cannot be, may not be, and should be*.

Music education research is generally unreflective in terms of the historical challenges that questioned issues of representation, legitimation, and interpretation in the research process. The field seems unaware or unable to come to terms with the challenges to the very nature of the research project that are at the heart of qualitative research. Assumptions of objectivity and positivism abound with little explication of reflexivity. Thirteen years into the new millennium, twenty-seven years after the publication of Marcus & Fischer (1986), it would seem that the majority of researchers in music education have not come to terms with the issues brought to bear by the “crisis of representation”.

Praxial music philosophy’s challenge to aesthetic and positivistic models provides a stepping-stone toward a re-conceptualization of music education research. Creative analytical practices (CAP) have much to teach music education researchers, and provide a pathway to new understandings of the social, emotional, spiritual, and heartfelt aspects of music making through contemporary research approaches. Perhaps, if music education scholars visit the lessons learned from 20th century social science research and work that has continued to emerge in the new millennium, we might be better prepared to understand the true nature of “music education for changing times” (Regelski & Gates, 2009). By reflecting on our assumptions and offering voice to the very people who live and breathe music everyday—21st century music learners and teachers—we might start to do research that offers a better grasp of the lived practices of music making that truly has meaning in people’s lives.

Perhaps this reflexivity might lead us to understanding the ramifications that music as a lived practice and music research as “living inquiry” (Meyer, 2010) has for education as a whole, and offer a courageous challenge to a neo-liberal system that seeks to reduce the holistic notions of music and music making into a utilitarian, economic asset that merely reinforces a

⁷ The eight moments in qualitative research are as follow: traditionalist phase (early 1990s – mid 1940s), modernist phase (post-WWII – 1970s), blurred genres (1970s – 1986), crisis of representation (mid-1980s), experimental writing phase (early 1990s–), post-experimental inquiry phase (1995 – 2000), methodologically contested phase (2000 – 2004), methodological backlash (2005 – beyond). As with identifying periods in the evolution of Western classical music, these years are not precise but marked by the appearance of specific works that point to changes in the development of thought and research forms. As well as the works of Denzin & Lincoln references in the present paper, the reader may also refer to Sparkes (2002) for a discussion of the first seven moments and a critique of the “moments” perspective.

hegemonic world-view rather than expanding it. Perhaps we, as facilitators of higher learning, need to honor the privilege we have been afforded, and challenge the colonial and commoditized dominance of people and the musical lives they live, by taking the time to listen to those we serve—makers, learners, and teachers of all kinds of music. Perhaps our research should be turned inside out and upside down in that we need to hear, feel, see, make, and learn as much, if not more, from those we seek to teach.

We believe this is the only way forward to a 21st century ethos of music education research—an ethical, spiritual, and heartfelt future that embraces music making, and storied writing about music making, in all its uncontrolled, rebellious, and gloriously perfect imperfection. On *our* horizon, we serve present and future generations, not those of the past. What music worlds are they creating? What music realities will they inherit? How can we help them live musically? Is it by supporting antiquated forms of research that only a select few can understand? Can we love the world, knowledge, and music enough to speak truth to power, even the power that has bestowed on us the privilege of tenure in our ivory towers? Is it ethical for us to replicate the status quo and continue to disempower the lived music experiences of young people and the well-meaning people who teach them on a daily basis?

We do not think so. It is to this end that we offer our multi-voiced response to a new ethos of research in music education, and call for a sociosophy of music education. We believe the voices of music teachers and learners of all ages matter (Gouzouasis, 2013a). Music makers need to be encouraged to use their own words and experiences toward self-expression and empowerment.

At the risk of sounding “practical and motivational,” I implore you to keep taking risks. Believe in your projects. Become Gatekeepers who open gates for others. Be permission givers. Have the “nerve of failure.” (Richardson, 2013, p. 14)

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