**Reflections on Anti-authoritarian Pedagogy in a Jazz Combo Lab**

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**Introduction**

 With the theme of *MayDay 26* considering, “interdisciplinary collaboration and what we can learn from other fields,” my paper, *Reflections on anti-authoritarian pedagogy in a jazz combo lab,* focuses on one potential *other field.* As a Ph.D. student, much of my coursework in research methods, educational psychology, theory and policy are in “other fields.” I filled many of these course requirements in the *Adult Education* department. Paulo Freire is an important figure in adult education whose pedagogy has been used in music education. However, prior to 2013, I knew very little about Freirean pedagogy. At the beginning of the fall semester 2013, circumstances converged to allow me the opportunity explore Freirean pedagogy in a university jazz setting.

 The first converging experience occurred during auditions for *Jazz Combo Class*, for which I served as Teaching Assistant. I realized that uneven instrumentation would cost the weaker auditionees the opportunity to participate in the class. This can create a *Catch 22* for students wanting to improve musically but unable to navigate a competitive music audition. How are students able to improve as jazz musicians if they haven’t *made the cut*, and cannot even participate, in a jazz ensemble? I recommended the creation of the *Jazz Combo Lab*, an extension of the combo class, with the aim of exploring small-ensemble jazz music for these students, in a laboratory setting. It was my hope to design *jazz combo lab* to develop both skill and critical reflectivity. My teaching had for years been influenced by John Dewey, who said, “To cultivate unhindered, unreflective external activity is to foster enslavement, for it leaves the person at the mercy of appetite, sense, and circumstance” (Dewey, 1910/2005, p. 52).

 The second converging experience occurred during a class I enrolled in, housed in the Adult Education department, *Politics, Language, and Pedagogy: Applying Paulo Freire Today*. In this class, we read through *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 1970/93), *Pedagogy in Process: The letters to Guinea Bissau* (Freire, 1978), *We Make the Road by Walking* (Horton & Freire, 1990), *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire, 1992), and *Pedagogy of Freedom* (Freire, 1998); a book-length case study implementing Freirean pedagogy (Purcell-Gates & Waterman, 2000); and critiques of Freire’s pedagogy by Bowers & Apffel-Marglin (2005), Roberts (2000), Esteva, Stuchul, & Prakash (2005), hooks (1994), Ismail (2003), Rivera (2004), and Weiler (1991). This course was brimming with powerful discussion, dialogue, disagreement, and discourse. The course instructor encouraged students to explore how Freirean pedagogy might inform our own teaching praxis. After the first class, I realized Freire’s pedagogy might serve as a framework to empower my students, who might have been marginalized by the competitive audition experience. I challenged myself to try to apply Freire’s ideas on literacy in the *Jazz Combo Lab*.

 During the past twenty years, music education pedagogy has become contested space, as many researchers, philosophers, and teachers argue for a critical approach to music education. I agree wholly with Elliott (2013) when he proposed that a “primary” way music education can serve humanity is by, “enabling the development of students’ character, identities, empathy, happiness, health and well-being, personal and social agency, and ethical dispositions to oppose all forms of oppression and injustice with and through critically reflective and creative music making” (p. 3). I want my own teaching to facilitate these qualities. With these qualities in mind, the purpose of this autoethnography was to examine my teaching praxis as I integrate Freirean pedagogy in a small ensemble jazz class. Freire (1998) describes critical reflection as “a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice” (p. 30). The presentation of this current paper, then, can be described as an act of critical reflection.

Over the course of the semester my teaching praxis evolved through discussions in *Applying Paulo Freire Today*, critical readings of Freirean texts, studying music education thinkers who have used Freirean frameworks, and reflective teaching in the *Jazz Combo Lab.*  At MayDay 25 in Vancouver, Peter Gouzouasis and Danny Bakan presented, “An ethos in music education: Where are teachers and learners in music education research?” Their paper inspired me to employ autoethnography as a self-reflective research method. This paper describes some of my autoethnography (Chang, 2008) and problematizes Freirean pedagogy in music education.

**Jazz Combo Lab Students**

There were four students who registered for Jazz Combo Lab.

* Ronan
	+ Trumpet
	+ Also played in a university big band. He was perhaps the strongest jazz musician throughout & wanted to become a music major
* Caitlin
	+ Violin
	+ Older woman with experience playing classical music & has knowledge about bluegrass
* Malachi
	+ Piano
	+ Classically trained piano student, graduate student (not in music) & he worked extensively on comping throughout the semester
* Aiden
	+ Electric Violin
	+ Had some experience with free improvisation, but little experience playing jazz & wanted to widen his perspectives as a music performance undergraduate student

**Lesson Planning**

 On the top margin of each lesson plan, I wrote a guiding quotation from one of the *Applying Paulo Freire Today* readings for the week, and then constructed a lesson plan that would aim to empower students and to be as Freirean as possible. Therefore, my aim was to teach, as much as possible, a minimally modified Freirean pedagogy for this music performance ensemble. Throughout the semester, I reflected on my experiences and on the appropriateness of Freirean pedagogy for the *Jazz Combo Lab* in traditional journal entries and, later in the semester, in the form of haiku. These haiku forced me to synthesize single thoughts about Freirean pedagogy in the *Jazz Combo Lab* into an artistic form. Artistic expression often plays a central role in autoethnographic research.

 Freirean pedagogy is designed to help avoid banking education and increase student conscientization (Freire, 1970/93, p. 67; Roberts, 2000). Improvisation, which can be understood as an act of free play (Nachmanovitch, 1990), is an essential part of the jazz music tradition. At the start of the semester, in the *Jazz Combo Lab,* I hoped to create a safe environment where students would improvise, experiment, talk, grow musically, and be empowered to make judgments and express musical and verbal positions.

 I believed that the improvisatory nature of jazz musicking might be uniquely able to accomplish a type of empowerment. As the semester progressed, students chose much of the instructional material. I video-recorded each teaching session to reflect on my success at facilitating robust dialogue, increasing student agency, and avoiding authoritarian educational models. I also created a Facebook page, for the dual purposes of extending classroom conversations and sharing small ensemble jazz YouTube videos.

**Key Freirean Terms**

 Paulo Freire’s use of the term *praxis* emerges from his study of Karl Marx. In this way, it is similar to Deweyan *moral education* (Dewey, 1909/75), where moral education is only moral if it acts in the world. The term *dialogue* has been central to philosophical thought since Socrates, but Freire’s use may be unique. Other terms, like *conscientization* and *banking model* seem to have been original to Freirean pedagogy. Here is a list of terms, and how I am using them throughout this paper.

* Praxis: “Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970/93, p. 51)
* Conscientization: movement from naïve thinking, thinking in which the oppressed are not empowered to change the world, to critical thinking, “thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits no dichotomy between them” (Freire 1970/93, p. 92)
* Banking Model: Positions teachers as possessors of knowledge, knowledge is then deposited into the students, who are mere consumers, rather than producers of knowledge
* Problem Posing Pedagogy: As opposed to the banking model, this pedagogy poses problems that the students need to overcome & positions knowledge as constructed rather than something out there
* Dialogue: This is conversation. To distinguish it from other philosopher’s use of the term, Freire (1970/93) describes the “correct method” (p. 67), as “the encounter between men, mediated by the world, in order to name the world” (p. 88)

**Coming to Freire’s Pedagogy**

 As mentioned above, I came to the study of Freire’s pedagogy through a graduate level course housed in the adult education department at my university, *Applying Paulo Freire Today.* While this course was designed for students in the Adult Education doctoral program, there were a number of Art Education and other doctoral students. I was the only Music Education student. I was in my 3rd year of graduate studies, and was familiar with Deweyan democratic education, and that Freirean education was also based on democratic principles. I had not, at that point, read any Paulo Freire. I wasn’t aware that Freire was aware of Dewey’s “Escola Nova” (Kirkendall, 2010, p. 11) movement. Though Dewey’s “student focused, active learning-based pedagogy” (p. 11) influenced Freire, Freire’s pedagogy seemed more expressly critical.

**Readings**

 In this section of the paper, I will share some of the readings that were most influential on my emerging understanding of Freire’s pedagogy over the course of the semester. Freirean pedagogy developed throughout Freire’s life, beginning with the modernist binaries and categories found in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* written in 1969 just after Freire’s exile from Brazil. His pedagogy continued to evolve throughout his experiences in America, Guinea-Bissau, Nicaragua, and with his return to Brazil. Freire’s pedagogy ultimately shifted in response to postmodern critiques and he incorporated many postmodern ideas. These critics were especially disparaging of Freire’s emphasis of economics above issues of race, gender, and culture (Kirkendall, 2010).

**Pedagogy of the Oppressed**

 *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire 1970/93) was written after Freire implemented nation-wide adult literacy programs in Chile and Brazil, programs that ended when right wing political parties were elected to power. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* represents the most complete description of Freire’s pedagogical concepts and later Freirean writings draw from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* heavily and expect readers to have a strong grasp of Freirean concepts (Kirkendall, 2010). Many contemporary critical social educators base their understanding of Freirean pedagogy entirely on this text, which Roberts (2000) describes as unfortunate; Freire’s pedagogy grew throughout his life in response to what he considered fair criticism – especially from critical race theorist and critical feminists. It is impossible to fully grasp Freire’s growth as a pedagogue without understanding *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Contained within this book are his concepts of *humanization*, *banking* *education*, *problem* *posing* *pedagogy*, *conscientization*, and the *oppressed*/*oppressor* binary. He traces many of these concepts back to his education, which was expressly continental, in particular the influence of the writing of Hegel, Marx, Erich Fromm, Georg Lukács, Edmund Husserl, Simone de Beauvoir, and Herbert Marcuse. These influences, as well as references to revolutionaries Vladamir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Fidel Castro, and Che Guevara are often described in the footnotes. Despite grounding *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in the theory of some pretty radical thinkers, Freire viewed his pedagogy as an expression of Christian humanism, rather than Marxism.

 Freire (1970/93) believed that because the world can often dehumanize oppressed people, education must be a humanization process. This process requires the oppressed to become “restorers of humanity to both” (p. 44) themselves and their oppressors. But there is a real danger, in Freire’s mind, that when given power the oppressors might themselves become mini-oppressors. The key to overcoming oppression lies in praxis, which for Freire combines theory and action. This comes in two stages, (1) the oppressors unveil the oppressive nature of the world and commit themselves change the world, and (2) the world enters a state of permanent liberation for all people. To Freire, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). This *curious* nature of knowledge, knowledge based on curiosity, was a guiding thought for my weekly teaching of *jazz combo lab*. “A person learns to swim in the water, not in a library” (p. 137).

 For Freire (1970/93), many teachers problematically use a banking concept of education, which I defined above. Banking education alienates students from knowledge, and therefore suppresses conscientization. The correct pedagogy is rather based on dialogue. This requires reflective action, courage, and love. Students are viewed as historical. Dialogue cannot occur without critical thinking. Freirean conscientization requires students to move from magical, to naïve, to critical thinking.

**We Make the Road by Walking**

 *We Make the Road by Walking* (Freire & Horton, 1990) demonstrated the type of conversations Freire was engaging in as his pedagogy evolved. It seemed that through conversation with Myles Horton, the famous American, *Highlander Folk School* educator, Freire’s pedagogy may have moved further toward anti-capitalism and Marxism. There were some important concepts that I took as I incorporated Freirean pedagogy into the *jazz combo lab*. To Freire, “what is fundamental in the role of the teacher is to help the student to discover that inside of the difficulties there is a moment of pleasure, of joy” (p. 23). Freire finds aesthetic “sensualism” in the act of reading. Music, especially improvised jazz music, has provided me with similar pleasure and joy, especially since improvised music provides *difficulties* for musicians to overcome. Also pertinent, in this book, Freire identifies schools during his own learning as “killing creativity” (p. 28), through “bureaucratization of the mind” (p. 37). Freire suggests that creative action provides opportunities for “*ruptura”* (p. 38). The pedagogy Freire outlines in his conversations with Horton grow out of experience, and requires the teacher, who is inspiring the students, to act collectively. This iteration of Freirean pedagogy is democratic and dedicated to teaching freedom.

**Multiple Subjectivities**

 One of the biggest difficulties I had with accepting Freirean theory was Freire’s modernistic use of binaries, either/or arguments. For instance, to Freire, especially during his early writings, *oppressed and oppressors* are labels attached to different people, conscientization had distinct cognitive steps, which the oppressed could navigate from magical thinking, through naïve thinking, to critical thinking. Critical thinking was a permanent enlightenment. Lyotard (1979/84) defined, *postmodernism* as “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p. xxiv). Freire’s oppressed/oppressor binary, and conscientization as a universal process can be viewed as metanarratives. As a 21st century, postmodern educator, these metanarratives were difficult to either accept or overlook. Living in such a complex world, where people have such varied experiences, a single emancipatory, universal process, such as is found in Freirean pedagogy, seemed unlikely.

Roberts (2000) text, *Education, Literacy, and Humanization,* especially his interpretation of Freirean concepts through multiple-subjectivities, we are an “amalgam of many different ‘selves’” (p. 147), helped me to incorporate these concepts in a more holistic and, for me, bearable manner. Freire’s description of magical, naïve and critical thinking as distinct cognitive stages of conscientization seems particularly modernistic. Roberts recommends an alternative, “a dialectical representation of conscientization as a continuous reflective process” (p. 147). Also, binaries are a common and dangerous trap of modernist thinking. When binaries arise, complex social issues are reduced to “either/or” paradoxes. There is an oppressor/oppressed binary in Freire’s writing, especially as posed in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* If an individual can be an oppressor in one sphere of their life, and the oppressed in another (multiple subjectivities), then Freirean pedagogy might be applicable to my *Jazz Combo Lab* praxis.

At an American university the students are fairly privileged – especially in comparison to the oppressed in Chile, Brazil, Guinea Bissau, or Nicaragua. Conceiving critical consciousness through the lens of multiple subjectivities allows me to conceive how individuals are able to be critically conscious of one issue, but not another. For instance, a person might be class conscious and yet completely unaware of gender inequities. Freire’s use of machismo language throughout *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an example of this. In his later writings, he seems to become conscious of this, and uses gender neutral language. In my teaching praxis, Roberts’s (2000) text brought Freire into the 21st century as a viable, postmodern critical pedagogy.

**Pedagogy of Freedom**

 In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, published after his death, Freire (1998) discussed his ethics, democracy, critical reflection, race, right thinking, and conscientization in his most postmodern words. He addressed the problems of neoliberalism to freedom, described critical reflection as “a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice” (p. 30), equated democratic teaching praxes with “critical capacity, curiosity, and autonomy of the learner” (p. 33), suggested the teacher must also be a researcher, and discussed conscientization to a critical awareness of problems and action, and recognizes curiosity as a precursor to knowledge.

Freire (1998) also suggested that both authoritarian and *laissez-faire* teachers hinder students’ freedom. This balance of authoritarian and laissez-faire pedagogy became a distinct issue for me as I tried to implement Freirean pedagogy, as my own teaching might at times lean toward the *laissez-faire*. Finally of note, *Pedagogy of Freedom* provided inspiration for my first Freirean *haiku*, as it was an in-class assignment of the *Applying Paulo Freire Today*.

**Musicking: Making The Political Subtle**

 Freire stated that his pedagogy is expressly political. Primarily because Jazz Combo Lab is a performance ensemble, and one in which students, oppressed by the audition process, wanted to improve their playing skills, I wanted a more subtle way to express the political content of Freirean pedagogy in the *Jazz Combo Lab*. Definitions of *political* involve systems of government, the state, and the public; and historically, the word *political* originated in the word *politicus,* Latin, “pertaining to a polity, civil affairs, or government” (political, 2014). *Political* also implies an act as being not neutral. Political parties take political positions. For Freire, dialogue is a way for students to politicize their worlds. Dedicating large segments of time in *Jazz Combo Lab* talking about politics might be oppressive to unconfident students yearning to develop their musical skill.

I believe, to some extent, it is through developing musical skill that these students would be able to overcome their oppression. And yet, each class needed to allow some space for students to voice their awareness of political matters, and develop communally. A balanced needed to be found. Christopher Small’s (1998) *musicking* provided the theoretical framework for the type of representative-political musicking I appreciated as a teacher in the *Jazz Combo Lab*. According to Small, the ways in which we choose to music are a ritualistic performance, and “… to take part in [ritual] is to take part in an act that uses the language of gesture to explore, affirm, and celebrate one’s concepts of ideal relationships” (p. 98).

**Freire in Music Education**

 Freirean pedagogical ideas seem to be present, but not widespread, in music education. I searched Sage Journals online for *Freire* in our field’s primary teacher’s journal, *Music Educators Journal (MEJ)*. The earliest mention of Freire in *MEJ* occurred in 2002, by Coleen Conway (2002), and doesn’t actually discuss Freirean pedagogy, but rather recommends *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a “general discussion” (p. 58) resource for curriculum writing. Of the six results of this search, three were recent (since 2010), so it may be that Freirean pedagogy is trending upward. The most recent MEJ articles, by Allsup & Shieh (2012) Elliott (2012), and Jorgensen (2010), seem to have used Freire more holistically and explicitly. In this section I will share a few music education articles that use Freirean pedagogy explicitly.

 Allsup (2003) used Paulo Freire’s understanding of praxis as non-neutral to widen the use of the term praxis in music education. The author clarified Freire’s inseparability of theory and practice when he suggested, “we disavow the traditional separation between abstracted learning and real life… acting upon our world requires inaction: thinking, perceiving, reflecting, reconceptualizing, connecting” (p. 158). My paper is an expression of this *inseparability* principle. This is the *inactive reflecting* Allsup suggested.

 Allsup (2003) describes a lesson in which he had his music education undergraduates compose a “requiem for the missing and dead” (p. 158) of September 11, 2001. Such a lesson seems to have the power to incorporate, in the classroom; students’ lived experiences of tragedy, outside of the classroom. This lesson might open spaces for critical dialogue, and some degree of personal reparation. Allsup recognized music pedagogy’s place in supporting Freire’s pedagogical “utopian goal,” that is “to leave the world better and happier than we found it” (p. 163).

 By 2005, Schmidt (2005) recognized that music educators still did not commonly read Freire. The author’s goal was to use Freirean concepts to “develop frameworks that define the philosophy of a Critical Pedagogy for Music Education” (p. 2). Schmidt’s concern was that in music education, “Authoritarian pedagogical models and objectives… are expected” (p. 4), and recommends that music education might grow to be *for* social and personal transformation. Freirean conscientization, for Schmidt, is a process in which a learner, “become[s] conscious of one’s knowledge, by engaging in learning that connects concepts to the learners’ own realities, leads students to the point where they ‘know that they know.’ Music education, centered upon conscientization becomes powerful” (p. 6). According to Schmidt, this power is a consequence of culture and social relationships.

 Schmidt (2005) also describes Freirean problem posing education in connection to “dialogue and questioning,” knowledge being constructed and “where students create new and personal challenges, and view music as something to be constantly questioned, changed, and transformed” (p. 7). Music is a way in which students encounter the world interactively. Taken together, Schmidt’s description of conscientization and problem posing education seem to be in line with Robert’s (2000) postmodern conscientization as a continual process of reflection.

 In an article that is particularly pedagogically enlightening because it was aimed at practicing music teachers and shares a model in constructing lesson plans, Abrahams (2005) suggested a Freirean critical approach relates music in students’ personal lives to empower students in the classrooms, and “does not advocate a particular body of repertoire or specific teaching procedure” (p. 63). This is particularly interesting to me since Freirean adult education programs, at least in Guinea Bissau and Nicaragua, did have a *particular body of repertoire,* in this case adult reading literature (Kirkendall, 2010).

 Abrahams (2005) outlined, “Five key principles of critical pedagogy” (p. 64), education as (1) conversation (2), broadening students’ view of reality (3), empowering (4), transformative (5), and political. Because these principles were shared in a widely distributed practitioner journal, Scheib (2012) suggested they are employed in music teacher training. That author suggests that the resulting “Dialogue through problem-posing helps students form connections to the profession… [and] transfer and retention of course content” (p. 111). It may be that by 2012, Freirean pedagogy was becoming more common in music education, at least in university teacher training programs.

 In a recent book chapter, Spruce (2012) suggested that critical thinking, within critical social theory, is able to empower student’s agency, and help students make connections between their music learning and “lived reality” (p. 185). The author suggested that Music Education as Aesthetic Education, the dominant music education philosophy of the second half of the twentieth century, employs transcendentalist-rational thinking, which, because knowledge is viewed as external to the students, employs what Freire describes as *banking education.* Spruce understood Freirean conscientization as moving students from the category magical thinking to the category critical consciousness by providing them with the “power to act” (p. 189). Roberts’s (2000) critique, considering the categorization of the stages of conscientization as “quaint and artificial” (p. 147), seems apropos to Spruce’s description of conscientization.

 Spruce (2012) then provided examples of critical pedagogy based on his understanding of Freirean pedagogy, and describes his belief that “music provides the possibility of a much richer discourse between teacher and student” (p. 193) than discourse based on spoken language. While I believe that we can represent ideal relationships of liberation through wordless music (see Small, 1998), I find it difficult to believe Spruce’s contention that music provides *richer discourse.* Freire’s dialogue is explicitly and openly political, involving conversations about the oppressive nature of the capitalistic world, while musical sounds are subtler, with murkier meanings. As a teacher, I do not look to music as being a “richer” expression of political discourse, but a viable option through which students might express themselves. Spruce’s statement may suggest a music-centric position that shows hierarchical content focus – music as better – while Freire was expressly against content focus in his literacy programs, and Freirean pedagogy aims to defeat hierarchies. Spruce’s statement might therefore be viewed as anti-Freirean. However, the spirit of Spruce’s chapter might be to make the political subtler, which I did through Small’s (1998) theory, discussed above.

**Teaching Episodes**

 The focus of this paper is the theoretical end of praxis – what I learned – not on the teaching episodes that I analyzed through the autoethnographic method. However, four reflections, written from my journal, might demonstrate how my thinking evolved throughout the semester. At the start of the semester, on September 5th 2013, I taught my first *Jazz Combo Lab* class. I wrote in my journal,

My goals for this class are to explore some of the Freirean concepts I began to learn in the Adult Education course… I believe at the minimum, employing a more dialogical method will increase the democratic-ness of my teaching. So, this is not only a laboratory for the students, but it is a laboratory for myself… The introductory discussion seemed a little long, but maybe that’s what dialogue is all about, giving people time to think about ideas and values surrounding this music. How else will they build identity? After listening to Thelonius Monk’s *Blue Monk* I had to push them a little to take over the conversation, and form a plan for playing it. Their playing wasn’t very good. They knew that. (Shevock reflective journal, September 5, 2013)

By the first class, I was aware that *Jazz Combo Lab* was a laboratory for my own teaching. I was aware that *discussion,* allowing students to talk during class, was taking up instructional time. I wrote about instructional time in the journal because I was aware of my own unease with dedicating this much class time to talking, not to music making. As I taught for twelve years prior to entering graduate school at Penn State, I had preset notions about what activity should be taking place in a music class. In that, I valued music above dialogue. I continued, throughout the semester and since, to reflectively think about the balance between producing sonic music and talking in class. Too much music and class can become disempowering and unreflective. Too much talk and making music in class can become a rarity, and class can become about music instead of musical action in practice. To this day, I don’t feel there is an clear answer to how to balance music and talk.

 By my September 19th journal entry, the students were showing signs of improvement, both musically and in their ability to dialogue. Playing with the iPhone app *iRealb* seems to have proven an effective tool for learning jazz combo music without a bassist or drummer. The students seemed somewhat more comfortable with talking in class, since I was insistent on providing time for conversation throughout. One difficulty inexperienced jazz improvisers have is constructing a solo that is interesting and lasts longer than one time through the head. This problem might be compounded by the prevalence of big band music in school jazz, because big band music emphasizes improvised solos less than jazz combo music. I had each student talk through a guiding framework for an extended improvised solo. I then allowed each student to perform the solo. After each solo, the other studentsassessed their classmate. Since I played vibraphone along with each class, I also participated in this activity, submitting myself to the verbal construction of an extended solo, performance of that solo, and assessment by each student. This activity had mixed results.

I also tried to have them critique each other’s solos. I’m not sure how well it worked. It definitely seemed to help Caitlin. I’m not sure Ronan was happy with it, he seemed uncomfortable with receiving criticism from his peers... The goal of having peer assessments was to empower the individuals. Their opinions mattered. They were the authority able to judge their own and other’s work… it was a challenge of social-cohesion; not necessarily painless. (Shevock Reflective Journal, September 19, 2013)

After this first *not painless* peer assessment, students seemed uncomfortable around each other. However, I continued using peer assessment throughout the semester. By the second peer assessment, perhaps because I submitted myself to the same scrutiny; perhaps because they understood this would be expected, students were noticeably more comfortable with taking and giving criticism, and I feel this became an important key to their development as musicians. Students were empowered as agents, judging their and other improvisations based on criteria that were socially constructed.

 As a doctoral student who was the course instructor I had difficulties unrelated to teaching. I presented research three times from the end of September to the beginning of November, in North Carolina, Nebraska, and Ireland. Each of these presentations meant that I missed class time. The students met to rehearse without me during these weeks and continued to develop, but not as quickly as they had developed in September, nor as quickly as they would during the free-jazz lessons I taught in November. On October 17th, Malachi posted a recording he made of the group performing *Blue Monk* to the *Jazz Combo Lab* Facebook page and it was nice to hear them reflectively playing, a point I lauded on the Facebook page.

 By November 8th, the *Jazz Combo Lab* was working on jazz ballads, which were particularly challenging for Malachi, because the piano voicings were causing problems. After playing through *My Funny Valentine,* we returned to *Blue Monk,* and I had the students improvise a pattern, which could then be taught to the whole group and used as a comping figure during some of the solos. In my journal I wrote,

Next I had the students improvise, and then write out a harmony part for *Blue Monk,* and of the three, we all learned Malachi’s. I’m not sure how democratically I handled this, because when ultimately the three members weren’t able to decide on one to do, I chose Malachi’s because I thought it would work best for… a composed line to be played behind soloists. I then comped on the piano while Malachi taught the group his part. (Shevock Reflective Journal, November 8, 2013)

Another reason I chose Malichi’s harmonic line was to empower him, after he had difficulties with the ballads. I share this reflection because it demonstrated one of the few times I feel I left a democratic teaching style. This was partly due to reading Freire’s (1998) *Pedagogy of Freedom,* where he suggested his pedagogy is not *laissez-faire.*

 I dedicated two weeks to free-jazz in November. During the week before the second free-jazz class, I had students find free-jazz tunes they liked, and post them to the *Jazz Combo Lab’s* Facebook page. Both Ronan and Malachi posted videos.

 In class, we talked a little about the Ronan’s Facebook post – *Pithecanthropus Erectus*, by Charles Mingus. I gathered some information about it from Wikipedia, which I read to the students,

According to Mingus' liner notes, the title song is a ten-minute [tone poem](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tone_poem), depicting the rise of man from his [hominid](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hominidae) roots (*Pithecanthropus erectus*) to an eventual downfall due to "his own failure to realize the inevitable emancipation of those he sought to enslave, and his greed in attempting to stand on a false security." (Wikipedia.com, *Pithecanthropus Erectus* (album))

This provided the class with fodder for critical dialogue, including how Mingus’s composition ends in such a way that it sounds hopeful; perhaps that humankind might *evolve* past its desire to enslave others. We ended up talking about historical slavery, social slavery, or wage slavery. I then had students – as a group – compose a free-jazz piece around licks they improvised, which I then wrote on the chalkboard.

**Problematizing Freire**

 Since Freire’s is a critical pedagogy, it is important to problematize Freire, rather than unreflectively apply Freirean pedagogy. There are quite a few educational theorists who have problematized Freire’s pedagogy throughout his life. He responded to critical race theorists and critical feminists in his later books by writing about the importance of these issues to critical pedagogy. One particularly powerful critique came from Esteva, Stuchul & Prakash (2005), who presented Freire as conservative and as a “colonizer” (p. 13).

Conscientization is, in fact, new wine for old bottles—the bottles of colonization. During the last several centuries, all kinds of agents have pretended to “liberate” pagans, savages, the oppressed, the underdeveloped, the uneducated, and the illiterate in the name of the Cross, civilization (i.e. Westernization), capitalism or socialism, human rights, democracy, a universal ethic, progress, or any other banner of development. Every time the mediator conceptualizes the category or class of the oppressed in his or her own terms, with his or her own ideology, he or she is morally obligated to evangelize: to promote among them, for their own good, the kind of transformation he or she defines as liberation. Yet, a specific blindness seems to be the common denominator among these mediators: They seem to be unaware of their own oppression. In presuming that they have succeeded in reaching an advanced level or stage of awareness, conscience, or even liberation (at least in theory, in imagination, in dreams) and even more, that is what their oppressed lack is this specific notion or stage, they assume and legitimate their own role as liberators. Herein, they betray their intentions. (Esteva, Stuchul, & Prakash, 2005, pp. 16-17)

When I read this critique, my mind was drawn to Freire’s failed literacy program in Guinea Bissau, and his insistence that students learn to read and write Portuguese rather than their native languages. Portuguese was the language of the Guinea Bissau government and the colonizer’s language.

Undoubtedly, the decision to use the colonial language as the means of instruction was, ultimately, the major reason why the literacy program in Guinea-Bissau failed. As in most postcolonial African countries, leaders preferred to use the language of the colonizer as the new national language… Creole might have had somewhat more potential as a unifying force, as the use of it had spread during the war for liberation. (p. 111)

It may be that the use of the language of the oppressor was inappropriate. It may also be possible that the very need for a *unifying force* represents what Esteva, Stuchul, and Prakash (2005) called a *universal ethic,* one that seems to have been unsuitable for Guinea Bissau, even if it was suitable for Brazil and Chile. Though Freire suggested that the government insisted on implementing his literacy program in Portuguese, Freire continued to defend teaching the “dominant pattern” (and perhaps the dominant language) years later. Freire’s rationale was multifaceted.

Do you see it’s impossible to think of language without thinking of ideology and power. I defend the duty of the teachers to teach the cultivated pattern and I defend the rights of the kids or of the adults to learn the dominant pattern. But it is necessary in being a democratic and tolerant teacher it is necessary to explain, to make clear to the kids or the adults that their way of speaking is as beautiful as our way of speaking. (LiteracyDotOrg, 2009)

Freire seems to suggest that the learning of the “dominant pattern” is a “right,” when, in the case of Guinea Bissau, requiring the learning of Portuguese seems to have been an unnecessary burden to students wanting to become literate. This conversation seems also to speak to teachers who feel there is a duty to teaching classical music. Esteva, Stuchul, & Prakash (2005) raise a number of difficult issues for a teacher attempting to use a Freirean praxis in a classroom. The issue of universals was answered to some extent by Roberts (2000), who constructed a postmodern Freirean pedagogy. However, the issue of a mediator, whose view of conscientization places “the oppressed” into less advanced “stage of awareness” seems unanswerable within the context of Freirean pedagogy, as I understand it. Freirean pedagogy may, by its nature, place students in a position of deficit.

 This is the provocation I hope to stimulate with this paper. Can a pedagogy, an “instructional method” (pedagogy, 2014), be developed that both aims for the conscientization of “the oppressed” and respects students as not less than the teacher, no less human? Is a truly anti-colonial Freirean music pedagogy possible, or is something new needed?

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