

## Oxford Handbooks Online

### Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

Ruth Wright

The Oxford Handbook of Social Justice in Music Education

*Edited by Cathy Benedict, Patrick Schmidt, Gary Spruce, and Paul Woodford*

Print Publication Date: Dec 2015 Subject: Music, Music Education

Online Publication Date: May 2016 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199356157.013.47

### Abstract and Keywords

This chapter discusses the role of music education in the perpetuation of cycles of unjust hegemonic social reproduction, using Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction and the roles of education and culture therein. Alternative music pedagogies, such as informal learning, are examined as offering potential to break such cycles by allowing accumulation of two forms of cultural capital—pedagogical and musical capital—by diverse students. An empirical example is used to demonstrate how perceptions of the knowledge legitimation code within which music education operates may be shifted, allowing fewer students to self-identify as “non-elite” and therefore not suited to studying music. Some principles are suggested by which music education might act to break cycles of injustice and in whatever small way act to disrupt the social status quo.

Keywords: social reproduction, Bourdieu, pedagogical, cultural capital, legitimation codes, informal learning

---

The social world is accumulated history, and if it is not to be reduced to a discontinuous series of instantaneous mechanical equilibria between agents who are treated as interchangeable particles, one must reintroduce into it the notion of capital and with it, accumulation and all its effects.... the structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices.

(Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241)

## Introduction

It appears that, despite a number of political and economic strategies more or less purportedly aimed at fairly distributing wealth, or at least some of society's wealth, among members in "developed" countries, the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. The United Kingdom's *Sunday Times* "rich list," released in May 2014, claimed the "total wealth of the richest 1,000 individuals, couples, or families jumped 15% in a year" (BBC, 2014). This contrasted with a report on May 29 that five million UK children face a life of poverty (Independent, 2014). This pattern is repeated in many countries around the world, presenting a clear and practical example of how society reproduces itself to maintain the advantage of those already privileged.

Numerous sociologists have identified the crucial role that education plays in such social reproduction, and key figures have highlighted the role of culture in these cycles (p. 341) of injustice. As Bourdieu (1973, p. 80) so discerningly perceived, "the education system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give." He referred here to access to the "code" within which he observed education to operate, a sociolinguistic and behavioral/attitudinal code, a cultural code or set of resources developed during early life, largely within the family, and acquired differentially according to class. He termed these resources "cultural capital" and argued that possession of such capital predisposes one to take advantage of education. The code is never overtly taught during the education process, however. It has to be learned in the home and is not found in all homes. Children of more socially advantaged groups tend to acquire the code, whereas their less advantaged peers do not.

In 2010 (Wright, 2010a, 2010b) I wrote of the role that music education might play in larger societal patterns of injustice such as this. I also suggested that providing students with opportunities to engage in more democratic forms of music pedagogy might help develop cultural resources more evenly across student populations, resulting in wider social inclusion in music and applying a small point of pressure for larger social change. Since then my empirical work with colleagues (Wright et al., 2012) has led me to question the micro interactional processes between students and teachers that might make a difference in changing such patterns of inclusion. I have continued to consider the role of pedagogy in social reproduction and in particular the roles of two forms of cultural capital, which I term "pedagogical" and "musical capital" in these processes (Wright, 2015). I suggest that it is in embracing pedagogies that allow the interruption of pre-formed, rationalized communities of knowledge and that permit accumulation of pedagogical and musical capital by diverse students, irrespective of social group or background, that alternative approaches to music education might act to break cycles of injustice and in whatever small way act to disrupt the social status quo. This may perhaps explain why previous attempts to include more students in music education by attempting to reduce curricular domination by elite cultural content such as Western art music have failed to change patterns of inclusion in music education and why some new approaches are proving more successful.

## **Music, Culture, Education, and Social Reproduction**

Culture is defined as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1958, p. 1). Culture also operates at the level of individual societal institutions such as schools, however, when socially determined patterns of preference and value underlay “the way things are.” As such, culture often becomes invisible, a “given,” when it comes to the workings of social institutions such as schools. The cultural framework within which such institutions operate, however, has immense effects on the outcomes for the (p. 342) students who study within them. Music is an integral element of humanity’s culture. We have yet to find a society, no matter how remote, without music. Bannan (2014, p. 105) writes of humanity’s “biological-determined musicality,” concurring with anthropologists such as Blacking (1973) and Mithen (2006) who suggest that humanity has a deep-rooted need to participate in communal music making—that said need is “embedded in the human genome” or that humans are “hard-wired for music” (Bannan, 2014, p. 1). Many music educators have therefore argued for the needs and rights of young people to an engaging and satisfying experience of music in education, placing it as a human right (Mullen & Harrison, 2013; Wright, 2010a).

As such, music is deeply embedded in human culture, and therefore in cultural issues of power and control, as societies produce and reproduce themselves over time. Education plays a key role in social reproduction, according to Bourdieu (1984, 1986, [1987]1994) The role of music education in social reproduction—implying the reproduction of societal models favoring the cultural interests of currently dominant social groups—should therefore not be underestimated.

## **Music Education, Social Inequality, and Social Reproduction**

We know that social class, wealth, family culture, gender, race, ethnicity, and identity shape, and to some extent predetermine, the extent to which young people benefit from education. Evidence now supports the idea that this is not an accidental correlate of birth, but that parents deliberately engage in “concerted cultivation” (Hofvander Trulsson, 2012; Lareau, 2003), harvesting cultural resources and qualifications such as music, ballet, and athletic examinations and certificates for their children to ensure that sufficient cultural capital is accrued to come out ahead in the education race. Hofvander Trulsson’s work also suggests that children of some socially upward aspirational lower class and immigrant families who understand “the rules of the game” also engage in such practices to secure advantage for their children (Hofvander Trulsson, 2012). This lends credence to Lareau and Weininger’s (2003) assertion that parental skill in manipulating

interactions with education may have a significant role to play in child educational success.

It might be contended that in the case of music education, distributive inequalities are exaggerated to a degree found nowhere else. Class, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender have all been shown to affect access to music education in ways not experienced in other school subjects (Bates, 2012; Gould, 2012; Gustafson, 2008; Lamont & Maton, 2010; Rabkin, Hedberg, & Arts National Endowment, 2011). While teachers of other subjects have been engaged in long and often government-prompted battles to increase access to and achievement of children across the social spectrum—efforts that have met with varying degrees of success—music education appears until recently to (p. 343) have been left behind in the battle to recruit, retain, and foster positive achievement among diverse student groups. Ontario, Canada, serves as an example, with data indicating that music education serves on average 10%–12% of secondary school students, once they complete compulsory music education at the age of 14 (Bolden, 2012; Veblen, 2012). Yet we know that young people remain passionately attached to music as a force in their day-to-day lives (Herbert, 2012), including the most dispossessed—the homeless (Palzkill Woelfer & Lee, 2012).

Lamont and Maton (2010) use the concept of legitimation codes to describe student understandings of success criteria required in various curriculum subjects. They provide analysis from an empirical study demonstrating that UK students perceive music as an elite code, which requires special knowledge, skills, and special talents, and that this may play a central role in student decisions concerning whether or not to study music. By choosing not to study music for such reasons, I suggest that many students actively position themselves as “non-elite,” as lacking the cultural capital required to succeed in music. I would suggest, however, that such self-positioning may result for some students in a larger, albeit unwitting, educational statement about how the student sees herself in relation to the cultural capital required to succeed in education per se. Such statements may speak to enduring issues of self-confidence and “self-imposed” (although societally conditioned) limitations on future educational potential. This is discussed further in the section that follows.

### Bourdieu and Reproduction

Pierre Bourdieu developed a theory of social reproduction that helps us to understand how this disadvantageous self-positioning may happen. He asks us to consider how social behavior is regulated if people do not merely follow social rules (Bourdieu, [1987]1994). Attempting to answer this conundrum, he developed a view of social life conceptualized in terms of a “game.” Bourdieu (1986) asserted the game to be competitive and its objectives to maintain or advance the player’s position on the social field by accumulating various sorts of capital: economic (money assets), cultural (certain types of knowledge, taste, discrimination, cultural preferences, language), social (connections and networks, family, religious and cultural heritage), and symbolic (things that stand for all the other types of capital and can be exchanged in other fields, such as qualifications). The game,

## Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

---

he asserted, was not played on a level field, however. In fact, a better analogy might be to say that the site of the game was a steepish hill. Some players begin the game already holding stocks of preferential capital, and this gives them an advantage, placing them further up the hill than others. We saw an example of this earlier in Lamont and Maton's analysis of student decisions concerning whether or not to study music. Students who see themselves as "elite" due to background, family cultural habits, or private music tuition—that is, as special knowers capable of developing, or already holding, the special knowledge required to succeed in music—are positioned higher up the hill than their less fortunate peers. They hold more capital. Moreover, such students (p. 344) are likely to accumulate proportionately more of the capital over time than their peers because of their advantageous start and the advantageous conditions within which they continue to exist.

Players also develop dispositions or behavioral tendencies that are derived from *habitus*, that is, "a way of being, a *habitual state* (especially of the body) and in particular a *predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination*" (Bourdieu, [1972]1977, p. 214, original italics). This explains why individuals tend to behave in certain patterned ways and why similar patterns of behavior can be observed among people of similar social class. The habitus was structured by one's past social experiences, particularly those within the family and education. It then tended to shape actions, as it established ways of seeing and responding to the world, and generated tastes and values consistent with past experiences and projected futures (Maton, 2012). Such patterns can also extend to how one perceives oneself in relation to education, and particularly in relation to elite knowledge codes such as music education, leading to self-positioning as non-elite by many students.

These three concepts together—habitus, capital, and field—explained individual and collective practice, described by Bourdieu (1986) in the following equation (p. 101):

$$[(\text{habitus}) (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}$$

In other words, practice (action/behavior) is the product of the relationship between an individual's dispositions (habitus) and his or her position in a field, defined in terms of the amount of capital held by the individual within that field. Such practices explain why society tends to reproduce in patterns, as habitus is patterned and produces predictable behaviors, and why such reproduction is largely governed by distribution of capital, as capital shapes habitus. It therefore helps us understand how patterns of social exclusion perpetuate and how subjects such as music may form part of a larger pattern of culturally based distributive injustice, perpetuated in and through education.

### Bourdieu and Education

For Bourdieu, education played a central role in the distribution of patterns of social advantage, including the reproduction of existing social patterns of inequality. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) described this educational reproductive power as a type of "symbolic violence" in that it gave education the authority to convey meanings and convey them as

---

## Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

---

fact, while divorcing them from the social power base that had first given them their legitimacy. He describes this as follows:

Every power to exert symbolic violence, i.e. every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force, adds its own specifically symbolic force to those power relations.

(Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 4)

(p. 345) An example of this might be seen in the continuing battles about the nature and purpose of music education, curriculum content, and pedagogy. While appearing to be pedagogic discussions, these are in fact social power struggles. The cultural values and philosophies of the socially dominant group frequently become embodied in music curricula or national standards without overtly being revealed as such. They appear as pedagogic innovation, rather than social control.

Moreover, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) saw culture as occupying a central role in the symbolic violence enacted by education, suggesting that “all Pedagogic Action (PA) is, objectively, symbolic violence insofar as it is the imposition of a cultural arbitrary by an arbitrary power” (p. 5). Furthermore, the choice of cultural values dominant in education was anything but arbitrary, but rather an expression of the cultural values and interests of the socially dominant class. As they argue,

in any given social formation the cultural arbitrary which the power relations between the groups or classes making up that social formation put into the dominant position within the system of cultural arbitraries is the one which most fully, although always indirectly, expresses the objective interests (material and symbolic) of the dominant groups or classes.

(Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 9)

Bourdieu argued that by this means, education plays a trick on the less advantaged members of society. By wrapping education within a cultural code familiar to those from dominant sectors of society, the children of these dominant social groups are predisposed to understand and benefit from education before their less advantaged peers. Because this process is imperceptible, however, contained in the invisible waters of a culture pervading education without overtly revealing itself, it appears that some children sink and others swim in school due to merit alone, whereas in fact, there are very clear explanations for relative success and failure; all we need to do is to introduce a little dye to allow the cultural waters to be revealed. Moreover, “in nearly all economically advanced countries, schools play a crucial and growing role in the transmission of advantage across generations” (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). I suggest, however, that this trick is no longer covert, as it appeared to be in Bourdieu’s analysis of French society. Lamont and Maton’s analysis suggests that students are very well aware that certain subjects, such as music, as it is delivered in many traditional pedagogic models, are more

accessible to “elite” students. Students who exclude themselves from participation in music because they recognize themselves as “non-elite” are therefore acknowledging that they know the rules of this particular game and recognize that they are unlikely to win it.

### Elite Knowers

Within educational research, Bourdieu’s cultural theory has had a great impact, becoming a standard topic in education textbooks (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 576). Lareau (p. 346) and Weininger (2003) contend, however, that much of the research conducted on the basis of Bourdieu’s cultural theory might be based on a misinterpretation of his concept of cultural capital.

We argue that a dominant interpretation, resting on two crucial premises, has emerged concerning cultural capital. First, the concept of cultural capital is assumed to denote knowledge of or competence with “highbrow” aesthetic culture (such as fine art and classical music). Second, researchers assume that the effects of cultural capital must be partitioned from those of properly educational “skills,” “ability,” or “achievement”. (p. 567)

According to Lareau and Weininger, the prevailing interpretation of cultural capital in educational research can be attributed in large part to the work of DiMaggio, particularly his 1982 article investigating the association of cultural capital to school achievement. Here Lareau and Weininger assert that DiMaggio sees cultural capital as

[m]ore completely filling out models of the “status attainment process.” [and]...interprets cultural capital in terms of the Weberian notion of “elite status cultures”...

Cultural capital is thus definitionally yoked to “prestigious” cultural practices, in DiMaggio’s interpretation. (2003, p. 568)

For Lareau and Weininger, such assertions may rest on some basic misunderstandings of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. They suggest that DiMaggio’s assumptions—first, that Bourdieu intended his concept of cultural capital to indicate elite or highbrow culture, and second, that such capital has effects independent of ability or skill—might be questioned.

While *Distinction* (1984) takes great pains to document lifestyles in France coherent across status groups, and to prove that highbrow culture is part of the “art of living” consistent with the dominant status group, the relationship between familiarity with such highbrow culture and achievement in education is less well supported, nor is the educational process itself by which such advantage might be transmitted closely examined (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p. 577).

Lareau and Weininger suggest, however, that a closer inspection of this work causes further questioning of the highbrow interpretation:

For we also find Bourdieu stating here that the educational system's ability to reproduce the social distribution of cultural capital results from "the educational norms of those social classes capable of imposing the...criteria of evaluation which are the most favorable to their products. (p. 578)

As they go on to state:

Bourdieu's remarks highlight two important issues. On the one hand, he did see a congruity between the aptitudes rewarded by the school and the styles and tastes that (p. 347) engender status group inclusion among members of the dominant class: the "subtle modalities in the relationship to culture" that he names do indeed recall the cultural attributes of the dominant class as described in *Distinction*. On the other hand, Bourdieu also indicates that this concept of cultural capital was intended to reflect the peculiarities of the French context that was being analyzed. Thus, the question arises whether Bourdieu considered congruity between educational norms and status practices to be essential to the concept of cultural capital, and, if so, whether they necessarily take a "highbrow" aesthetic form. (p. 579)

Lareau and Weininger show that other interpretations have been adopted, however. They cite Sullivan's study of final year English students that took a broad variety of indicators of cultural capital to attempt to determine which might be determined capital. Findings suggested that reading was more significant than arts participation as providing "intellectual resources which help pupils at school" (p. 579). These intellectual resources of "cultural knowledge" and "vocabulary" begin to dissolve DiMaggio's sharp distinction between a status culture, which revolves around prestige, and "ability," which revolves around technical skill and knowledge. They conclude by providing an alternative definition of cultural capital that does not restrict its scope exclusively to "elite status cultures," and that does not attempt to partition it analytically or empirically from "human capital" or "technical" skill." Their approach "stresses the importance of examining micro-interactional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation" (p. 560)

To summarize this argument, therefore, Lareau and Weininger adopt a definition of cultural capital that accords very closely with Lamont and Maton's (2010) description of knowledge legitimation codes. Not only do the social-cultural origins and affiliations of curriculum content have a role to play in whether diverse students feel able to succeed in particular subjects, but so too do the types of intellectual resources, cultural knowledge, and vocabulary required to succeed and the extent to which these are available solely within the educational context.

If music education is based in an elite knowledge code formed from a status culture that is foreign to students and that requires elite knowers (possessed of pedagogical and musical skills and understandings not available to them solely, or at least largely, within the classroom), many students will be excluded or will choose to self-exclude. By



determining that success in music requires elite knowledge and an elite knower and by deciding that she is not such an elite student, a young person may position herself as “non-elite.” While being hesitant to overstate the effects of such decisions, it may be possible, especially within the context of the importance of music in the lives of young people, that such positioning begins or contributes to a sense of lower self-worth or potential educational ability in comparison to those peers positioned as “elite” in the eyes of the student. Thus existing patterns of social reproduction recur, and cultural hegemony is perpetuated.

Disrupting patterns of social reproduction—the role of music pedagogy—educational philosopher Gert Biesta (2010) suggests that one of the problems with the subject-based (p. 348) nature of education is that it frequently serves only to permit students to speak as agents of particular knowledge communities, already formed by a consensus in which the student had no part. In this way, education may function as a way of inducting students into previously formed rational communities. By predefining what we take the subject “music” to be, what being “musical” or “making music” means, we close off to our students the possibilities inherent in engaging with music as “other” and discovering their own unique way of being musical. In this way, we create self-replicating loops with all their attendant hegemonic practices and effects.

It is here I suggest that alternative music pedagogies may offer potential in disrupting previously established patterns of social reproduction. The comparatively late focus on pedagogy and its role in this respect may indeed provide further explanation as to why previous attempts to move away from music education dominated by elite cultural content such as Western art music have failed to change patterns of inclusion in music education and why some new approaches are proving more successful.

In schools in the United Kingdom where an “informal learning music pedagogy” developed by Green (2008) from her observations of the practices of popular musicians has been implemented, uptake of elective music education has risen to up to 40 percent of the cohort, with high reported levels of enthusiasm, motivation, and engagement in school music (Hallam, Creech, Rinta, & Shave, 2008). Similar results are also observed in Australia and Canada, where projects founded on Green’s work have been initiated.

This is an example of “alternative” music pedagogy that appears to make a difference in young people’s engagement with music in schools. Yet, as Lareau and Weininger assert, our understanding of how pedagogy is effective may be aided by close examination of the micro interactional processes that allow students to develop understanding of the strategic “use of knowledge, skills, and competence” and ways in which such abilities may come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation that receive them positively.

### Pedagogical and Musical Capital

Within the music education classroom, I would suggest that two specific forms of cultural capital may be identified: pedagogical capital and musical capital. Pedagogical capital is composed of skills, knowledge, and understanding related to learning and teaching; moreover, it concerns ownership of pedagogical decision-making. Musical capital relates to skills, knowledge, and understanding relating to music but also importantly to self-perceptions of musicality and musical potential (Wright, 2015).

Bourdieu used economic and cultural capital as axes against which to plot positions within the dominant field of power. I would suggest (Wright, in press) that within the field of classroom music education, useful determinants of position might be relative possession of musical and pedagogical capital. What follows below derives from an (p. 349) empirical study and serves to illustrate the concepts articulated thus far. In particular, I wish to look at what occurs within these learning situations in terms of accumulation and relative possession of pedagogical capital and musical capital and the ways in which possession of varying amounts of these capitals allocate agents to different positions within the field of music education.

### An Example

The study took place in two schools in Southern Ontario, Canada, in 2012 (Wright, Beynon, Younker, Linton, & Hutchison, 2012) involving the introduction of informal music pedagogy (IMP) based on the work of Green (2008) to two Ontario schools, one secondary and one elementary. Participants were 74 rural elementary students in grades 7 and 8 (aged 12–14) and 37 urban secondary school students in grades 9 and 10 (aged 15–16). The lessons followed a similar form to those of Green's (2008) Musical Futures pilot study in that

- students moved through a number of activities based on principles of informal learning;
- they were encouraged to work in groups with friends;
- each group learned music chosen by the group, mainly popular music;
- they learned the music by purposive listening to recordings and copying;
- they had control of their learning sequence and this was directed by their musical goals, not by a hierarchical curriculum;
- they improvised, composed, and performed in a holistically integrated way; and
- teachers were encouraged to watch, listen, and empathize with students' learning goals first of all, and then to work as mentors, coaches, and co-musicians to help students achieve their goals.

### Pedagogical Capital

Student comments from the informal learning project data appeared to indicate that perceptions of their holdings of pedagogical capital changed during the project. Students' initial interview comments at the beginning of the project indicated that they viewed themselves as holding little pedagogical capital. The teachers were the pedagogic experts in the classrooms, planning content and learning for students, making decisions concerning sequence, pacing, and acquisition of content, and directing the learning process. All teaching was the domain of the teacher. Elementary students indicated this when describing previous music lessons:

ANNA Regular music lessons we would usually just sing from a book...[with] Mrs. D just playing on her own keyboard.

(p. 350) Secondary students said:

STRIKER So there's like, she'll take different songs [scales] and we practice with them. B flat, B flat concert down or something.

Comments about lessons later in the project indicated an increased sense of autonomy within the learning and teaching situation, of having a voice in what happened and how it happened in their classes.

SHANNON Well I like learning this way because it's almost like you're figuring out like you're teaching yourself so you almost have that sense of pride that you're doing this all yourself and it's a cool experience doing that.

This led to feelings of independence and responsibility:

JASON It's made me feel independent without the teacher here teaching you. It just gives you a sense of responsibility like I get to do this....

These students appeared to see themselves as being a true part of the pedagogic process, as holding more of the pedagogical capital that was circulating. Students then perceived themselves as teachers of others and of themselves. They began to recognize themselves, albeit implicitly, as co-owning the pedagogical interactions:

SARAH ...we do learn but not from a teacher sometimes. We learn from friends and what they know and we learn by ourselves, not all from the teacher.

The change in distribution of pedagogical capital was also noticed by the teacher, as this comment indicated:

S So yeah, it's just the classical training and then switching over to the oral learning [that are difficult] but you just have to think of it like you're learning everyday too and you learn along with your students and that's what makes it probably the most rewarding.

## Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

---

No longer was she the owner of all the knowledge, charged with transmitting it to her students, now she was a co-learner alongside them.

Assessment also played an important role in the accumulation of pedagogical capital. The role of the teacher in non-formal teaching required a change in assessment practices away from the previous testing model. Now students were assessed through observation of group practice both formatively and summatively. Students reported that this affected their self-perceptions:

PETE It made me feel happier and I feel smarter because there's no tests. You don't have to worry about your marks.

JASON It just gives you a sense of responsibility like I get to do this and not have to like be playing the perfect notes for the teacher because I can't, sometimes when I mess up I feel like oh no, I'm not going to get in trouble for it.

The new evaluation processes allowed this student and others to feel smarter, to accumulate pedagogical capital in terms of self-recognition as a competent learner. In this sense, students' development of skills, knowledge, and abilities were meeting evaluation criteria that allowed them to be successful, to demonstrate what they could do within musical genres that did not previously permit positive evaluation. This required a shift from assessment criteria formed from a dominant culture (academic music) perspective toward those based on more pragmatic and flexible criteria.

The changes indicated by these students illustrated a changing situation in which students appeared to accrue pedagogical capital, with more ownership and autonomy over musical content and learning and teaching. In Bourdieu's terms, we might say that the students had moved to occupy more advantageous positions within the field of music education. If pedagogical capital were to be used as the vertical axis against which to plot student positions within the field of music education, a graph would show a rising line depicting the increasing amount of pedagogical capital held by students. If field positions were to be indicated by the student's position within the graph area against the vertical axis, students would now be positioned higher than previously in the area or field. Their position would have advanced. In Lareau and Weininger's (2003) definition of cultural capital, students acquired strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence that came into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation that accommodated them positively. In Biesta's (2010) terms, we might say that rationalized communities had been disrupted and that students experienced a pedagogy of interruption in which they could form alternative music discourses. Students were placed in situations where many more of them could accumulate pedagogical capital as they gained a deeper understanding of what it means to learn and teach music, and as they gained confidence in themselves as music learners and teachers. Moreover, they were constructing what the subject "music" was and could therefore construct it to recognize their own abilities and skills. A more socially just distribution of pedagogical capital occurred, as capital was available to more

students on the basis of classroom music instruction and its acquisition was less dependent upon knowledge acquired in other social contexts.

### Musical Capital

Students' initial self-perceptions of musicality and musical potential were largely negative prior to the informal learning project. Common statements from students included:

I never knew I'd be able to play what I'm playing today.

Most of us were thinking before that we're not going to be able to play anything, it's so hard.

(p. 352) This concurs with Lamont and Maton's (2010) thesis that students believe music to be an elite knowledge code that requires special abilities and knowledge. It could be asserted, therefore, that at the commencement of the IMP project, these students, like many perhaps, exhibited a weak sense of their own musicianship and their musical ability. They saw themselves as unlikely to be able to play anything, and that playing instruments was hard. They could therefore be said to have held (or perceived themselves to hold) only a small amount of musical capital. When students were questioned about their experiences in the informal learning program, different self-perceptions began to emerge, however:

SEXTER I feel a lot more confident playing the guitar because I always used to think I can't do it and I would never be able to play it.

BRIAN We feel like a supported group of independent musicians.

This was confirmed by a comment from a student, recorded in field notes at the end of a session: "you know, now we're the musicians not just the teacher." For students this appeared to result in feelings of legitimacy or authenticity in their music making:

JASON Because it's like, I don't know it just feels like we're actually uh, like we're actually like legit.

I have defined musical capital as relating to skills, knowledge, and understanding in and of music and also to self-perceptions of musicality and musical potential. These students' comments (supported by numerous others) indicated increases in student self-perceptions of holdings of musical capital after the informal learning projects. The self-perception of legitimacy is a particularly important one in relation to musical capital, and I believe indicates a significant change in student field positioning; students who had initially perceived themselves as not musicians (and not musical) now identified themselves with the label "musician."

If we plotted students' possession of musical capital on a similar graph to the one used to measure pedagogical capital, we would again see a rising line and a gain in vertical position within the area of the graph. Student perceptions of knowledge and knower codes were again altered, and more diverse students were included within the music education experience. I would suggest that as more students recognized themselves as

holding musical capital, they moved away from self-positioning as non-elite, as “not the type of student who could succeed in music.” The implications for social justice result from the consequent self-positioning of fewer students as non-elite and the self-recognition of more students as being the type of knower who can succeed in music in school and life, with possible wider applications of this self-knowledge to other educational and existential arenas.

These brief illustrations indicate the ways in which concepts of pedagogical and musical capital might be used to analyze music learning situations through a lens of social justice. By evaluating the distribution of two specific types of cultural capital, (p. 353) pedagogical and musical capital, within a pedagogic situation that appears to allow such capitals to be more equitably acquired across a diverse group of students, we may better arrive at an understanding of how alternative pedagogies such as informal learning act to further social justice and broaden inclusion within music education. The illustrations are also intended to provide a brief example of one way in which Lareau and Weininger’s (2003) reconceptualization of cultural capital in education might be operationalized in the music education concept. I believe they provide some interesting insights into the music learning situation using informal learning but could be equally applied to other pedagogical models.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I have attempted to situate music education within the “big picture” issues of social injustice and inequality deriving from large-scale hegemonic cycles of social reproduction. I have outlined some sociological theory investigating the role of education in these processes that may be brought to bear upon examination of such issues, with particular reference to the work of Pierre Bourdieu. I have looked at issues of cultural capital and Lareau and Weininger’s (2003) expansion of this term in the educational context to include “micro-interactional processes whereby individuals’ strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation” (p. 560). I have suggested using the forms of cultural capital that I term “pedagogical capital” and “musical capital” as ways to measure student position within the field of music education and have illustrated their use with examples from an informal music learning project conducted with colleagues in Canada. I have also posited that the introduction of what Biesta (2010) terms “pedagogies of interruption” within which such forms of capital may be advantageously accrued by students may lead to more equitable field positioning for more students.

I will conclude by venturing to suggest some tentative precepts drawn from the preceding material that might permit alternative music education pedagogies to make an impact in furthering social justice. First, we must co-define with our students what we take the subject “music” to be, what being “musical” or “making music” means in much more open terms, so that our students have possibilities to engage with music as “other” and to discover their individual, unique way of being musical. This may shift the knowledge

legitimation code of music away from its current elite status in the eyes of students and may result in more students being included in music education. It may also result in fewer students positioning themselves as “non-elite” knowers. This is perhaps the starting point from which to break our previous self-replicating loops, with all their attendant hegemonic practices and effects. Second, we need to consciously develop pedagogies of interruption that disrupt traditional hegemonic cycles by providing space for students to speak with their own unique voices, to create their own new knowledge communities (see Wright, 2014). Third, we should plan learning and teaching so that pedagogical and (p. 354) musical capital are more fairly distributed between learner and teacher and between and among students, with the emphasis on the learner accruing ever increasing amounts of capital, to the end that the teacher ultimately becomes a co-learner or facilitator. Fourth, we need to revisit evaluation modes and criteria to ensure that they do not reflect dominant cultural or social paradigms and values but that they permit positive evaluation of “other” modes of musicality and musicianship. If, as the quotation at the beginning of this chapter suggests, the “structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241), any hope for music education to play even a small role in a more socially just society must lie in changing such structures and distributions of capital.

## References

- Bannan, N. (2014). Music, play and Darwin’s children: Pedagogical reflections of and on the ontogeny/phlogeny relationship. *International Journal of Music Education*, 32(1), 98–118.
- Bates, Vincent C. 2012. Social class and school music. *Music Educators Journal*, 98(4), 33–37.
- BBC. (2014, May 18). *Sunday Times Rich List ‘wealthier than ever’*. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from BBC News, UK, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-27459621>.
- Blacking, J. (1973). *How musical is man?* Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Bourdieu, P. ([1972]1977). Outline of a theory of practice [Esquisse d’une theorie de la pratique: Precede de trois etudes d’ethnologie kabyle (Geneva: Droz)]. (R. Nice, Trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown & R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, education and cultural change* (pp. 71–112). London: Tavistock Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction* [Originally published as *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit)]. (R. Nice, Trans.) Cambridge: Polity.

## Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

---

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson & J. Richardson (Eds.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

Bourdieu, P. ([1987]1994). *In other words: Essays towards a reflexive sociology* [*Choses dites*]. (R. Nice, Trans.) Cambridge: Polity.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education society and culture* (2nd ed.). London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

DiMaggio, P. (1982). Cultural capital and school success: The impact of status culture participation on the grades of U.S. high school students. *American Sociological Review*, 47(2), 189–201.

Green, L. (2008). *Music, informal learning and the school: A new classroom pedagogy*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Gould, E. (2012). Re-memembering bands in North America: Gendered paradoxes and potentialities. In C. Beynon & K. Veblen (Eds.), *Critical perspectives in Canadian music education* (pp. 101–122). Waterloo: Waterloo University Press, p. 109.

Gustafson, R. (2008) Drifters and the Dancing Mad: The public school music curriculum and the fabrication of boundaries for participation. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 38(3), 267–297.

(p. 355) Hallam, S., Creech, A. S., Rinta, T., & Shave, K. (2008). *Survey of musical futures: A report from Institute of Education University of London for the Paul Hamlyn Foundation*. Institute of Education, University of London.

Herbert, R. (2012). Young people's use and subjective experience of music outside school. In E. T. Cambouropoulos (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 12th international conference on music perception and cognition and the 8th triennial conference of the European society for the cognitive sciences of music*, July 23–28, Thessaloniki, Greece. Thessaloniki: ICMPS-ESCOM.

Hofvander Trulsson, Y. (2012). Chasing children's fortunes: Cases of parents' strategies in Sweden, the UK and Korea. In P. Dyndahl (Ed.), *Intersection and interplay: Contributions to the cultural study of music in performance, education, and society*. Malmö Academy of Music Perspectives in Music and Music Education. Malmö: Lund University.

Independent, T. (2014, May 29). *The real cost-of-living-crisis: Five million British children 'sentenced to life of poverty thanks to welfare reforms'*. Retrieved May 29, 2014, from The Independent: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/the-real-costoflivingcrisis-five-million-british-children-face-life-of-poverty-thanks-to-welfare-reforms-9442061.html>.

Lamont, A., & Maton, K. (2010). Unpopular music: Beliefs and behaviours towards music in education. In R. Wright (Ed.), *Sociology and music education* (pp. 63–80). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.



## Music Education and Social Reproduction: Breaking Cycles of Injustice

---

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race and family life*. Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Lareau, A., & Weininger, E. (2003). Cultural capital in educational research: A critical assessment. *Theory and Society*, 32(5–6), 567–606.

Maton, K. (2012). Habitus. In M. Grenfell, & M. Grenfell (Ed.), *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts* (pp. 49–65). Durham, UK: Acumen.

Mithen, S. (2006). *The Singing Neanderthals: The origins of music, language, mind, and body*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mullen, P., & Harrison, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Reaching out: Music education with hard to reach children and young people*. London: UK Association for Music Education—Music Mark.

Palzkill Woelfer, J., & Lee, J. (2012). *The role of music in the lives of homeless young people: A preliminary report*. Retrieved June 1, 2014, from [http://dub.washington.edu/djangosite/media/papers/WoelferLee\\_RoleOfMusicHomelessYoungPeople.pdf](http://dub.washington.edu/djangosite/media/papers/WoelferLee_RoleOfMusicHomelessYoungPeople.pdf).

Rabkin, N., Hedberg, C. E., & National Endowment for the Arts. *National Endowment for Arts Education in America: What the declines mean for arts participation*. Based on the 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. Research Report #52. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts.

Tylor, E. (1958). *Primitive culture: Researches into the development of mythology, philosophy, religion, art, and custom*. Gloucester, MA: Smith.

Wright, R. (2010a) (Ed.). *Sociology and music education*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Wright, R. (2010b). Democracy, social exclusion and music education: Possibilities for change. In R. Wright (Ed.), *Sociology and music education* (pp. 263–282). Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Wright, R. (2014). The Fourth Sociology and Music Education: Towards a sociology of integration. *Action, Criticism and Theory*, 13(1), [http://act.maydaygroup.org/php/archives\\_v13.php#13\\_1](http://act.maydaygroup.org/php/archives_v13.php#13_1).

Wright, R. (2015). Transforming habitus, changing practice in music education: Using Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to analyse informal learning in Canadian music education. In P. Burnard, J. Soderman, Y. Hofvander-Trulson, P. Burnard, J. Soderman, & Y. Hofvander-Trulson (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the sociology of music, music education and research*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate. (p. 356)

Wright, R., & Finney, J. (2010). Culture, society and music education. In R. Wright (Ed.), *Sociology and music education*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Wright, R., Younker, B. A., Hutchison, J., Linton, L., Beynon, S., Davidson, B., et al. (2012, July). Tuning into the future: Sharing initial insights about the 2012 Musical Futures pilot project in Ontario. *Canadian Music Educator*, 53(4), 14–18.

### **Ruth Wright**

Ruth M. Wright holds undergraduate and master's degrees in music education and doctorate of philosophy from the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff. She is chair of the Department of Music Education at the Don Wright Faculty of Music, the University of Western Ontario. Her main expertise is inclusive classroom music pedagogy and the sociology of music education. Research interests include the sociology of music education and the interfaces between class, power and structure as they affect access to music education. Her edited book *Sociology and Music Education* was published by Ashgate Press in 2010. She was guest editor of a special edition of the *British Journal of Music Education* in 2010 on informal learning and post compulsory music education and is a member of the editorial board of a number of peer-reviewed journals.