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## The Same Person

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# The Same Person

## **Abstract**

How can we conceptualize curriculum and school knowledge to better address important questions of social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities? This question was given to me by Dr. Brent Talbot for my final presentation in Music 149, Social Foundations of Music Education. The purpose of this assignment was to synthesize the knowledge of various philosophies and models of music education covered in this course while utilizing the course material given to us throughout the semester. After Dr. Talbot's emphasis on creativity and having already written too many papers to count, I decided to write and perform a short play. I drew upon the fact that many considered Dr. Talbot and I to be doppelgängers. In this scene, I play both myself and Dr. Talbot, who is the voice in my head. I often considered what Dr. Talbot would say in regards to my projects for the class, so his voice in my head was all too familiar. This format made the most sense as a summation of my experiences and research in Social Foundations of Music Education.

## **Keywords**

Music Education, Teacher, Student

## **Disciplines**

Music | Music Education

## **Comments**

This presentation was given in Dr. Brent Talbot's course, *MUS 149: Social Foundations of Music Education*, Fall 2013.

The video streaming above shows Jeffrey's presentation. The file available for download is the dialogue of the presentation.

Jeff Biner  
MUS\_149  
Assignment #8

### The Same Person

*(JEFF sits quietly by himself. He wears black glasses, a purple shirt, bow tie, grey slacks, argyle socks, and black dress shoes. Whenever TALBOT speaks, it is JEFF saying the lines with his legs slightly crossed. JEFF is staring at a computer with three books near him: Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Musician & Teacher, and Teaching as a Subversive Activity.)*

TALBOT: Jeff.

*(JEFF looks around the room and doesn't see anything. He continues working.)*

TALBOT: Jeff.

*(JEFF looks extremely confused and can't figure out who is calling his name.)*

JEFF: This presentation is making me hear things...

TALBOT: Jeff it's Dr. Talbot.

JEFF: *(still confused)* Oh... where are you?

TALBOT: I'm in your head.

JEFF: *(shocked)* I've lost it.

TALBOT: Don't worry about your mental state, you're just manifesting me in your consciousness to help cope with the difficulty you're having writing your final presentation.

JEFF: *(Still a bit confused)* Alright... so... um... can you help me?

TALBOT: I thought you would never ask. What question are you answering?

JEFF: *(Reading off of the syllabus)* How can we conceptualize curriculum and school knowledge to better address important questions of social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities?

TALBOT: That's a good question.

JEFF: Well you did write it...

TALBOT: Exactly, now read to me what you have written so far.

JEFF: In order to fully articulate the constructed educational standings in the complicated field of music education one must observe the overarching class structure in a conceptual environment in addition to the developmental...

TALBOT: (*Interrupting*) So you're bullshitting me.

JEFF: Yeah, this is pretty bad. You've got strong "crap detecting" skills. I'm having some difficulty grasping the question.

TALBOT: That's why I'm here. Lets look back at the question. Can you ask me the question again, but this time in your own words?

JEFF: Ok... lets see. (*Looks at syllabus for a couple seconds*) How do we educate while also addressing social change, knowledge that may be different in the future, life in a world that isn't direct, and inequality?

TALBOT: Good. How can we do that?

JEFF: Dialogue... understanding... and adaptability.

TALBOT: That sounds like the beginning of a thesis.

JEFF: So... We can conceptualize curriculum and school knowledge through... dialogue, understanding, and adaptability to address important questions of social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities.

TALBOT: Alright. That's broad enough to expand upon.

JEFF: That it is.

(*Silence*)

TALBOT: So expand upon it.

JEFF: Right here?

TALBOT: Why not?

JEFF: Well, I kind of need to work on my paper...

TALBOT: This isn't working on your paper?

JEFF: (*Shrugs in agreement*) I guess you're right. What should I expand on first?

TALBOT: What do you mean by dialogue?

JEFF: I was thinking about the first part of the question: conceptualizing curriculum. We've discussed curriculum in class. The first thought that would have come to mind before I took this class would have been curriculum as a syllabus.

TALBOT: Is curriculum a syllabus?

JEFF: Well that's what I'm getting at. Teaching as a Subversive Activity says that "the school syllabus is [...] someone else's story." I could easily substitute the word curriculum in that same sentence. In school, we've gotten the curriculum of whatever people worked on before us. That isn't always what pertains to us as current students. (*Sudden realization*) This goes along with what we talked about with Bill Ayers. He said that his curriculum has been knee replacement surgery, because that is what is important to him right now. I think curriculum should pertain to the students.

TALBOT: You think?

JEFF: (*Correcting himself*) Curriculum should pertain to the students.

TALBOT: And dialogue?

JEFF: Well the core of curriculum should be dialogue. Pedagogy of the Oppressed directly discusses this. With class discussion and communication you get action and reflection, or praxis. Most of education today has teachers just throwing information at students. Sure, they can memorize and take notes, but without a dialogue between everyone in the classroom, there isn't any meaning making. This is what Teaching as a Subversive Activity discusses. It talks about languaging and question based learning. A classroom that really digs into learning will get the most out of it. The classroom manuscripts in Teaching as a Subversive Activity show the effectiveness of dialoguing. The students ask questions and learn more from each other than a textbook could tell them. These manuscripts echo the experiences I've had in this class; most of our discussions are question based and open.

TALBOT: I'm glad dialogue has worked for you and that you know what it is, but, going back to the question, how does that help?

JEFF: Setting up a dialogue can open the curriculum to social change and inequalities. Anyone can pose a question that surrounds these topics, and the class can talk about it. With basing the curriculum on their needs, we can understand how this plays into their personal situation. I can pose questions like how does this effect them? Do they have any personal experiences? With the diversity of each classroom, students will get to hear different perspectives. It is so much better than a teacher standing in front of a room and throwing information at the students. They won't make meaning of the important questions if the teacher just tells them about social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities.

TALBOT: Anything else?

JEFF: More specifically, dialogue helps with understanding contingency of knowledge. I think back to the beginning of Teaching as a Subversive Activity with Columbus. We are always told about how the wonderful Christopher Columbus discovered America. I wish my teacher from whenever we learned that had opened up a dialogue instead of just telling us this information. That way we can talk about different perspectives and look at Columbus from different angles. My knowledge about Columbus has changed, and dialogue shows that knowledge changes; it enables critical thinking as Pedagogy of the Oppressed states. Because consistent dialogue shows different perspectives, it will help students look at changes differently. There are so many people that view everything from one perspective; they're absolutely certain that they're right. How does that help social change? How does that make people adjust inequality? Dialogue creates an open mind.

TALBOT: Very good. Now you mentioned understanding after dialogue.

JEFF: Yes. Understanding will help with the formation of curriculum and school knowledge.

TALBOT: How?

JEFF: As dialogue occurs, the teacher needs to emphasize understanding. Dialogue can't be meaningless words, or verbalism. There needs to be praxis: action AND reflection. Meaning making. With this emphasis, students can take the knowledge from school and know what to do with it. It won't be scribbled words in a notepad. They can apply the curriculum, which is based around dialogue, and put it to their own lives, the social change they experience, the knowledge that changes in their life, their indirect and mediated worlds, the inequalities they face. Through understanding, we can build a curriculum that helps them as they grow.

TALBOT: So understanding is important to the students. What about the teacher?

JEFF: Of course understanding is important for the teacher. It's like Teaching as a Subversive Activity and the student-teacher and teacher-student. The teacher needs to be open and understanding with the students because they also teach. This is a lot like Pedagogy of the Oppressed and revolutionary leaders. There shouldn't be a revolution FOR the people, but a revolution WITH the people. The teacher shouldn't teach for the students, but should teach with the students; create a mutual understanding.

TALBOT: You've been talking a lot about Pedagogy of the Oppressed and Teaching as a Subversive Activity. What about Musician and Teacher?

JEFF: Right! I was just about to get to that. Musician and Teacher shows the importance of understanding by showing the diversity in musical learning. It gives examples of different classrooms, it discusses a multitude of musical ensembles, it shows different theories of education that have been used to teach students, and it talks about paying attention to the needs of the students. That one is important. By understanding their needs, you can properly address the important aspects of social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities.

(TALBOT *begins to appear, but JEFF interrupts*)

JEFF: Wait, I'm on a roll. Understanding leads directly to adjustment. If an aspect of the curriculum isn't working or the knowledge doesn't pertain to the students, a teacher needs to be able to adjust to fit the different needs. Dialogue can lead to an understanding that an adjustment needs to be made. *Musician and Teacher* shows the importance of adjustment when it shares the story of the "band guy" as choir director. Allan found himself in an unfamiliar educational situation, but adjusted to attend the needs of his students. He started studying voice and created a very successful choral program. Adjustment is directly connected to each of the addressing points of the question. First of all, social change in education needs flexibility. People that do not adjust to social change get stuck, the unpredictable future of knowledge requires constant adjustment to keep up, life in a mediated world needs adjustment in order to successfully navigate, and when inequalities are approached with adjustment it creates balance. Conceptualizing a curriculum with a focus in adjustment shows students its importance..They can then approach the important questions in a dialogical fashion, understand what they discuss, and adjust accordingly. There's my presentation! In order to conceptualize curriculum and school knowledge to better address important questions of social change, contingency of knowledge, life in mediated worlds, and inequalities, we must utilize dialogue, understanding, and adjustment.

TALBOT: Alright then.

JEFF: Hey Dr. Talbot... thank you for helping me out, even if you are a figment of my imagination.

TALBOT: Always happy to help.

JEFF: We finally have an excuse to dress the same way, because we are literally the same person right now. Actually, come to think of it, I have this sudden urge to salsa dance.

TALBOT: Don't fight it.

JEFF: Alright. (JEFF/TALBOT *begins to salsa dance.*)

THE END

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-Jeffrey Binner