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Youth Leadership and Empowerment in the Music Classroom: Models of Student Leadership in Acosta, Costa Rica; Mountain View, California; and Queens, New York

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Abstract

This study examines the ways in which music education programs in the United States and Costa Rica can integrate youth leadership and teamwork training into their curriculum, through appointed section leaders, partner teaching, peer mentoring, mixed seating, and leadership classes. By showing the success that music programs in rural Costa Rica, suburban California, and urban New York have achieved in increasing students' perceived leadership and collaborative skills, the author suggests that music education can serve these functions in many diverse communities. The key to these programs is the emphasis that their leaders place on using music as a vehicle to empower students to join the movement in Music Education for Social Change.

Keywords: Music education, Youth development, Youth leadership

1. Introduction

"I'm a leader and a follower."–Student from Mountain View High School [1]

This quotation from a former Mountain View High School student encapsulates the potential of music education programs to impart leadership and teamwork training to its students. In the three programs presented in this study, classical orchestral and choral students take on the dual roles of leader and follower on a daily basis. In this sense, the music classroom ideally becomes a safe place for students to practice participating in a democratic civil society, the type of society that demands of young people the ability to take on different roles. The data presented here, gathered from original research from *el Sistema Nacional de Educación Musical* (Sinem) in Acosta, Costa Rica; the Mountain View High School (MVHS) Choir Department in Mountain View, California; and the Corona Youth Music Project (CYMP) in Queens, New York, indicates that music education programs can succeed in instilling leadership qualities in students through a mixture of implicit and explicit mechanisms. Such mechanisms might include leadership workshops, student-led rehearsals and concerts, and student teaching. These practices have implications for a new philosophy of music education that moves away from the traditional hierarchical ideal of Western European-based music education to a student-centered process of cultivating agents of social change, a philosophy of Music Education for Social Change.

2. What is Music Education for Social Change?

Music Education for Social Change as it is broadly conceived today began in Latin America in the 1970s with Venezuela's National Network of Youth and Children's Orchestras and Choirs, commonly referred to as *El Sistema*. The network of youth orchestras and schools are located in the most vulnerable regions of Venezuela. Since 1975

the foundation has drawn attention worldwide for its success in both shifting popular perceptions of classical music within Venezuelan society and transforming the way that music education is valued on a societal level. The program is considered revolutionary because it uses music education as a tool to address social inequalities rather than a purely aesthetic form of expression. Forty years later other countries, including the United States and Costa Rica, are attempting to replicate the success that Venezuela has achieved.

As in any educational system, music education has a framework of embedded values that inform its curriculum and vary by region, community, and program. A well-known example of a music education pedagogy that explicitly integrates social values is the Suzuki Method, a Japanese pedagogy founded post-World War II by Dr. Shinichi Suzuki. Dr. Suzuki wrote, "Teaching music is not my main purpose. I want to make good citizens, noble human beings."[2] The Method not only emphasizes the ability of every child to attain musical excellence but also the holistic development of musicians as citizens.

In contrast to the holistic nature of the Suzuki Method however, much of the philosophy behind current music education in the United States prioritizes an aesthetic understanding of music based upon 18th century modernism.[3] In Romantic philosophers' attempts to differentiate the arts from the realm of the "rational" they determined that music's value was autonomous and highly individual. Music could have no utility other than the feelings it evoked.[4] This represented a shift in previous understandings of music in Europe, as pre-Renaissance and Renaissance music was used by the Church as a means of religious education and spiritual elevation and as such served a highly utilitarian function.

Much has changed since Immanuel Kant and his peers posited this modern standard. Democratization and industrialization, technological innovation, and globalization have changed popular perceptions and functions of music. The principles of democracy call into question (or ought to) the structure of an orchestra or choir that places all authority in one person. With the rise of the middle class during the Industrial Revolution in Western European-based, and later for other industrializing countries, Western classical musical instruments became more accessible. The invention of the audio recording made music more than just performance-oriented. Now audio recordings are by far the most prevalent mode of listening for most people living in developed nations. With increasing access to music of varying genres and caliber, music is becoming diversified and with increasing access to music software, music is becoming democratized.[5] In other words, what music we listen to is now more than ever a personal choice. It is no longer feasible to distinguish between experts and non-experts in music appreciation, as everybody has exposure to a wide range of music. Finally, widespread migration means that many classrooms around the world are no longer as homogenous as they once were. Unfortunately, despite these changes the average American public school music classroom has not evolved to match the needs of the 21st century.

As such, there is a need to distinguish a more democratic brand of music education. Multiple attempts to realign music education to meet the needs of a modern world have been made by various music scholars and educators, particularly in the past fifty years. A result of this discussion has led to an emerging global field in music education sometimes referred to as "Music Education for Social Change." This more socially conscious brand of music education attempts to explicitly identify and integrate democratic social values into its curriculum.

3. Methodology

The analysis of the data from all three sites falls into substantive categories of participant-identified variables in response to the primary research question: the methods by which music programs can create student leaders. The programs presented in this paper were selected because of their value-explicit missions. Additionally, each site presents a different demographic and therefore has different needs to fulfill. Sinem Acosta represents the potential of music education to affect change within an isolated rural community by providing students with a wholesome form of entertainment and the opportunity to interact with fellow musicians outside of the province. The Corona Youth Music Project is situated in an urban immigrant neighborhood in Queens. Its students face challenges that many immigrants from a lower socioeconomic level face when they come to the United States. As such, these students can benefit from the exposure to leadership and esteem building so that they might have the confidence to overcome the achievement gap. Mountain View High School, though not located in a "marginalized" community (and thus why it does not qualify to most people as an *El Sistema*-inspired program), still struggles to provide music education to all of its diverse constituents. The choir department instills within its members a sense of empathy and altruism in order that they might use their relative socioeconomic privilege in a manner beneficial to their community and larger society. These comparisons show that Music Education for Social Change programs can succeed in reaching students from very different social sectors.

In the discussion of MVHS data was drawn from this author's previous study of the perceived social, emotional, and behavioral benefits of music education according to students in Fall 2013. Out of 108 students, 101 received parental permission to participate in the study. Data came from participant-observer notes, student district database demographic and academic records, ninety-four end-of-the-year student questionnaires from Spring 2013, two free-listing activities involving twenty-one volunteers from three of the four classes, informal interviews with three program teachers and three alumni, questionnaires from five alumni, five former parents and eight currents parents, an anonymous student survey handed out to eighty-six current choir students, and eighteen formal student interviews using a stratified systematic sampling selecting from grade level, GPA, ethnicity, parent education level, home language, and middle school of origin. The majority of quantitative data came from the survey, which included ninety-nine variables—social, emotional, and behavioral qualities or skills that students believed choir had either increased or taught them.

When examining the program in Costa Rica, hereafter referred to as Sinem Acosta, this paper primarily discusses the violin section because 1) it is the largest in the orchestra and so has the greatest differentiation in ability, and 2) those are the students with whom this researcher developed the most rapport. The analysis references field notes and journals from the spring and summer of 2011, a formal interview with Director Ronny Mora, and a Spanish questionnaire collected from a convenience sample of six current and former violin students, and violin teacher Angie Jiménez Hidalgo. The questionnaire focused on the programmatic elements of Sinem Acosta that promote leadership abilities in its students, primarily its system of student-taught private lessons. Two limitations to this research were language and location. Not only was the research conducted in Spanish, but also most data had to be collected online. This meant that the research questions were not predicated by recent participant observation but rather generated from a combination of field observations from 2011 and published literature on student leadership practices in the classroom. As such, it is difficult to gage the validity of the answers.

At CYMP there were four student and two teacher interviews selected by convenience and personal relationship. In order to narrow the focus, research focused on the Youth Orchestra (excluding the other ensembles), as these youth have been in the program the longest. Research questions addressed students' abilities to define and deconstruct what it is to be a leader, past leadership experiences, leadership opportunities within the program, and how leadership skills might be important in their futures. As at the other two research sites, this researcher served in the capacity of teacher as well as researcher. This had significant ethical implications on the research relationships between the researcher and the students and teachers. On the one hand it meant more access to an otherwise closed community. On the other hand, this researchers' investment in the program's success led to a stronger bias. Additionally, students responded to this researcher as to a teacher and, as such, an adult in a position of power. They may have given the answers that they thought this researcher wanted, an outcome known as the Hawthorne Effect.[6] This was a particular concern at CYMP because the students were much younger and more susceptible to influence.

The structure of this paper is as follows. First it discusses the theoretical framework of Music Education for Social Change and places this concept within the historical context of music education in the United States and Latin America. The bulk of the paper is a presentation of student perceptions and researcher observations in the three Music Education for Social Change programs where field research was conducted. Much of these results affirm the literature findings that music is in fact an effective vehicle for leadership development. It discusses challenges that these and other programs face in overcoming the viewpoint that posits the orchestra and choir as sites of authoritarian and hierarchical oppression. This expands the thesis even further as it claims that it is up to music educators to create a classroom that adheres to the democratic principles of Music Education for Social Change. Finally, it discusses why this data has ramifications for the future role of music education and social activism.

4. Mountain View High School (MVHS)

> The mission of the Mountain View High School Choir Department is to enlighten students in the area of choral music and to allow all students the opportunity to learn and enjoy many different styles of music. In addition, the choral department will provide many varied avenues for students to seek an understanding of and practical experience as leaders…. It is our hope to raise caring citizens who use the common language of music to communicate globally and make a positive difference in the lives of others.
>
> —MVHS Choir Department Mission Statement[7]

The Mountain View High School choir department does not cater to the same socioeconomic sector that *Sistema* programs seek to reach. Located in the heart of Silicon Valley, Mountain View is known as a destination for highly educated immigrants. However, a large minority of the population of immigrants is not highly educated.[8] The choir

department does not fully represent this diversity as it has a higher percentage of self-identified Caucasian students than the city average.[9] Also of note is the overall high education level of the choir department parents. While 30.7 percent of the city's adults have a graduate or professional degree, 50 percent of students in choir have parents with a post-bachelor degree.[10] Though the department provides scholarships and fundraising opportunities for its students, this data implicates that access to a broader range of students is limited, reflecting the larger issue of diversity that music education programs in the United States face.

The choir department consists of three different choirs and an introductory music class. Madrigals is MVHS's most advanced choir. This mixed-gender group demands the greatest time-commitment as students learn over fifty pieces of repertoire and perform in over seventy-five concerts per year. Student survey responses varied by choir; the more advanced and time-intensive the choir, the more social and behavioral benefits were attributed to participation. It stands to reason that the students with the most involvement would attribute more benefits to an activity. Despite these variations, all three choirs were mostly positive in their responses. There are two possible explanations for these results. One concerns the validity of the survey. Many of the surveys, particularly those from the Madrigals, came back with all yes answers. This could be attributed to the Hawthorne Effect, a lack of understanding of the questions, or indifference towards the study.

Another explanation is that this trend is a result of Jill Denny's explicit mission to create "caring citizens who use the common language of music to communicate globally and make a positive difference in the lives of others."[11] In pursuit of this goal, Ms. Denny consistently reinforces values such as altruism, inclusion, work ethic, and risk-taking in her interactions with the choir members. Students could have a greater awareness of the non-musical lessons they are learning than other students in a different program might have under a different director. As one alumni put it, "The sense of empowerment and community of being part of Jill Denny's choir is incredible," but it's hard to know "how much of this to attribute to choir and how much to attribute to the amazing woman leading the choir."[12]

It is important to note that this study only measures student and parent *perceptions* and does not attempt to determine whether these effects are actually apparent in other aspects of students' lives. Accordingly, it does not necessarily follow that students at MVHS, despite their high level of articulation and maturity in discussing music's effects, are *more* affected than a student in another less value-explicit choral program.

Students are afforded various leadership opportunities within the program. Some students serve on a peer-elected vocal council that is responsible for student event planning and fundraising. The primary fundraiser that the vocal council organizes is the Singing Valentines day in February in which groups perform student-arranged a'capella songs all over the school. Often times the students who arrange these pieces will teach them to the rest of their group. Those who play piano are selected to be section accompanists, granting them a specified role within the group. In the beginning, students are split into pairs in order to learn music theory. The pairs are designed to have one advanced theory student and one new theory student, requiring advanced students to tutor those less advanced. During the December season (the three weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas), the Madrigals perform in over fifty concerts, many of which are student-directed.

Each choir has time in class during which they must work in their section without teacher direction, an activity called sectionals. Peer and director-elected "section leaders" lead sectionals. These students are not necessarily the most musically "talented" or experienced members (although they must be solid enough to be relied upon to know their parts). Rather, Ms. Denny selects them for their leadership and organizational abilities. The more advanced the choir, the more out-of-class sectional time is expected (the Madrigals are expected to have one sectional per week outside of class). This practice affords leadership opportunities for the section leaders, and the necessity to work together efficiently for all members. Sectionals teach students how "to work collectively in groups," to be "responsible for what you have to do without having to have supervision."[13] Students must negotiate and compromise to settle disputes, they must get along with and include peers whom they may not agree with or with whom they have little in common, and they must actively listen to one another and collaborate in a cooperative manner so as to maximize the assets that each student brings to the group.

Good leaders must listen and include all members of their group. One student said that he felt that learning to listen in choir had an important influence in other classes because it taught him the importance of "paying attention to other people and what they have to say so that 1) they can feel included and 2) you can draw from their ideas so you can come up with something better together." Another student observed that she was now more aware of "people who don't get to speak up so much" in other classes and made a greater effort to "try to incorporate [those] people" into conversations and class activities.

Within the choir, one section leader reported: "I like hearing what other people input because then that helps me…figure out what I need to do for them and, like, what we need to do all together." While peer feedback was important to most students (as indicated by the eighty-nine percent of students who reported an increased ability to receive constructive feedback), one interviewee opined that she felt too much peer correcting could distract from the

overall progress of the choir. "I feel like there's a lot of correcting between peer on peer going on which is not effective." To prevent students from correcting their peers in an inappropriate manner, Jill Denny implemented a comment card system. Students wrote critiques on a notecard and place it in a box for Ms. Denny and the teaching staff to take into account.

Many parents also reported improvements in their students' leadership and teamwork abilities. One parent stated that her daughter had "learned what works to inspire and lead and, just as importantly, what doesn't."[14] Another parent agreed, adding that increased empathy accompanied the growth in leadership in her son. A former parent believed that choir had given her daughter "greater appreciation for the importance of cooperation and teamwork in her social circles and activities." For one parent, her son had learned "that the part he plays in a group is important."[15] Most parents emphasized the positive ramifications that these lessons would have for their children's futures.

In the ninety-nine variables that Mountain View High School students identified as lessons learned in choir, sixteen of those were directly related to leadership and twelve to teamwork. Interestingly, many students cited that they had developed many leadership traits, but did not report an increase in leadership itself when directly asked. While eighty-seven percent of the students felt that they had increased their initiative, only sixty-three percent reported an increase in leadership. This contradicted student and parent interview findings, indicating that students had a more narrow definition of leadership than articulated when allowed time to expand. On the other side of the spectrum, ninety percent reported an increase in collaboration skills. This could reflect an overall culture, present especially in the Madrigals, of focusing on the growth of the group rather than the growth of the individual.

It could also reflect a more negative feeling of inequality that some students reported. While most interviewees expressed the belief that all choir students are equal, the survey data did not support this assertion. Only fifty-five percent of students marked that choir had increased their sense of equality. Three students and one parent felt that Ms. Denny displayed favoritism in selecting leaders and small groups. Some students correlated ability with positions of power within the choir. Others felt that their ability went unnoticed. "No choir could ever be completely equal," asserted one student, though she added that she felt that the Madrigals was "overall as equal as it can get."

A potential explanation is that enough students were feeling the innate competitiveness of performing arts and dissatisfaction with ones perceived "status." Jill Denny attempts to combat this competitiveness by reminding students that in a choir, if one student succeeds, all students succeed; likewise, if one student fails, all students fail: "It's not like on a math test where, if the person sitting next to you gets an F, that doesn't affect you. In choir, every person is affected by every other person." As one student put it, "I feel like the idea of one person or one group of people succeeding while others get left behind, it doesn't really have to be that way...music education emphasizes that and that's something that needs to be emphasized." That said, the somewhat ambivalent results regarding equality within the group point to a potential area for further observation and analysis.

5. El Sistema Nacional de Educación Musical (Sinem Acosta)

> [*El Sistema Nacional de Educación Musical* has the objective to] Elevate artistic and culturally at-risk populations by practicing musical instruments, thus enabling coexistence, relationship and patterns of behavior consistent with Costa Rican values based upon peace, dialogue, the exchange of opinions, and social relations in peace and harmony in order to lower rates of violence and crime in the country.
>
> —Misión del Sistema Nacional de Educación Musical[16]

Sinem Acosta is one project within a national system of classical music schools and orchestras in Costa Rica. Modeled after Venezuela's *El Sistema*, this government-funded social development program exists in all seven Costa Rican provinces in "culturally at-risk" communities.[17] Located in the mountains twenty-nine km outside the national capital of San José, San Ignacio de Acosta (Acosta) is geographically isolated from the main metropolis, reflected in its 2008 poverty rate of thirty-six percent.[18]

The youth of Acosta face diverse problems including: rural poverty and its accompanying issues of prostitution, domestic violence, and alcoholism; unemployment, leading to families separated when one or more parents commute or move to the city to find work; limited access to entertainment and higher education, leading to boredom and apathy; and genetic disorders and disabilities, the latter due to the prevalence of cousins marrying cousins.[19] M*achismo* still runs deep in this conservative region, leaving women more vulnerable to unemployment and abuse.[20] In 2011 there was more than a two-to-one male-to-female ratio of students in the program, indicating that Sinem Acosta could do more to recruit female students.[21]

Many of the "Costa Rican values" that Sinem prioritizes come from the nation's history as a relatively peaceful country surrounded by warring nations in Central America.[22] Costa Rica has one of the world's highest life expectancy, literacy rates, and access to healthcare. Poverty and social inequality rates are some of the lowest in Latin America, though economic stagnation and growth in inequality have troubled the government in the past twenty years.[23] Since its army was disbanded in 1948, Costa Rica has had a strong national rhetoric surrounding equality and democracy that is emphasized in its public school curriculum.[24] It is within this framework that Sinem serves communities.

Respondents from Sinem Acosta didn't make much of a distinction between the qualities of a leader and a team member. One of the key words in student responses was *compañerismo*, or companionship. When asked what methods Sinem Acosta used to integrate student teaching in its daily operations, one student responded that "all of us have helped a lot, we ourselves have all taught and this [strengthened our sense of] companionship a lot."[25] What this statement indicates is that, for Sinem Acosta students, the act of being a leader is simultaneous with the act of being a member of the group. This is reflective of the program mission statement as Sinem Acosta is the only program that does not explicitly state leadership as a primary objective. That does not mean that students are not still afforded ample opportunities to lead.

Sinem Acosta has an established system of student teaching that goes back to its launch in 2007. As at MVHS, designated section leaders in Sinem are responsible for teaching their section. Those in a more advanced section have an obligation to teach those who are less advanced. The first violins (the section of violinists who play the most complex parts, often including the melody) teach the second violins, the second violins teach the beginners, and so on. This is crucial to the orchestra's success, as there is only one violin teacher for over forty violin students. The teacher, Angie Jiménez, is an alumna of the program, as are most of Sinem teachers. These alumni start teaching because they are the only ones available, but they stay after they graduate because they are dedicated to the program.

Unlike in more traditional orchestras, Sinem Acosta musicians are not ranked within sections. Students are still auditioned and assigned seats, but they are not arranged with the most advanced players at the front and the least in the back. The director, Sr. Mora, still appoints section leaders but the subsequent stands are assigned to mix experienced players with those less experienced. This practice is designed to alleviate some of the duties of the teacher while having students responsible for helping one another advance. Some students struggle with the responsibilities of teaching. Consequently, a degree of individualized leadership training is provided to Sinem's student teachers, either from Sr. Mora or experienced student teachers. In a personal interview Ms. Jiménez added that, "One takes into account the leadership [abilities] of each student and has them experiment with different types of students to determine what their style of learning is and how to share this knowledge." As Ms. Jiménez indicated, much of the training involved is actually formal encouragement for students to experiment and discover their own teaching style.

Students expressed pride in their roles, although one violinist added that he felt overwhelmed by the responsibility: "It is very difficult because a lot of pressure falls on you. Everybody in the group is depending on you, and if you fail everybody will fail." The same student, however, also indicated that being a leader increased his sense of self-worth and role within the group. "Having the opportunity to guide a group makes you feel important and like you can help others." What students like him experience is increased "power from within," or the attitude that they can change their community, one of the key indicators of personal agency.[26]

Not all students were pleased with their position in the orchestra, however. One student indicated that she felt "humiliated" for being a second violin. Many of the interviewees cautioned that, while leadership was important, it was even more important not to become egotistical, indicating that perhaps that has or had been a problem within the program. Like Jill Denny's choirs, students compare themselves to others. Unlike choir, however, there is a marked correlation between the part one plays and ones' abilities. In choir, ones part is determined by ones vocal range. In orchestra, ones part is usually determined by ones playing ability.

The issue of section divisions and ranking is one that all instrumental teachers must face. When teaching students with different abilities it can be effective to divide them into separate parts, with the more advanced students in one section playing the difficult parts and the less advanced students in another section playing more basic parts. This is how most orchestras are formatted, and how most orchestral music is arranged. The problem with this system is that it perpetuates divisions between the "good" and the "not-so-good" players. When students are segregated by ability it makes bridging the divide difficult because it becomes more difficult to learn from one another.

There are a several ways to address this challenge. One recommendation is to mix the sections, so that they are not determined by ability but rather with the goal of having an equal number of advanced and non-advanced players in each section. This presents the difficulty of ensuring that all students are able to play the music that they are given. Teachers want to challenge their students but not overwhelm them. Finally, teachers could switch sections at the end of each season, so that in one concert some play first violin and in the next they play second. This solution only

works if teachers introduce entirely new repertoire each concert—otherwise it is logistically challenging for students to perform one piece in one section and then have to rearrange seats for the next.

6. Corona Youth Music Project (CYMP)

> The CYMP strives to promote social inclusion in New York City by empowering youth and children in Corona, Queens to excel through their participation in musical ensembles…. In keeping strong ties with the community and its organizations, [the Corona Youth Music Project] aspires to develop valuable leaders for Corona and beyond.
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> —CYMP Mission Statement[27]

As made apparent in its mission statement, the Corona Youth Music Project views student leadership as one of its highest priorities. For the director Alvaro Rodas, the act of putting kids in a position of authority is essential because "just sitting in an orchestra and trying to play notes, it's not going to do anything."[28] Empowering youth to become leaders is important, agreed one student, because without the practice "you wouldn't stand up much, you wouldn't give your voice and give your ideas as much."[29] In striving to create leaders "for Corona and beyond," the program hopes to teach its students "that they are important to Corona, to New York City, to the United States, to their country…that they are valuable as a member of the community."[30]

The neighborhood of Corona, located in the borough of Queens, New York, is made up of almost entirely first- and second-generation immigrants from Latin America.[31] Almost 23 percent of adults within the community live below the poverty line,[32] and a full 39.5 percent never completed high school.[33] Most of the students are English language learners.[34] Rather than represent them as "at-risk" youth, Mr. Rodas chooses to emphasize the strengths that the students and their families bring to the program, including a strong sense of respect and perseverance: "I assume they carry [these values] from home and not something that they learn at our program." Taking these values into account, the program seeks to empower students by providing them constant opportunities to develop leadership and teamwork skills. Treating underserved youth as resources rather than problems, CYMP is creating "competent risk-takers" capable of overcoming the challenges they will face.[35]

CYMP staff members tell students from the very beginning that they are all equally capable of leading. "We don't have this idea that one person leads the orchestra, that it's something only certain people with talent can do. It's just something that everybody has to take the time to learn how to do, and so it's not an elitist hierarchy type of system," said violin teacher Jennifer Johnson. Seats are not assigned except for that of the Concert Master (in most classical orchestras in the Western tradition, the section leader of the first violins is appointed Concert Master, second only to the conductor), which changes frequently so as to give different students the opportunity to hold the position.

When asked, "How many teachers are in this room?" almost all students will invariably raise their hands, showing that they consider themselves teachers. According to Ms. Johnson, CYMP teachers tell students this from the beginning "so that if there's a problem or a question that arises, it's not just the person in the front of the orchestra's responsibility to answer it, but it's their stand-partner, their friend, their cousin, their brother or sister, everybody has an immediate responsibility." This philosophy roots from *El Sistema* founder José Antonio Abreu's belief that "the person who knows A-B-C has the responsibility…not just the ability, but the *responsibility*, to teach somebody who does not know those three notes."[36]

Having children be partially responsible for their peers forces them to ask questions, which, according to Mr. Rodas, might include "Who am I, what is my role here, how can I help this person step up?" This practice in reflexivity prepares students to discover who they are in relation to others and how they can make an impact within a community.[37] As their roles are constantly shifting, the line between transmitter of knowledge (teacher) and receiver of knowledge (student) blurs. Rather than passive receivers of knowledge, students become the ones who create and transmit that knowledge to others. Knowledge no longer belongs to any authority figure; it belongs to and is constructed by the group.

CYMP is alone of the three programs in that it has a formal class for its Peer Mentors. The Peer Mentors are the twelve or so students who are designated as student teachers to the other orchestra members. They are selected by experience, technical skill, and exhibited leadership abilities. According to one Peer Mentor, the classes teach "things that teachers do. You should have leadership, you should have compassion, [and] you should have patience." Peer Mentors are responsible for assisting in rehearsals and classes, initiating new students into the music, and correcting technical errors. The Peer Mentor program is considered so crucial to the program's vision and success that in a personal interview the director went so far as to say that he would like to have the CYMP to become "a peer

mentoring program that has an orchestra as a vehicle," rather than an orchestra that has peer mentoring as a vehicle for achieving success.

Opportunities to lead are not just reserved for the sanctioned Peer Mentors. Students are regularly given the chance to teach others, through a variety of means. One example of the innovative tactics that CYMP employs is the Peer Mentor *seminario* that was held in February. In the tradition of *El Sistema*, the CYMP has intensive all-day rehearsals during students' school breaks, called *seminarios*. In February of 2014, five selected Peer Mentors led a three-day *seminario* for the rest of the Youth and Children's Orchestras. During the *seminario*, students were divided between those who already knew the piece, and those who did not. The experienced students were paired with the new learners, and were told to teach them what they knew. It was the job of the Peer Mentors to pair students, solve problems, monitor the teaching, and ensure that the students came back together to rehearse with the larger group.

With minimal intervention, the staff watched the students struggle and ultimately succeed in leading their peers in mastering the repertoire. When asked how they were able to achieve that success, students responded that they modeled their teaching tactics after the adult teachers in the program: "I've seen Miss Jennifer teach so I was like, 'Oh, I should do that!'"

This was the first time that both orchestras were involved in a peer mentoring activity at such a grand scale and with so little involvement from the staff. While many students were accustomed to teaching, not all were. With minimal assistance from the adult teachers, students had to discover and experiment with different ways to communicate effectively. In the spirit of experiential learning, students were not told what to do—they had to figure out what to do, how to do it, and then only after the fact, articulate why they did what they did. For Mr. Rodas, it is this discovery process that affords the largest growth for students. "The number one thing I would…recommend for a good peer mentor is [to] not talk about it, just do it and do it a lot… Obviously that's accompanied by some sort of theoretical…reflection of the process of being a coach, teacher, mentor."

Interviewees articulated the need to give others a chance to lead as well. This suggests that the message that Mr. Rodas, Ms. Jennifer, and the rest of the CYMP staff has been received by their students. One student said that her leadership skills had improved because she saw what the teachers were doing to include others. "[Mr. Rodas] may be our director but he doesn't always say what to do, he gives other people a chance…by saying, 'Okay, so what do you think we could do?'" Because of this, and all the other ways that the staff members encourage students to lead, she asserted, "I think we are all good leaders."

Students and staff reported an increase in student leadership as a result of the program. Most students mentioned other situations outside of the organization (at school, at church, within the family, and within their friend group) in which they were able to function more effectively due to the practice they got from the Project. If this is the case, the program has been successful in its goal to develop "valuable leaders for Corona and beyond."[38] Ms. Johnson noted that "a lot of [the students] are naturally starting to find themselves in this role [of leader] and the more that happens, the more it's encouraged through our program."

Only one out of the five students interviewed did not feel that the program had offered her leadership opportunities. As one of the younger and newer students, she had not yet had the chance to teach. She said she liked being taught by her peers "because they help me learn [the music]," but that she was the one being taught and never the one teaching. As Mr. Rodas' goal is to provide more and more instances of students teaching students, she may find herself in that role in the future. Until then, it might be interesting to reverse the roles: have the beginning students learn something on their own and then teach that to the older students. It could be something short and simple, but the pride and excitement that knowing something the older children do not know would have a large impact on the younger students' confidence and reinforce to them that they too are capable of teaching.

7. Conclusion

This paper is not an attempt to justify the need for music education. Music will we be valued, or not, according to the cultural perceptions and attitudes within which a program is based. If a community does not value classical music, a classical music program will not be very successful unless a cultural shift occurs, as it has in Venezuela.

Furthermore, this paper does not claim that leadership and teamwork training are unique to music programs. As CYMP director Alvaro Rodas acknowledged, these skills are not "exclusive to music," but "we happen to be musicians and this is what we're doing." While numerous American and British studies have indicated that music has particular academic, social, and emotional impacts on students,[39] it seems unfair to argue that it is the only activity that has pro-social effects on youth. It would not make sense to force a child to play an instrument if they are not so inclined; the power lies in exposing students to and harnessing a love for music.

Finally, this thesis is not a claim that enhanced leadership and teamwork skills are inherent to all music education programs. Indeed, the bulk of programs do not do so, at least not to the full extent possible.[40] The way that classical music has traditionally been taught in many countries, including the United States and Costa Rica, ignores and even suppresses students' natural potential to lead. Many teachers will stifle teamwork opportunities by not allowing time for students to interact socially, or not giving students the opportunity to function as a group without the conductor. Music educators who do so miss out on the great potential that music education has for its students.

Music educators must transform their way of thinking about what and how they teach. They must reconsider their role within society. It is time for teachers to radicalize their teaching to reflect the values and needs of each community. If not, music education will continue to perpetuate authoritarian and elitist ideals that are no longer relevant today's society. Leadership and teamwork are two examples of traits that music educators can encourage through their curriculum, but there are endless possibilities when it comes to teaching music with a purpose. Whether teaching music education for leadership enhancement, teamwork skills, increased literacy, as therapy, etcetera, music educators must embrace their responsibility—not just ability but *responsibility*—to create social change.

8. Endnotes:

1 Former MVHS student, e-mail message to the author, December 4, 2013. All questionnaires were distributed in confidentiality.

2 Suzuki Shin'ichi Suzuki, *Nurtured by Love; A New Approach to Education* (New York: Exposition Press, 1969), 26.

3 Ilkay Ebru Tuncer Boon, "Toward a Useful Synthesis of Deweyan Pragmatism and Music Education," *Visions of Research in Music Education* 14 (2009): 7, http://www-usr.rider.edu/~vrme/.

4 Ibid.

5 David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, "The Functions of Music in Everyday Life: Redefining the Social in Music Psychology," *Psychology of Music* 27 (1999): 73, doi:10.1177/0305735699271007.

6 Andrea Landin, Carlos Roldan, Elaine Sandoval, and Sara Zanussi, *Say Yes to Assess: An Exploration in El Sistema-Inspired Assessment Practice*, Sistema Fellows Program at New England Conservatory (2013): 14. http://sistemafellows.typepad.com/files/sayyestoassess.pdf.

7 Jill Denny (director, Mountain View High School Choir Department), e-mail message to author, December 7, 2014.

8 "Mountain View, California," accessed November 17, 2013, http://www.city-data.com/city/Mountain-View-California.html.

9 Data retrieved from the Mountain View-Los Altos District database on November 16, 2013.

10 "Mountain View, California," accessed November 17, 2013; MVLA District database, November 16, 2013.

11 Denny, e-mail.

12 Former MVHS student, e-mail message to the author, December 4, 2013. All questionnaires were distributed in confidentiality.

13 Interview with current MVHS student, November 21, 2013. All interviews were conducted anonymously in order to protect the confidentiality of the minors.

14 MVHS parent, e-mail message to the author, December 5, 2013.

15 Former MVHS parent, e-mail message to the author, December 6, 2013.

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17 Ibid.

18 Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo, *Plan de Desarrollo Humano Local, Cantón de Acosta 2010-2012* (2009): 1-58, http://www.ifam.go.cr/PaginaIFAM/docs/PRODUCTOS%20FOMUDE%202006-2011/R4Productos/P23%20Planes%20DHL%20y%20Agendas%20Distritales/Planes%20de%20Desarrollo%20Humano%20Cantonal/Plan%20de%20Desarrollo%20Humano%20Local%20Cant%C3%B3n%20Acosta.pdf.

19 Ronny Mora (director, Sinem Acosta), in discussion with the author, March 11, 2011.

20 ibid.

21 Ibid.

22 G. Rosabel-Coto, "Music Education for Social Change," 56.

23 Ibid.

24 Ministerio de Educación Pública, “Líneas Estratégicas 2010-2014,” accessed April 29, 2014, http://www.mep.go.cr/lineas-estrategicas-2010-2014.

25 Sinem student, e-mail message to the author, April 12, 2014.

26 Landin et al, *Say Yes to Assess*, 36.

27 Corona Youth Music Project. "The Project,” accessed April 14, 2014, http://www.nucleocorona.org/Corona_Youth_Music_Project/TheProject.html.

28 Alvaro Rodas (director, Corona Youth Music Project), in discussion with the author, April 15, 2014.

29 Interview with current CYMP student, April 14, 2014.

30 Jennifer Johnson (teacher, Corona Youth Music Project), in discussion with the author, April 12, 2014.

31 Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2008-2012, Selected Social Characteristics in the United States U.S. Detailed Tables; generated by Johanna Smith Nilsson; using American FactFinder; http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/0616350.html; (April 9, 2014).

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Heath and Roach, “Imaginative Actuality,” 21.

36 Johnson, discussion.

37 G. Rosabel-Coto, “Music Education for Social Change,” 59.

38 Corona Youth Music Project, “The Project,” accessed 2014.

39 Heath and Roach, “Imaginative Actuality”; Ann Stone, Tora Bikson, Joy Moini, and David McArthur, *The Arts and Prosocial Impact Study: Program Characteristics and Prosocial Effects*, RAND Institute on Education and Training (1998). doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.01.507; Susan Hallam, "The Power of Music: Its Impact on the Intellectual, Social and Personal Development of Children and Young People," *International Journal of Music Education* 28, no. 3 (2010): 269-89, doi: 10.1177/0255761410370658.

40 Stone et al, *The Arts and Prosocial Impact Study,* iv.