

Beyond the Anthropocentric: A Valuing System for Eco-literate Music Pedagogy.

Daniel J. Shevock, Penn State Altoona, djs541@psu.edu

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In this philosophical-design research, I draw on ecology, music, and music education literature to extend anthropocentric (human-centered) *valuing* systems, dominant in our field, to the ecocentric (ecology-centered). I originally experienced the idea of music and ecology being connected in my studies of historic music educator Satis Coleman. Coleman “advised children be taught to love nature through listening to nature’s music. Such an education can be an experience of connection, while modern living often disconnects us from nature, our communities, and our true selves” (Shevock 2015, 59). In 2015, I began cultivating *eco-literate music pedagogy* (EMP), a process including reflection on environmental philosophy, facilitating an ecological-composition project for a Pennsylvania youth choir, and encouraging deep ecological questioning during a university music course. As I enacted EMP, I began to wonder about our field’s underlying values; why enact EMP? I have been inspired by many music educators’ writings about the social value of music and music education (e.g. Goble 2010), but as I cultivated EMP, I began feeling something might be missing; specifically, something of the way we usually *value* in music education. What we value affects how we act and what we teach.

The guiding question for this research was: What benefits might an ecocentric position offer music educators? Goble (2010) concluded that music educators should develop *intercultural knowledge*. In other words, musics have social value, and this value is intrinsic to the people who are musicing. Following Goble’s reasoning, in gaining *intercultural knowledge* through music we gain insight into the ways people live together both positively and negatively. Ecofeminists¹ have demonstrated how the “unjustified domination of women” parallels the “unjustified domination of non-human nature” (Warren 2000, xiv). And some ecofeminists extend intrinsic valuing from humans-only to also non-humans (Shiva 2005).

When discussing the musicing of birds, R. Murray Schafer suggested, “despite ... similarities [between human and bird expressions], it is obvious that to whatever extent the birds are deliberately communicating, it is for their own benefit rather than ours that their vocalizations are designed” (31). Musics of non-human life can be understood as having intrinsic value (intrinsic to those life forms who are musicing).

¹ To the best of my knowledge, Roberta Lamb (2014) is the only music education scholar to draw from ecofeminist literature. Her paper points to the irrationality of both social and environmental actions; this points to “another possible world” (213).

A Valuing System. Conscientization² can be the heartbeat of cultivating ecocentric valuing in music education.

1. Conscientization can begin with becoming aware of our society's taken-for-granted values (including stories and musics) that underpin the unjust domination of nature.
2. Conscientization can be directed toward ecological ends by recognizing the intrinsic value of non-human musicing (life-forms musicing *for their own benefit*).
3. As we become conscious of the ways we unjustly dominate and the intrinsic value of non-human musicing, we can begin to realize solidarity with nature, moving beyond the anthropocentric.

Applications of this research

- Music provides a unique way to think about the ecological crises (e.g. as multiple lines in counterpoint)
- Nature's music provides unique insight into music and music education (e.g. composing music based on birdsongs; whale songs; or the howling of wolves)
- Non-human life-forms music *for their own benefit*; this is intrinsic value
- Non-human life has intrinsic- (rather than mere use-) value
- Facing global ecological crises, music education can play a unique and important role in cultivating ecological literacy (through the unique ways of thinking music provides, and/or using music for raising a community's ecological consciousness)

References

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² Freire (2000) referred to conscientization (*conscientização*) as, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (35). The language of conscientization as a learning process leading from naïveté to awareness, solidarity, and action is useful when discussing valuing in eco-literate music pedagogy because it connects perception to action.