

# **Increasing student engagement with a community college music curriculum**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the University of Liverpool  
for the degree of Doctor of Education by Christine J. Park

February 2021

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my Mom and Dad, my big sis Darleen, Rachel, Patrick, and Daniel for their unconditional love and support.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Michael Watts, for continuing to support me throughout the somewhat lengthy process of completing this research.

## **Abstract**

This case study is an examination of a cohort of 15 music majors at Los Angeles City College (LACC), a two-year, open-enrollment, public community college. The majority of students enter the music program having had limited exposure to classical music. Given these students low cultural capital, they start on the periphery of the theory and performance communities of music practice (CoMPs). As they gradually engage with the CoMPs and become legitimate peripheral participants through situated learning, students are able to learn to appreciate, value, acquire additional capital, and become more engaged with the Western classical music components of the curriculum.

The theoretical basis for the study comes from Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, which provides the foundation of the exploration of the relationship between LACC music student capital and the institutional capital of the music curriculum, and Lave and Wenger's concepts of situated learning and communities of practice, which provide the foundation for exploring why the interviewed LACC music students appear to enter CoMPs at different rates and with different levels of engagement.

The 15 participants in the study were a cohort of transfer-oriented students in their last semester of studies, selected through a purposeful sampling strategy to match the demographic characteristics of a typical cohort of music majors. Qualitative data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews with each of the participants, which allowed for a comparative analysis of student journeys through the music program.

The data suggest that students increase their engagement with the music curriculum when they define their identity by engaging in CoMPs, recognize the connections between theory and performance, and value the curriculum as a whole in helping them reach their musical goals. A significant finding of the research is the influence of emotional experiences in helping students engage with and connect the theory and performance curriculum. Recommendations are that music programs should support the formation of CoMPs, engage students early on with performance classes, create opportunities for students to have emotional experiences in the classroom, and use faculty brokers to bridge the boundaries between the theory and performance curriculum.

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## Abbreviations

- AA: Associate of Arts
- AA-T: Associate of Arts for Transfer
- BA: Bachelor of Arts
- CoP: Community of Practice
- CoMP: Community of Music Practice
- CSU: California State University
- LACC: Los Angeles City College
- SES: Socioeconomic Status
- UC: University of California

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This thesis provides the results of a case study of 15 music majors at Los Angeles City College (LACC), an open-enrollment, public community college offering two-year programs. The research explores the role of cultural capital and communities of practice in how these students engage with the music curriculum.

The majority of the cohort of music students entered the program with low levels of cultural capital, meaning they had limited prior exposure to the Western classical music that forms the basis of the curriculum. They all started on the periphery of the theory and performance communities of music practice (CoMPs) that comprise the LACC music environment. The students gradually increased their engagement with the classical components of the curriculum through situated learning, learning to connect theory to performance, and finding value in the curriculum as a means to help them reach their musical goals.

### **1.1 My interest in the study and my research questions**

As a professor of music and chair of the music department at LACC, where I have been teaching performance, musicianship, and harmony courses for over a decade, I have a deep interest in increasing student attainment of course and program learning outcomes. As student engagement is a primary theoretical model for understanding withdrawals and completions, I wanted to explore the factors that support and inhibit LACC music student engagement with the curriculum. I intended for the study to lead to professional practices that could increase the success rates of LACC music students.

The LACC music program historically has had low rates of course completion, retention, program completion, and transfer. Only 50% of beginning students are able to complete the first semester theory course (Los Angeles City College Program Review Data, 2017). Typical LACC music students have limited exposure to Western classical music during their upbringing and they enter the music program unfamiliar with the music genres that form the basis of the introductory classes. These students have a passion for the musical genres they were exposed to during their formative years, which inspires them to study music in higher education. My belief is that those beginning students who are unable to complete the introductory course are unable to engage with the Western classical music that forms the basis of the curriculum.

To that end, I focus on the following research questions:

- What factors contribute to how LACC music students engage with the curriculum?
- How can the music department increase student engagement with the curriculum?

LACC music students' initial engagement with the curriculum appears to be related to their incoming levels of cultural capital. Students who do succeed also appear to become legitimate peripheral participants in the theory and performance CoMPs and increase their level of cultural capital by learning to value the curriculum, gaining a sense of identity within the program as a whole, and connecting with the material taught in theory and performance courses.

## **1.2 Research context: Policy issues**

### **(a) The California Community Colleges**

The California community college system, the largest in the United States, is comprised of 115 colleges and serves over 2 million students a year (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2018). The colleges offer a range of educational programs intended to give students workforce training, basic skills, vocational training and certificates, degrees, and preparation for transfer to a four-year college. These public colleges have no entry requirements and accept all students interested in pursuing any subject offered by the institution.

California community colleges with music departments traditionally offer an associate of arts degree that prepares students to transfer to four-year colleges (Associate of Arts for Transfer (AA-T) in Music) and a terminal associate of arts degree (Associate of Arts (AA)-Music). Although some colleges offer an associate of arts degrees in commercial music, which has a theory and performance sequence more appropriate for commercial musicians, these programs are less common than general music degrees. Music students interested in finding an entry-level job in music can also take courses towards a vocational certificate that provides practical skill building. There is little consistency in vocational music certificates across the state and community colleges offer unique programs with varied course requirements and learning outcomes.

A 2010 California law requires community colleges to grant an AA-T degree and guarantee admissions into the California State University (CSU) system if a student completes an approved general education and major requirement curriculum in a specific degree (California Senate Bill 1440, 2010). The goal of the law is to facilitate transfer and to ensure that a student does not need to repeat courses once they transfer. In the early 2010s the CSU and California community colleges systems collaborated on course



descriptors in music. The course descriptors are based on the curriculum covered in classes that students take during the first two years at a typical CSU. In this way, community college AA-T degrees meet the expectations of four-year CSU transfer institutions. The articulation also ensures that a community college program will teach curriculum that aligns directly with the philosophy of the same program in the transfer school.

The core of the music curriculum leading to an AA-T degree includes a theory sequence (four levels of harmony and musicianship), private or applied lessons (four levels), and performance ensembles (four levels), with a music history course as an option. The learning outcomes for the transfer AA-T degree are to understand fundamental aspects of music such as notation and theory, recognize musical patterns and forms from different periods and genres, and accurately play or sing music alone or in an ensemble (California Course Identification Numbering System (C-ID), 2018). The theory sequence covers the practices of European composers of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, applied music courses provide individualized study for instrumental and voice students through private lessons, and performance ensembles and solo instrumental classes provide the student an opportunity to perform a variety of music genres including classical, popular, jazz, and world music, though the primary focus is often on classical repertoire.

Some California community college music departments meet the interests of their diverse students through a curriculum that reflects, aligns with, and nurtures the musical cultures and histories of their local communities, especially in music ensembles. The majority of schools, however, limit their performance ensembles to the more traditional choir, orchestra, and band, all of which have an emphasis on Western classical music (Assist, 2018). Although music history courses may include such topics as American Popular Music or History of Rock and Roll Music, most schools offer surveys of Western classical music from antiquity through the present day. Despite the variety of courses that community colleges across the state offer outside of the classical music tradition, course descriptors for the core course that articulate between community college and CSU music programs strongly imply that the four-year schools expect community colleges to offer a music curriculum based on the Western classical tradition.

### **(b) Los Angeles City College<sup>1</sup>**

LACC is an open access institution and accepts the 'top 100% of students' (Los Angeles City College, 2019). The majority of students are Hispanic/Latinx (54%), under 24 years old (54%), and economically disadvantaged and receiving financial aid (57%) (Los Angeles City College Student Profile, 2017). Students qualify for federal financial aid when they or their families have an income of less than \$50,000 per year, though the majority of them make less than \$20,000 per year. Forty-five percent of students are first-generation college students and nearly 10% are not United States citizens. Many students are first-generation Americans whose parents did not have the opportunity to pursue higher education, some have undocumented parents who were not comfortable pursuing higher education, and some parents may have been raised in families that needed money and wanted their child to work full-time immediately after high school rather than pursuing higher education. The college offers traditional majors and disciplines with the goals of providing students an opportunity to transfer to a four-year school and/or enter the workforce, and advertises that students with associate of arts degree graduates earn significantly more than people with a high school degree alone.

One of the requirements of the state funding for California community colleges is that a college must work to reduce equity gaps and embrace the diversity of its student body. Common focuses are on tutoring, English and math pathways, matriculation processes, placement testing, and co-requisites (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2013). In recognition of the fact that many incoming students do not possess the capital required to succeed in degree or certificate programs, the college provides a variety of additional support services in the form of financial aid and tutoring. Individualized support is available for disproportionately impacted student groups through specialized programs. The college thus recognizes the social and educational challenges faced by many of its incoming students and allocates resources to increase their chances for success.

### **(c) The Los Angeles City College Music Department Degree Program**

LACC articulates its courses with transfer four-year schools and follows those course descriptors within its music degree curriculum. LACC students seeking music degrees have flexibility in terms of the type of music they wish to study, but music theory is required for all degrees and vocational certificates. The four levels of the music theory sequence introduce the student to the voice leading, analysis, ear

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<sup>1</sup> The LACC administration provided me with permission to use the name of the school (Appendix A).

training, and sight singing of the harmonic principles of Western classical music of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The music major can choose from several music appreciation courses, including those in Western classical music, jazz, and rock and roll. Instrumental and voice students focus on technique that is geared towards the performance of traditional classical music and the repertoire focuses on the classical genres. Intermediate piano courses, for example, require the student to perform music from the baroque, classical, romantic, and twentieth century periods of Western classical music. The genres covered in the performance ensembles are specific to the nature of the ensemble, though the choice of repertoire is largely at the discretion of the instructors. For example, chamber music allows for performances of traditional classical music as well as jazz and world music, the jazz band only performs jazz, the orchestra typically performs traditional classical music, and the choirs sing music from various cultures.

Students completing the transfer Associate of Arts (AA) degree in music at LACC are expected to write, recognize, and utilize the fundamental aspects and principles of music, including music theory, notation, and form; recognize and understand patterns and forms in musical examples from a variety of time periods and genres; play or sing stylistically appropriate music from memory with precise rhythm, correct pitches, and accurate intonation; and participate in ensembles.

The fundamental aspects and principles of music are acquired in solo performance, ensembles, harmony, and musicianship courses. An introductory music fundamentals instructor may choose to include concepts from popular music as a way to help their students understand concepts more readily, but such an approach is not required as defined in the approved course outline or expected teaching methodology. The more advanced theory courses employ commercial chord symbols, which are used in popular and jazz lead sheets, but the symbols are intended to support a student's ability to recognize chords and the curriculum does not include commercial harmony. Melodies covered in musicianship courses may occasionally include jazz and show tunes, but the curriculum does not require that such melodies should be utilized by the instructor.

The transfer articulation that indicates that students must be able to recognize and understand patterns and forms from a variety of time periods and genres assumes that those time periods and genres are from the Western classical tradition (Music Appreciation C-ID, 2018). As such, the general Music Appreciation course is a historical review of Western classical music, including an introduction to jazz.

Some four-year schools allow for the acquisition of music appreciation skills through such courses as History of Rock, Pop, and Soul; African American Music; and Music in American Cultures.

The ability to play and sing music is developed through the study of music in solo instrumental or voice classes, as well as in ensembles. In addition to Western classical composers, jazz and show tunes are commonly utilized in solo and ensemble courses, but more contemporary popular music typically is not covered. At the more advanced levels, instrumental, vocal, and composition students are allowed the option to study contemporary popular music. Instructors have flexibility in the styles and genres they can cover in performance classes, as long as the learning outcomes are met. At the same time, the majority of four-year school music programs expect transfer students to audition by performing music from the Western classical tradition.

#### **(d) Los Angeles City College Music Student Demographics**

The demographics of LACC music students is comparable to the demographics of the entire student body. A typical group of music students is approximately 50% Hispanic/Latinx and 30% Caucasian; 50% female, and 50% aged between 21-28 (Los Angeles City College Program Review Data, 2017). Student participants in the study had similar age ranges (between 18-31 years old), socio-economic status (71% self-described as lower or working class, the rest as middle class), educational backgrounds (all completed high school, 93% in public schools), and educational goals (100% degree, transfer, employment) as a typical cohort of LACC students. A significant number of LACC music students (45%) are first-generation, meaning they are the first in their family to attend a college.

The success rate of LACC music students in all classes, which is around 70%, is similar regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, and socio-economic status. The success rates of male and female music students in all classes at LACC is almost exactly the same, suggesting that the cultural capital that gender provides does not benefit the student at this particular college. Similarly, the additional cultural capital in terms of musical opportunities, exposure, and experiences that age can provide does not appear to benefit the student at LACC. Although black and Latinx students have slightly lower success rates by a few percentage points, success rates in all music classes at LACC remain nearly the same for all ethnicities.

The low success rates (only 50%) for incoming LACC music students in the entry-level theory courses indicate that many students, regardless of demographics, are unprepared for the rigors of higher

education and that they face insurmountable challenges that prevent them from succeeding in the program.

### **1.3 Research context: Theoretical basis**

This introduction to the primary theory used throughout the study is intended to provide context for the theoretical nature of the literature review. A more thorough description is provided in Chapter 4.

#### **(a) Capital**

Bourdieu's seminal work on the impact of capital (experiences that allow a person to take ownership of and enter into social structures) and more specifically cultural capital (knowledge and resource acquired through experience that allow an individual to appreciate cultural relations and artefacts) on educational attainment has been highly influential in numerous branches of theoretical research in education (1973, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1993). Bourdieu argues that the culture of the dominant class defines the structure of an educational system; students who possess cultural capital are rewarded by that educational system and students with lower levels of capital face greater challenges.

LACC community college students enter the program with interests and past experiences in many music genres, including pop/rock, hip-hop/R&B, and country, and to a lesser extent jazz and classical. LACC music students who possess cultural capital that more closely aligns with the music curriculum, which is classical and jazz, initially have an advantage over those students who do not. Students with lower cultural capital are able to engage with the curriculum by working to acquire the necessary cultural capital through a transformation of their habits and dispositions, or what Bourdieu refers to as habitus. Bourdieu's theories thus serve as foundational concepts for my research.

#### **(b) Situated learning**

Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of situated learning is fundamentally concerned with the idea of progressing from novice to master through learning by doing as part of a community of practice. A key element is the acknowledgement of legitimate participation, or the sense of belonging and being welcome, which is appropriate to my study.

The LACC music program includes both theory (harmony/musicianship) and performance (solo/ensemble) components and within the music department a community of music practice (CoMP) develops around each of these distinct areas of study. Students in each CoMP work towards a common

goal and are indirectly supported by faculty. Although music majors have the same goal of completing a degree and transfer, they have unique interests and skill levels within these subsets of the full community of practice.

Because of their relatively low levels of capital—not having had exposure to the classical music that forms the basis of the curriculum, perhaps to the point of never having been to a concert or never having touched an instrument—most students who enter the LACC music program begin on the periphery of the CoMPs. Incoming students are attracted to the performance component of the curriculum and many incoming students have at least some prior experience singing or playing an instrument, which facilitates their entry into the performance CoMP. The low student success rates in the entry level theory courses suggests that students have greater difficulties becoming legitimate participants in the theory CoMP.

A better understanding of how students engage in CoMPs and why they appear to enter CoMPs at different rates will help me to answer my research questions concerning the factors that hinder and support LACC music students in their engagement with the Western classical music-based theory and performance curriculum.

### **(c) Terminology**

I provide the following definitions to clarify my use of these terms throughout this thesis:

**Music program:** The theory and performance curriculum that a cohort of students must complete to earn a degree.

**Theory curriculum:** The harmony and musicianship courses taken by a cohort of music students.

**Performance curriculum:** Ensembles, group instrumental, group vocal, and master courses taken by a cohort of music students.

**CoMP:** A community of practice comprised of students and faculty that develops outside of the formal music curriculum and meets the characteristics as defined by Lave and Wenger.

**Theory CoMP:** A community of music practice that develops around the theoretical aspect of the music curriculum.

**Performance CoMP:** A community of music practice that develops around the performance aspect of the music curriculum.

#### **(d) The engagement literature**

A review of the student engagement literature in K-12 and higher education defines three commonly accepted dimensions or categories of research studies on engagement in education: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Lester, 2013).

Behavioral engagement focuses on student conduct and behavior in terms of involvement in academic and social activities. Examples of behavioral engagement are following rules; formal in-class participation including concentration, persistence, and asking questions; and informal out-of-class participation in school-related activities.

Emotional engagement is concerned with “attitudes, interests, and values related to positive or negative interactions with faculty, staff, students, academics, or the institution” (Fredericks et al., 2004). Examples of emotional engagement include having affective reactions in the classroom to the curriculum (interest, boredom, anxiety, sadness, happiness); positive or negative feelings to the institution, curriculum, and instructors; and identifying with the school, having a sense of belonging, and feeling important in the educational environment. Emotional engagement helps students feel connected and have ties to the institution, as well as motivating them to do work.

Cognitive engagement describes a student’s thoughtfulness and willingness to work to comprehend ideas and acquire skills. Cognitive engagement contains a psychological aspect in terms of motivational goals and self-regulated learning and a cognitive aspect in terms of a student’s investment in learning and motivation to learn.

Student engagement has become a primary theoretical model for understanding withdrawals and completions and a number of instruments have been designed to measure student engagement (Fredericks et al., 2004; Christenson et al., 2008; Finn, 2006).

#### **(e) Types of LACC music student engagement**

In this study I focus on student engagement specifically with the music curriculum. The data suggest a definition for three types of student engagement by these LACC music students.

1. Finding value in the music program as a whole. The value can range from acceptance of the curriculum as a means to an end, to deep appreciation and belief that the curriculum will help the student reach their musical goals.
2. Having a sense of identity and belonging in the educational environment. Students want to belong to the CoMPs and work to become accepted by the CoMPs.
3. Feeling connected to the material being studied in class. Students have emotional experiences while listening, analyzing, or performing music, typically brokered by inspirational faculty, which can help them engage with the material. Here, the most powerful connection comes through a 'lightbulb moment' when deep learning occurs by recognizing the connections between theory and performance.

Any one of these three elements (value, identity, and connection) can be sufficient to motivate an LACC music student to persist and complete the program. The LACC music students I interviewed who were most engaged with the curriculum were able to describe experiences regarding each of the three elements.

#### **1.4 Impact of the study**

As a department chair and professor of music at LACC I have a vested interest in increasing student attainment of course and program learning outcomes for my students. I intend for this case study to suggest actionable practices that can increase student engagement with the curriculum and lead to increased student success.

The level of student engagement with the music curriculum may explain the low success rates in the beginning classes offered by the LACC music department. A greater understanding of how diversity, socioeconomic (SES) background, cultural capital, and communities of practice impact student engagement with the existing curriculum is intended to lead to original knowledge that will suggest further research and the development of professional practices to address the challenges faced by California community college music students. Within the policies that exist at the state level, my work suggests that professional practices can be implemented within a music department to increase student engagement with a community college music curriculum through participation in CoMPs. The research also raises questions about social justice in the traditional music curriculum. The study is intended to contribute to faculty and administration awareness and changes in practice in music departments



throughout the nine-college Los Angeles Community College District, and at other community college music departments throughout California that share similar curriculum and have students with similar backgrounds.

## 1.5 Structure of the thesis

**Chapter 2: Literature Review.** Places my research questions in the context of existing literature in cultural capital and communities of practice, especially in relation to community college music programs, and identifies gaps in the existing research.

**Chapter 3: Methodology.** Explains the process and justification for my methodology, including data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, and the utility of using a qualitative case study to consider my research questions.

**Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework.** In the first part I define and discuss cultural capital and the concepts of field and habitus, with a focus on connections to educational research. In the following section I define and discuss the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation, the community of practice, boundaries, and identity, again with a focus on education. I intersperse the theoretical framework with explorations of how the various concepts relate to the student educational experience at LACC.

**Chapter 5: Cultural Capital and Music Education.** Explores a central conflict in the LACC music program, in that the low level of institutional capital of the program attracts students with low levels of cultural capital, since students tend to choose options that are most readily accessible to them, but at same time the Western classical music focus of the curriculum requires a higher level of cultural capital than incoming students typically possess. The chapter critiques the current policy in how the LACC music department defines its curriculum and explores the compatibility of LACC music students with the curriculum.

**Chapter 6: LACC Music Student Engagement with the Curriculum.** Describes the process whereby LACC music students become legitimate peripheral participants. As they engage with CoMPs (move from the periphery to legitimate participation) they learn to value the curriculum, connect to the material, define their identity, and become recognized by the community.

**Chapter 7: LACC Music Student Emotional Experiences within the Curriculum.** Explores the types of emotional experiences student have in classroom, the benefits of such experiences, how emotional experiences can help bridge the theory and performance curriculum, and the role of faculty in supporting emotional experiences throughout the curriculum.

**Chapter 8: Discussion.** Presents six themes that emerge from an exploration of the similarities between journeys of LACC music students and suggests reasons that inhibit and enable student engagement with the curriculum.

**Chapter 9: Conclusion.** Includes a summary of my own educational experiences as a comparison to the journeys of typical LACC music students, suggestions for practices to increase student engagement with the curriculum, what I learned through my experiences as a researcher, and the extended impact of the research including opportunities for future research and suggestions for how the results can be used.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

A review of existing research concerning how cultural capital and habitus impact music student engagement with the curriculum, how students at the periphery of a community of music practice become legitimate participants, and the concepts of emotional experiences within a learning environment places my research questions in context and identifies gaps in the existing research. The literature review considers the following questions that extend from my general research questions:

**a. Cultural capital and habitus.** What foundational research has been done on the connection between cultural capital and institutional capital? Is it possible to increase cultural capital and can habitus be transformed? How are students able to utilize their capital in higher education programs of study?

**b. Legitimate peripheral participation.** What foundational research has been done on the community of practice (CoP) in educational research? What supports movement from peripheral to legitimate practice in a CoP? What factors cause students to enter CoPs at different rates? What foundational studies have been done on emotional experiences in learning environments? Do emotional experiences increase student engagement with the curriculum?

When possible, the review considers these questions in relation to college music programs.

### 2.2 Cultural capital and habitus

Bourdieu argues that students from lower socioeconomic status (low-SES) backgrounds have less cultural capital than those from higher socioeconomic status (high-SES) backgrounds, placing them at a disadvantage in an educational system that reproduces the culture of the dominant class (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Students without cultural capital in a particular sub-field in the wider field of higher education will either place a higher value on their lack of habitus and work to develop their disposition, or they will struggle to succeed.

Throughout his writing Bourdieu makes numerous references to music. He argues that musical taste is a signifier of social position and affirms one's class, and that a love of music guarantees high cultural status (Bourdieu, 1984). In his research Bourdieu thus defines 'music' as the field of 'Western art music.'

Later researchers have extended Bourdieu's concept of the music field to include music education, all the musical genres, and the numerous facets of the music industry (Burnard, 2012; Irwin, 2016).

Although some of the studies mentioned below do not use the Bourdieusian terms 'cultural capital' and 'habitus,' these factors occur and are developed during formative years and as such are related to Bourdieu's concepts.

### **2.2.a The impact of cultural capital, habitus, and institutional capital on music learning**

Numerous studies over the past decades have found that students acquiring appropriate cultural capital from their family in their upbringing are more likely than students who do not acquire such cultural capital to meet standards, achieve high grades, go to college, and complete programs of study (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Jaeger, 2009; Tramonte & Willms, 2009; Jaeger & Mollegaard, 2017).

There is much quantitative and qualitative research indicating that social class produces different levels of institutional commitment, preparation, feelings of entitlement, and the ability for students to feel that they fit in higher education (Berger & Milem, 1999; Walpole, 2003; Aries & Seider, 2005, 2007; Reay, Crozier, & Clayton, 2010). Historical studies indicate that students from low-SES backgrounds are less likely to attend college, are more likely to attend less selective institutions when they do enroll, have unique college choice processes, and are less likely to persist or to attend graduate school (Astin, 1993; Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999; McDonough, 1997; Tinto, 1993). Some of the most critical and influential research concludes that students from low-SES backgrounds have lower educational aspirations, persistence rates, and educational attainment than high-SES students, both before college and once they are in college (Astin, 1993; DiMaggio & Mohr, 1985; McDonough, 1997; MacLeod, 1987; Tinto, 1993). The habitus of a student from a low-SES background causes them to have lower aspirations and predisposes them to make choices concerning their education that are likely to result in them maintaining their social status.

Although a combination of high school records and SAT scores is consistently the best predictor for success in college, such metrics appear to be poor indicators of success in the field of music (Burton & Ramist, 2001). Numerous factors have been identified as contributing to musical cultural capital and the development of habitus. One such large-scale study of pre-college music students in multiple regions in the United States found direct effects from home environment, socioeconomic status, and family

attitudes on the success of students in their music studies (Dell et al., 2014). There appears to be no significant similar study yet completed on community college music students.

For students in grades 10-12, music interest in school is significantly lower than for any other academic subject, while music interest outside of school is highest of all subjects (McPherson & Hendricks, 2010). High school students thus engage with music primarily because it provides status and acceptance within a group, but this connection to music does not appear to translate into a desire to learn music in a formal way.

### **(a) Low-SES high school and choice of college**

There is a long history of research that suggests that the amount of cultural capital a student can attain is impacted not only by family but also by the educational system, including the high school, which may or may not reward cultural capital (DiMaggio, 1982; Aschaffenburg & Maas, 1997; Andersen & Jaeger, 2015). Some of the initial research in this area suggest that in addition to academic and social experiences, precollege characteristics and attributes have an overwhelming influence on persistence and retention (Bean, 1990; Lang, 2000; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Tinto, 1993).

Historical studies found that students from low-SES backgrounds were likely to enroll in lower-tier colleges rather than in institutions that would be more likely to influence their aspirations and improve their persistence (Astin, 1993; Bowen & Bok, 1998; Hearn, 1984; Karabel & Astin, 1975; Karen, 1991). Since then, various sociologists considered Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital, institutional capital, and habitus as influencing college choice and causing students to believe that some institutions are just 'not right' for them (Reay, David, & Ball, 2005; Crozier et al., 2008; Crozier, Reay, & Clayton, 2010).

Habitus helps explain why students from low-SES backgrounds and with lower levels of cultural capital enter a community college. Most community college music programs are open access, with no or minimum requirements or standards for entry into the program, are located in close proximity to where students live, and are more affordable than four-year schools. Numerous studies suggest these same attributes as important factors in college choice (Bowers & Pugh, 1973; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Douglas, Powers, & Choroszy, 1983; Lay & Maguire, 1981). Similar studies suggest that habitus-informing attributes also impact college choice, including socioeconomic class, parental education, parental encouragement, peer encouragement and support, and ethnicity (Bowers & Pugh, 1973;

Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hearn, 1991; Hossler et al., 1989, 1999; Litten, 1991; Stage & Hossler, 1988).

More recent studies support the theory that the institutional capital of the high school influences college choice and that students from low-SES area schools are less likely to enroll in selective colleges or in any college at all (McDonough, 1997; Palardy, 2015). Both authors suggest that the habitus of a low-SES high school may lead exceptional students to attend a local community college rather than a more selective four-year college. This theory is supported by other researchers who have found that students attending low- and middle-SES schools have significantly higher levels of two-year college attendance than those from high-SES schools (Engberg & Wolniak, 2014). Research supports the notion that in addition to upbringing and habitus, the socioeconomic composition of the high school impacts college choice and may influence a student's decision to attend community college (McDonough, 1997; Palardy, 2015). (The concept of 'college choice organizational habitus'—whereby interactions between school practices, parents, students, peer influences, and staff impact college choice—was developed by McDonough.)

Nora's (2004) study on the role of habitus on college choice is particularly relevant to this current study in that it suggests that students select a college in which they feel comfortable, a sense of acceptance, and where they believe they will fit. Bourdieu (1984) argues that students choose an educational path that closely aligns with their habitus. Since students will subconsciously exclude themselves from places from which they feel excluded, the students in this study were more likely to attend a community college, or no college at all, since they believe that their background does not support the conservatory or traditional four-year music school model. Social class has been found to be related to issues of access to higher music education (Dibben, 2006).

Research suggests that high-SES parents transmit more cultural capital than low-SES parents to their children (Roksa & Potter, 2011; Weininger, Lareau, & Conley, 2015; Jaeger & Karlson, 2018). There are clear benefits for the development of cultural capital in low-SES students, but educational inequality remains for those low-SES who do not develop the dominant cultural capital.

## **(b) Impact of limited exposure to classical music**

The level of involvement by parents and teachers are important factors in a student succeeding in a musical career (Creech, 2009; Gruber et al., 2008). The quantity and quality of instrumental practice is another key factor in predicting student success (Jørgensen & Hallam, 2009), which again is influenced by parents and teachers. A number of studies using Bourdieusian considerations of music programs focus on younger grade-school students (Brändström, 2000; Valenzuela & Codina, 2014) rather than college students. A study of a Texas undergraduate music program shows that success in introductory core classes predicts student success throughout a student's musical studies, with music theory being the strongest predictor of GPA, followed by music history and lessons (Rohwer, 2012). A study of a German music program found that a student who is strong academically prior to college will have strong performance in music subjects in college, though the study also found no connection between academic strength prior to college and student success in college on their principal instrument (Lehmann, 2014). These studies suggest that theory and performance success rates should be considered as separate determining factors for success in a college music program.

Even more relevant to the current study is that students who enter college without previous exposure to classical music will experience issues with confidence, isolation, and inadequacy in a music program (Burt & Mills, 2006; Burland & Pitts, 2007; Feichas, 2010; Nettl, 2005; Pitts, 2003, 2005). These students are more likely to have self-doubt and anxiety that their theoretical knowledge and skills will negatively impact their academic success (Burland & Pitts, 2007). The disconnection in students with non-classical music backgrounds is more likely to occur in subjects such as harmony, dictation, and the history of music (Feichas, 2010). For instrumentalists, socioeconomic status is a critical factor in the early stages of learning to play a classical instrument, as low-SES limits opportunities and knowledge, thereby impacting student attitudes, self-belief, and performance (Albert, 2006). A small, localized study of an Irish higher education music program found that music students who do not have Western classical music backgrounds will have less relevant cultural capital within a music program than students who have had more formal classical music backgrounds (Moore, 2012). The disconnect may occur even if the student enters with some popular music experience. Students who study and perform popular music genres are less interested in technique and music theory than classical music students (Creech et al., 2008a).



### **(c) Demographics**

A number of studies explore the role that habitus plays in educational outcomes, including applications to gender (McClelland, 1990; McNay, 1999; Dumais, 2002; Reay, 1995; Reay, 2004), ethnicity (Farkas et al., 1990), and sexual orientation (Desmarchelier, 2000).

Studies show that first-generation students face challenges in managing the cultural, social, and academic expectations of higher education; find the environment more intimidating and less familiar than students who have family members who had higher education; and are at an academic disadvantage when compared to non-first-generation students (Lehmann, 2007; Lundberg, Schreiner, Hovaguimian & Miller, 2007; Gofen, 2009; Lane & Taber, 2012; Thomas & Quinn, 2007). The habitus of first-generation students is found to impact educational outcomes (Dumais & Ward, 2010; Lane & Taber, 2012). This research is particularly relevant to this study in that 45% of music students at LACC are first generation.

If music students begin to recognize that a knowledge of classical music is necessary to fully engage with the higher education music curriculum, they may place a higher value on their lack of habitus and work harder to develop their disposition. A recent study suggests that low-SES students who succeed in developing their cultural capital may actually have a *higher* return on that capital than high-SES students (Jaeger & Karlson, 2018).

#### **2.2.c Overcoming a lack of cultural capital**

A lack of cultural capital can be balanced by students transforming their habitus and identities, and by teachers recognizing that students possess other forms of capital, leading to recontextualized teaching and more culturally sensitive music curriculum. What follows is a summary of relevant literature in those areas.

##### **(a) Transforming habitus**

Earlier researchers expanding upon Bourdieu considered cultural capital as a product of childhood experiences that are restructured through experiences in the outside world, acquired arbitrarily, defined by its relationship to high or elite cultures, and separate and distinguishable from skills or ability (DiMaggio, 1982). Although habitus is durable and Bourdieu's description of habitus implies there is not

much possibility for reflexivity, agency, or transformation, both Bourdieu and later researchers acknowledged that habitus can respond to new situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004; Conde, 2011). Some recent researchers have criticized the older definition of cultural capital, and its embodied form of habitus, as a product of deficit thinking. For these researchers, rather than habitus being a characteristic that cannot be altered and institutional capital being in the interest of the dominant class, habitus is changeable and institutional capital can be defined as the knowledge and skills a student must possess to work effectively, be productive in a field, and find employment (Kingston, 2001; Goldthorpe, 2007; Clegg, 2008). Rather than focusing on deficits a student has from their less-privileged background, these studies look at their resilience and the types of unique skills students acquire during their upbringing (Yosso, 2005; Walker, Gleaves, & Grey, 2006; Clegg, 2011). An asset-based consideration of the student acknowledges the strengths they acquired during their upbringing, such as being multilingual, valuing and recognizing the importance of higher education, wanting to give back to their communities, being able to adapt to new cultures, and overcoming hardship and stereotypes (Rendon, 2006). Social capital can result in bonding (what Gofen (2009) calls 'bonding capital') whereby families from lower socioeconomic groups support their children to ensure they go to school (Auerbach, 2006; Heath, Fuller, & Paton, 2008; Gofen, 2009). A number of studies have considered this type of student resiliency as a way to imagine a future possible self, known as the 'possible selves' literature (Rossiter, 2003; Leondari, 2007; Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Archer, 2007).

### **(b) Recognizing student capital to recontextualize teaching and curriculum**

Despite the challenges to a music curriculum that aligns with the cultural capital of its students, there is a growing awareness of the relationship between the existing music curriculum at many schools of higher education and social inequality (de Boise, 2016; Wagoner, 2014; Vaugeois, 2007). Given that the curriculum is rooted in Western European history, the traditional music curriculum is particularly at risk of being part of an ongoing "unexamined Whiteness of teaching" (Picower, 2012, p.197). A review of the curriculum is likely to reveal that it reinforces cultural identities by championing the Western classical music tradition based on an "authoritarian pedagogy of musical expert and apprentice" (Wagoner, 2014). A music curriculum based on Western classical music, be it in grade school or higher education, can be considered elitist and exclusionary (Benedict & Schmidt, 2007; Schmidt, 2005). The traditional curriculum projects the belief that classical music of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (white, male, European) is the standard, superior art form against which all other styles of music should be considered. Since new and transfer students must be familiar with the genres and culture-specific

standards of Western classical music, faculty who participate in student transfer auditions essentially are “listening for cultural capital; more significantly, they are listening for affirmations of Whiteness” (Koza, 2008). Music programs that follow the traditional curriculum may limit access by providing greater opportunities for those students who grow up in an affluent social and economic environment that allows for a classical musical education in childhood (Koza, 2008; Wright, 2013; Wagoner, 2014). Youth from lower socioeconomic environments, where the cost of musical studies is prohibitive, have less chance of acceptance into a university music program (DeLorenzo, 2012).

Western Classical music is the foundation of higher education music programs throughout the United States, even in communities where students have little or no exposure to classical music in grade school and do not have opportunities to develop cultural capital. Teachers can work to change their own habitus and recognize, include, and become empathetic to student habitus (Woollen & Otto, 2014). One study found that undergraduate music majors in their first music education course believe that the top three skills required by music instructors are personal skills, teaching skills, and musical skills (Davis, 2006). Students expect their teachers to be empathetic and have the personal skills necessary to relate to student experiences and cultural differences. Such culturally responsive teaching has numerous benefits for the student and is can contribute to improved student outcomes (Leigh Hamm Forell, 2006; Gay, 2010).

Teacher recognition of social justice issues can lead to more culturally relevant curriculum that both values community and helps the student form an identity that results in appropriate capital in the higher education field (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Yosso 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Clegg, 2011). A large body of research exists on culturally responsive curriculum, both in general and in music (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2010; Lind & McKoy, 2016; Berman, 2017; Munnelly 2017). Several studies demonstrate the utility of making such curricular changes in a music program. A small study of a UK conservatoire found that the conservative nature of the music curriculum excluded certain classes based on their lack of cultural capital (Legg, 2012). One case study shows that teachers who are able to empathize with the musical worlds of their students and overcome their dominant habitus will be more likely to recontextualize the music curriculum to more closely reflect the interests and habitus of students (Wright, 2008). Another small study in Norway demonstrated that popular music can be successfully added to the curriculum, but doing so may cause limitations in academic openness and create undesirable power hierarchies, since the more dominant classes or educators and the more dominant academic institutions will be the ones determining the types of popular music to include in the curriculum (Dyndahl et al., 2017). Another

study suggests that instructors of classical music would benefit from more varied teaching opportunities and mentoring to learn alternative teaching methods, rather than using the same methods that they were taught when they were students, which leads to a master-apprentice environment that limits the diversity and pedagogical innovation for students (Haddon, 2009). These pedagogical approaches likely can be replicated in studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of culturally responsive curriculum in community college music major programs.

Research shows that there is value to an examination of the social justice aspects of curriculum, and that it is possible to change the curriculum to meet the interests of students. Curriculum based on the Western-art-music-informed habitus can be recontextualized if instructors learn to empathize with and support student interests (Wright, 2008). The use of informal pedagogy, which is supported by music researchers (Karlsen, 2010; Irwin, 2016), is one approach to such recontextualization. Adding fields such as rap into the music curriculum can influence social justice pedagogy in urban communities (Rashid, 2016). An examination of the whiteness of the music curriculum can lead to curricular changes (de Boise, 2016; Wagoner, 2014; Vaugeois, 2007; Picower, 2012). Acknowledging the African contributions to American music can also positively influence curriculum (Kindall-Smith, 2011).

There does not appear to be any significant research showing that teaching a culturally responsive curriculum to certain student demographics in music classes can improve outcomes. A recognition of the importance of social justice and the value of community cultural capital, however, can influence faculty to reflect upon the status quo and consider the development of more culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Yosso 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Clegg, 2011).

A Western classical music curriculum may result in a student with little to no classical music experience spending years learning about a style of music that is foreign to them and possibly tangential to the music they wish to create. With classical music and jazz being the least popular of any genre in the United States (Nielsen, 2017), an increased emphasis on social inequality, and federal and state demands for increased equity, faculty within music departments need to consider whether altering the traditional music curriculum may positively impact student outcomes .

## 2.3 Communities of practice

### 2.3.a Supporting the formation of CoPs and CoMPs

A community of practice (CoP) engages in the practice of a shared area of interest that defines the community and provides value to the members. It develops through situated learning activities and its members support and learn from one another (Wenger, 1998).

The characteristics of a community of music practice (CoMP), which support the characteristics of a CoP, include having a shared repertoire towards a shared goal (Waldron, 2009; Beineke, 2013; Partti, 2014), mutual engagement (Partti, 2014), and identity formation through membership and brokering (Morrison, 2001; Blair, 2008; Mantie and Tucker, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010; Partti, 2014; Luebke, 2013). At LACC, theory (harmony/musicianship) and performance (solo/ensemble) can be considered to be music genres within the curriculum and students within those areas of study can form separate CoMPs.

A recent comprehensive literature review of CoMPs, the benefits and challenges faced by members of those communities, and the situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation that occurs in those communities suggests that learning in a CoMP occurs socially and informs identity, and that the communities change over time (Zaffini, 2018). The Zaffini study considers what music educators can do to create their own CoMP—including having veteran educators mentor novice instructors, encouraging veteran teachers to be open to ideas from novice instructors, and allowing teachers of all levels to participate equally in the community—and as such it has indirect connections to my extended research questions on how to get students at the periphery of a community of practice to become legitimate participants.

Researchers have looked at the concept of legitimate peripheral participation within a CoMP, whereby students on the periphery become part of the music community. As with CoPs in general, the development of a CoMP occurs through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire (Kenny, 2014; Mantie & Tucker, 2008). Although Mantie and Tucker's (2008) work focuses on musicians after graduation, it is relevant to this study in concluding that becoming a member of a music community involves engagement in practices that are part of the real world of actual practice in the field of music; without this engagement in actual practice, students are likely to lose focus. The authors conclude that a music curriculum conceptualized in terms of legitimate peripheral participation would

provide the students with more clear connections between the field of music inside and outside of school.

Later researchers found that CoMPs exist within the various musical genres that exist in music education (Countryman, 2009; Hewitt, 2009a; Burnard, 2012). As with CoPs, a CoMP is based on apprenticeships with newcomers learning from and interacting with old-timers, forming networks that start on the periphery and gradually move towards full participation in the field. Through learning through observation, imitation, practice, and performance, peripheral students become members of the musical culture and develop their own identity within the CoMP (Nielsen, 2006, 2009; Nielsen & Pedersen, 2011).

### **2.3.b Entering a CoMP**

In alignment with Lave and Wenger's (1991) theories of situated learning, some LACC music students are able to see the value in the curriculum, learn by doing, become legitimate participants, and fully join the CoMP. Other students may succeed as participants in one area of study and not another, while many new music students remain on the periphery and do not engage in the CoMP. Numerous researchers have explored the conditions necessary for a music student to become a legitimate participant, including informal learning, the role of faculty, and music genres as sub-CoMPs.

#### **(a) Informal learning**

With modern technology students have access to all kinds of music, giving them a sophisticated musical knowledge acquired outside of school. Many students come to LACC having played informally in bands. Such students participate in popular music communities of practice, which teachers can utilize as part of informal learning within the college (Folkestad, 2006). Such informal learning may be a useful method for bridging the disconnect between student engagement in classical music and their ability to enter a CoMP.

A program that includes formal and informal learning may be useful as a way to engage students who have strong connections to music genres other than classical (Green, 2001; Green, 2008). Such a hybrid program may support engagement in multiple communities of practice, provide students with access to full members of the community, give them access the technology they need to make music, and offer them the support they need for active and conscious self-reflection (Karlsen, 2010). A music program

that combines formal and informal learning and that makes an effort to work across cultural boundaries may also support multicultural students in forming their social, cultural, and musical identities (Karlsen, 2014).

### **(b) Music genres as communities of practice**

Musical fields provide social and cultural capital, and validate identity (Hewitt, 2009a). Students are likely to benefit from a music program that embodies salient aspects of the CoMP that a student is interested in pursuing, rather than simply adopting normative practices (Hargreaves & Marshall, 2003). Furthermore, students in different genres, such as classical and non-classical music students, have different motivations, expectations, and fears concerning their study of music in higher education (McMillan, 1997; Lebler & Carey, 2007, Creech et al., 2008b, Lebler et al., 2009).

Classical and non-classical students perceive themselves differently in a higher education setting (Creech et al., 2008a; Hewitt, 2009b; Welch et al., 2008). Classical students are more interested in notation and aural skills, and they have a stronger desire to excel musically and technically. Non-classical students are interested in memorization and improvisation. The studies found no significant differences between the two types of students in terms of how they view practicing and lessons. The implication is that assessment in music education should differ based on genre or field affiliation, be it classical, jazz, or popular music (Stanley et al., 2002; Hewitt, 2004; Hewitt, 2009b). These findings are similar to the current study of LACC music students, who identify with a variety of genres besides classical music and have a variety of viewpoints on the function of these genres in their musical studies.

Students with an interest in and experience with popular music are likely to find classically based theory to be disconnected from what they consider to be the practice of music. As such they will struggle to connect to the community of music theory practice, which forms an integral part of a community college music program. These students, however, may be able to define their identity in the performance community of practice. As students participate in a variety of fields or hierarchies, they learn their position and figure out what they need to learn. Learning experiences and opportunities of a hierarchical organization in a music program can be an important factor in shaping student learning (Perkins, 2013). A variety of learning experiences allows the student to learn in a way that involves the whole person and includes both intellectual and embodied knowing (Conkling, 2016). Without a way of

being and the establishment of an identity, students will not join a community of practice, since learning is inseparable from developing a sense of identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Most of the research done on CoMPs focuses on successful students who remain and succeed in a music program. Research on those who do not succeed can determine whether the inability to join the community of practice results from an inability to connect with the curriculum and a lack of identity, causing the student to remain at the periphery and ultimately withdraw from the program.

## **2.4 Emotional experiences in education**

Musical patterns elicit emotions in listeners regardless of their level of music education (Elliott, 2009; Miu, Pitur, & Szentagotai-Tatar, 2016). Although the emotions that music elicits can be a powerful tool to maintain and increase student engagement, research suggests that teachers limit the learning experiences of their students because they are unable to find ways to include the musical interests of students in their curriculum, resulting in students prematurely ending their musical studies (Sloboda, 2001). A lack of emotional engagement may even deter students who love music from choosing to study music. Although the freedom to listen to and produce music is a key component of human wellbeing, certain types of music students may reject the study of music due to their adaptive preferences (Nussbaum, 2006 in Watts & Ridley, 2012).

Research suggests that a music student will benefit from emotional learning. StGeorge, Holbrook, and Cantwell (2014) find that students have a stronger musical learning experience, are more motivated, and are more likely to continue their musical studies if they have an emotional affinity with the music they are studying. Research suggests that musical training and emotional sensitivity are connected, but that such sensitivity may be more related more to a person's overall emotional intelligence than to the training itself (Trimmer & Cuddy, 2008). A related study reveals that gender, age, and personal experiences play key roles in shaping one's emotional engagement with music (de Boise, 2016).

Social and emotional learning is concerned with helping students understand, manage, and maintain their emotions to help them successfully accomplish tasks and goals (Zins & Elias, 2006; Durlak et al., 2011). The related concept of emotional intelligence is defined as having the ability to perceive emotion, use emotion to facilitate thought, and understand and control emotions for personal growth (Corcoran & Tormey, 2010, 2012, 2013; Cougar Hall & West, 2011; Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012; Hen & Walter,



2012; Kocoglu, 2011; Perry et al., 2004). A meta-analysis of grade school SEL programs in the United States showed significant improvements in student social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance (Durlak et al., 2011).

Much of the literature on emotional learning in music focuses on the development of skills to influence success in teaching by music instructors (Mortiboys, 2005; MacLeod & Walter, 2011; Miksza, Roeder, & Biggs, 2010; Geng, 2018), rather than the concept of how students can become emotionally involved in their own learning and the impact of that type of learning on student success. The ability to experience various emotions in music is influenced by exposure to, learning about, and connection to the music (StGeorge, Holbrook, & Cantwell, 2014). Students entering a music program that is based on a genre of music with which they have no previous exposure will struggle to connect with that music in an emotional way. For these students, challenges with emotional learning and the development of emotional intelligence may decrease motivation.

#### **2.4.a Supporting emotional experiences in music programs**

Existing research suggests numerous ways to foster emotional experiences in music programs, including promoting empathy by engaging students in a shared experience (Laird, 2015), integrating cognition, physicality, emotions, and the social aspects of music in lesson plans (Richerme, 2015), teacher modeling to set an example and help the student develop characteristics that will enable them to be passionate (Magid & Lim, 2010), and focusing on how to teach students to be more aware, better able, and more sensitive to listening to and performing musical expressions of emotion (Elliott, 2009).

By focusing on the type of teaching required, higher education music programs can consider the conditions that will support music students having emotional experiences. One such approach is the creation of a safe space, where students are more likely to have emotional learning experiences, which can provide increased motivation and engagement (Hendricks, Smith, & Stanuch, 2014). A recent study explores whether emotional intelligence can be developed in undergraduate music education majors using an emotional intelligence development framework to increase self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (McGinnis, 2018). Although the goal is improved music teaching, rather than towards improving student success, the results indicate an improvement in emotional intelligence is possible by using the framework.

Emotional learning or affective experiences in music (having an affinity for music or a relationship or connection with music playing and learning) are more likely to come through learning an instrument and evaluative performance on that instrument, rather than in related music classes such as theory or musicianship (Mitchell, 2017; StGeorge, Holbrook, & Cantwell, 2014). Having an affinity for music, which comes in part from having a direct connection to an instrument, gives students motivation to learn and to continue their studies. This research supports the concept that theory/musicianship and performance success rates should be considered as separate determining factors for success in a college music program.

Approaches to increase emotional learning in music include the integration of informal pedagogy into teacher training that can be passed along to students and the recontextualization of the curriculum to more closely align with student interests (Wright, 2008; Finney & Philpott, 2010; Karlsen, 2010; Irwin, 2016). Finney and Philpott (2010) argue that curriculum is more relevant when supporting the making of music, or creativity, rather than on the playing of music, or technique. Although technique and emotion are often seen as two distinct components of music performance, the traditional higher education music curriculum focuses on technique, especially at the early stages of a music program. Faculty who encourage emotional learning along with technical learning will provide a student with increased motivation and support their engagement in a CoMP.

Emotional learning can be supported in a music curriculum through the inclusion of community music, which has aspects of music therapy and social music, and considers how music fits into various social and educational contexts. Students in a higher education community music program are able to develop dispositions towards, energy, and commitment and qualities of emotional learning (Mellor, 2011). Mellor's study is based on Barnett's (2009) theory of knowing and being, whereby engagement and emotional learning can occur when the student has a sense of community and a sense of 'being.' The research found that students in a community music program believe the pedagogy to be inclusive and supporting the creation of a shared musical space that encourages participation, levels power relationships, and allows the student to feel safe. Community music pedagogy provided the students with life skills, a musical identity, and increased employability as part of their overall music degree. The work-based learning they engaged in during their studies expanded what they thought music and musicians could do, increasing engagement. The suggestion is that community music, which considers music in more in terms of application and practice, has an important role to play in higher music education and help match the strengths of music students with what society needs from them. Rather

than a focus on performance in the traditional concert hall, community music curriculum is more likely to align with the strengths of students and can provide a wider application of music learning.

#### **2.4.b Gaps in the literature**

Research on emotion and music curriculum tends to focus on early childhood education rather than higher education. Perhaps the assumption is that students who enter higher education already have emotional intelligence and there is no need to develop curriculum that supports such basic emotional learning about music. There does not appear to be much research on emotional engagement in community college music programs based on Western classical music with a student body that does not possess significant cultural capital in that field. Although research has been done on which parts of the music curriculum might best support emotional experiences, there does not appear to be much research on the benefits of music teachers asking their students to consider the curriculum in terms of their emotions or how to create an environment in which students can learn about classical music in an emotional rather than theoretical way.

Although research has been done that provides practical suggestions for creating safe spaces to support music learning, there does not appear to be much research demonstrating the effectiveness of such safe spaces on retention and success. There does not appear to be much research on whether students who lack an emotional connection to music due to their cultural capital want to learn emotionally or believe they would benefit from environments that encourage emotional experiences. Similarly, there does not appear to be much research on whether emotional experiences are more likely to occur when a student feels part of a CoMP and whether such emotional experiences allow students to become legitimate participants in higher education communities of practice.

Although there are many studies demonstrating the benefits of exposure to and familiarity with Western classical music in childhood on one's future learning, there do not appear to be many studies done on whether exposure to Western classical music early on in childhood benefits those students who begin formal studies as adults. Similarly, there do not appear to be many studies done on whether exposure to any kind of music early on in childhood benefits those students who begin formal studies as adults.

Although research shows that culturally-sensitive curriculum may allow students to participate within a CoMP, there does not appear to be much research on whether emotional experiences can help a music

student experience feelings of legitimacy within a community of practice, or whether such curriculum can help a student move from a theoretical and procedural understanding of music to an emotional understanding of music.

My research attempts to contribute to filling gaps in the literature in two key areas related to higher education music programs. The research considers the theory that music students can increase their cultural capital and explores the related concept of how students utilize their existing cultural capital as they initially engage with the curriculum. The research also considers situated learning in music programs, including whether emotional experiences support students in crossing boundaries and becoming legitimate participants in a CoMP.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter describes the process and justification for my methodology, including the utility of using a qualitative case study to consider my research questions, data collection, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

### 3.1 The choice of a qualitative case study

The case study is a research method based on observations of a specific contemporary phenomenon. Yin (2009) states that case study research may be the appropriate choice when “(1) your main research questions are “how” or “why” questions, (2) you have little or no control over behavioral events, and (3) your focus of study is a contemporary (as opposed to entirely historical) phenomenon—a ‘case.’” (p.3). For Yin, the case study can provide a deeper understanding of a program or organization and can help the researcher to understand it better. Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that a case study can provide a comprehensive understanding of a particular group, and Becker (1970) argues that the case study can support the researcher in developing general theories about social structures and processes. Each of these factors is consistent with the approach I took to my research.

My single-case design focused on a representative cohort of music students nearing completion of their degree in the LACC Music Department. Among Merriam’s (1998) definitions of different types of case studies is the ethnographic case study, which focuses on the culture of a group, such as can be found in a classroom. My particular case study design allowed me to explore the culture of a single group of LACC music students to understand how student capital impacts engagement with communities of music practice and the music curriculum. The student participants formed a typical case, as similar cohorts of students enter the program each year at LACC.

My goal was to collect sufficient qualitative data from a variety of music students who were at a similar stage in their community college education to have been impacted by their experiences in the program. Validity was strengthened by collecting data through the same set of questions from a sufficiently representative sample of students (see section 3.3). The data provided in the case study would allow me to make context-specific comparisons of the descriptions of the experiences and level of engagement of the students I interviewed, so that I could further consider the impact of the existing policies on student engagement and consider potential changes to those policies.

By comparing and analyzing the stories of individual students, I was able to understand what I was researching, develop a better understanding of the impact of the structure of the curriculum of the LACC music department on the engagement of a cohort of music students, and to use my findings to make evidence-based recommendations. I increased the validity of the data through triangulation: I used the responses from each individual student and comparisons and similarities between the accounts of the students, and then compared those results with the wider literature.

Case study research has been used by numerous researchers as a method for exploring undergraduate music major identities in communities of practice (Austin et al., 2012; McClellan 2014; McClellan, 2018). I chose the approach because I knew it would allow me to gather relevant and useful data to determine whether the capital of LACC music students contributes to their level of engagement with the curriculum. By hearing firsthand about the backgrounds, assumptions, aspirations, and learning experiences of individual students in the music program, I would be able to determine their individual level of engagement with the curriculum, and the key factors that contributed to their levels of engagement with the LACC music program. I would then be able to find the similarities between student experiences and use the data to make more informed conclusions about my findings.

### **3.2 The benefits of using a qualitative case study**

I structured my interviews to allow me to collect student responses to my leading prompts in their own words, which was my primary goal in data collection. Questions in the interviews were general and open-ended. I avoided leading questions intended to generate particular responses as I did not want to influence how individual students would respond, which themes would emerge, and where the data would ultimately lead. The individual stories of the students I interviewed were compared with one another, providing an analysis that allowed for a holistic interpretation and ultimately led to my conclusions. By relying on the students own accounts, I ensured that my analysis and subsequent interpretation came directly from the data. In this way I was able to remove myself from the data, which was important since I was a longtime faculty member in the music department in which I was collecting the data.

My approach allowed me to gather data on the cultural capital of each participant, their level of legitimate peripheral participation within the theory and performance curriculum, and whether they had emotional experiences in any component of the curriculum. My initial analysis revealed that cultural

capital and legitimate peripheral participation in CoMPs would in fact be meaningful ways for me to further analyze and make conclusions about the journeys of the participants in the study.

### **3.3 Purposeful sampling strategy**

A number of researchers promote the use of the purposeful sampling method for case studies (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2005, 2006; Yin, 2009, 2011, 2014). The traditional goal of such a purposeful sampling strategy is to select “individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell 2007, p.125).

In adherence with the purposeful sampling method, I arranged for one-on-one interviews with 15 full-time, transfer-oriented students who were enrolled in the music major program at LACC and who matched the demographic characteristics of a typical cohort of transfer-oriented music majors based on gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background. The aim was to interview a representative sample of students based on factors including music education and experience prior to entering the program, preferred music genres before and after entering the program, reasons for entering the music program, length of study in the program, and short-term and long-term educational and musical goals. I took this approach to ensure that the voices and experiences of students with a wide range of levels of cultural capital were heard and to ensure that the sampling indeed was representative.

I used a two-phased approach to screen the candidates (Yin, 2008), which was necessary as there are a large number of music students enrolled in the program. I first collected quantitative data provided by the college to determine the characteristics of typical LACC students. I then use that sampling method to find participants who had completed enough classes in the music major program to be able to provide insight into their experiences with the curriculum, and also to match the demographic characteristics of a typical cohort of music majors. I emailed students who fit these characteristics, reminding them that they did not have to respond (see ethical considerations in section 3.6), and the first 15 students who responded and agreed to participate created a sufficiently representative group of students who could inform my research questions. These 15 students met the characteristics of typical LACC students in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and educational background and goals (Table 1.0).

	<b>LACC student data (2017)</b>	<b>Research sample</b>
<b>Average age range</b>	21-28	18-31 (average age: 23)
<b>Gender</b>	50% female	53% female
<b>Ethnicity</b>	45% Hispanic, 30% Caucasian, 25% unspecified	40% Hispanic, 25% Caucasian, 20% Asian, 7% Black, 7% Mixed-race
<b>Socioeconomic status</b>	53% self-reported on financial aid*	71% low-SES, the rest middle-SES
<b>Educational background</b>	Completed public high school	All completed high school, 93% in public schools
<b>Educational goals</b>	100% degree, transfer, employment	100% degree, transfer, employment

Table 1.0: Comparison of student profiles of a typical LACC music cohort and the research sample (Los Angeles City College Program Review Data, 2017)

\*The college tracks socioeconomic status through the number of students on financial aid.

**3.4 Data collection process**

**3.4.a. Contextual data**

Quantitative data were gathered to develop a student profile for a traditional cohort of music majors at LACC based on age, gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, as well as success data at the course and program level. The data were taken from a publicly accessible website that is generated by the LACC office of research and used for annual program review by each department at the college.

**3.4.b Interviews**

Face-to-face individual interviews generated useful data as they provided the opportunity for prepared questions to allow the student to consider key issues and to generate reliable data that could be analyzed for similarities and differences. Additionally, the individual interview was appropriate because of the personal and subjective nature of some of the questions regarding the student’s emotional engagement with the curriculum.

Oltmann’s (2016) review of the factors that may affect a face-to-face qualitative interview include time and financial costs, limited geographic distribution of respondents, interviewee reaction to being asked sensitive or controversial topics, and interaction effects. As the focus of my research was the student experience in a college in which I work, I did not have time or cost issues, and the limited geographic distribution of the respondents was desired. My interview questions avoided sensitive topics and interviewees knew they could opt out of the study at any point (see Ethical Considerations in Section 3.6)



I chose a semi-structured approach to the interview as I wanted to collect as much data as I could within the given interview time, to ensure key issues were addressed, to provide the participants the freedom to express themselves, and to allow those students who may initially have been hesitant in sharing information with me the time to feel more comfortable with the interview process. The semi-structured interviews allowed for questions to be clarified and followed up and gave the participants time to consider and reconsider the questions, especially since I was asking them for recollections, opinions, and impressions that may only have surfaced after further consideration during the semi-structured interviews. Interviews were recorded to allow for word-for-word transcription. I decided that the interviews with these 15 students were sufficient to overcome the subjective nature of individual personal accounts and provide sufficient collective data for me to complete the case study.

### **3.4.c Interview questions**

The interview questions were designed so that I ultimately could interpret the student's cultural capital, level of legitimate peripheral participation with the theory and performance curriculum, and whether they had emotional experiences as they engaged with the curriculum. The interviews were designed to provide factual data (biographical information, progress in the music program, goals) and allow the students to be able to tell their stories in their own words through personal reflections about their level of engagement with the curriculum. Participants were asked during recorded, semi-structured interviews to reflect on how their ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, education, and musical interests influenced their educational goals and shaped their experiences in the harmony, musicianship, solo instrumental/voice, and performance classes they had taken at the school. (Ethical considerations are addressed in section 3.6.)

The prompts were intentionally designed to be open rather than leading. I followed a traditional ethnographic 'funnel' interview model by beginning with general questions that then led to more specific questions (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Participants were interviewed individually, and all interviews assumed the same format (see Appendix C).

### **3.5 Data analysis techniques**

The interviews were transcribed to ensure an accurate record. The word-for-word transcription provided internal validity of the students accounts to make sure they were consistent and not self-contradictory. Following these word-for-word transcripts, I created an Excel spreadsheet that included

the distinguishing characteristics of each participant and the interview topic, relevant quotes from the student on each topic, and my notes of relevant details that I discovered in the transcripts. Saldana (2015) describes transcripts as being text-based qualitative data that can be coded and analyzed using paper and pencil. Rather than paper and pencil, I instead used the Excel spreadsheet as a data matrix that would allow me to collect the structural codes, thematic codes, and memos typically associated with a codebook (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Saldana (2015) actually recommends using Excel spreadsheets as they provide “excellent organization with individual cells” (p. 29), which I found to be the case.

I decided not to use commonly used computer assisted qualitative data analysis software to create reports and assist with coding for two reasons. My transcriptions resulted in a limited dataset that could be analyzed to determine themes through highlighting, bolding, and underlining significant quotes, such as described by Boyatzis (1998). Additionally, I was working with a culturally diverse set of participants who, because of that diversity, used key words and phrases that would be difficult to delimit to key word searches using data analysis software.

The initial approach of separating interview responses to each interview question by the levels and types of capital they possessed allowed for open coding of the raw data by categorizing students based on their description of their experiences in their own words (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Through this analysis I determined student level of capital and how that capital pertained to the experiences they described within the interviews. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe a method of processing text by cutting and sorting quotes and expressions into piles of things that go together. I used this technique by cutting, pasting, and arranging quotes and expressions in the matrix according to their similarities. I further analyzed the text using many of the methods identified by Bernard, Wutich, and Ryan (2016), including looking for word repetitions and identifying the same words used in responses to the same prompt, identifying similar metaphors and analogies used by various students, and highlighting in my memos the similarities and differences in responses based on student characteristics and their own words from the transcripts.

A related matrix allowed me to consider the journeys of students as being in three distinct groups: whether a student did not transfer or complete a program, successful students who entered the program with some previous classical music experience, and successful students who entered the

program without previous classical music experience. I was able to sort the data by 10 factors: SES, previous experience in music, previous experience with classical music, external obligations, engagement with the performance CoMP, engagement with the theory CoMP, transformation of habitus, and emotional learning experiences. In this way I converted the raw transcript data into variable data, allowing for a within-group comparison (Bernard, Wutich, & Ryan, 2016). Through axial coding I was able to piece the data together to create categories and subcategories that grouped participants based on their background and how they described their engagement with the curriculum through the three stages of communities of practice: from novice, towards legitimate participation, and in some cases to full participation. The approach allowed me to identify and compare the themes that emerged from the data analysis, and consider the role of SES, cultural capital, entry into theory and performance CoMPs, transformation of habitus, and level and impact of emotional learning on student engagement with the curriculum. The detailed results of the analysis are described in chapters 6 and 7.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations in methodologies including qualitative case study research include those related to topic relevance and design, recruitment, collection of data, and portrayal of participants (Haines, 2017). Fleming and Zegwaard's (2018) ethical considerations in work-integrated learning research, which often involves the researcher's own students and as such are quite appropriate to my study, include considering the issues during the design of the research approach, getting ethical committee approval, informed consent of participants, recognizing conflict of interest, risk of harm, and confidentiality. These considerations informed the ethics of my research.

#### **a. Research relevance and approvals**

My research is relevant in that it enabled me to make recommendations for ways to improve the student learning experience. One-on-one interviews with current LACC music students provided the data needed to study my case. I chose a purposeful sampling strategy to ensure that the participants were relevant and appropriate to the population being researched. Students were told ahead of time that they were randomly approached in order to make up a sample that matched the demographic characteristics of a typical music cohort. Participants were told that the outcomes of this research were intended to inform future higher education research and influence program development at LACC and other music schools.

Ethical committee approval came from senior administrators at LACC, who provided written approval for the study (Appendix A), and an ethics committee at the University of Liverpool (Appendix B).

#### **b. Recruitment and informed consent**

Informed consent is the cornerstone of ethical research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Prospective student participants were made aware of why they were being asked to volunteer, the goal of the research, and that they would be selected to match the demographic characteristics of a typical cohort of music majors. They were told they could withdraw at any time; that identity would remain confidential; that they had rights under the United Kingdom Data Protection Act (given that the research was conducted in pursuit of a UK qualification); that the data would remain private, confidential, and secure; and who they could contact at LACC and the University of Liverpool if they had any concerns at any time. The students were made aware of the parameters of the study through an approval form, were made aware of potential risks, were told that by participating in the study they could benefit from the experience by having an opportunity to consider how emotional engagement could impact their performance and musical studied, and that their real names would not be used in the thesis. Participants provided their consent by indicating that they understood the purpose and expected benefits of the research, the extent of their involvement should they choose to participate, and that participation was completely voluntary and that they were opting in.

The first 15 students who agreed to participate comprised a sufficiently representative sample for the size of the study. After thanking the students for their interest, I notified any students who said they wanted to participate that they would only be needed for the study if I needed additional participants. I received informed consent from each participant.

#### **c. Conflict of interest**

Given my role as chair of the department on which I was doing my research, I was especially cognizant of how power imbalance could influence the process. Throughout the process of contacting potential participants, I took appropriate steps to ensure that I did not use my role as chair of the department to exert power or place undue influence on the participants.

One solution to a conflict of interest based on power differential is to remove the source of the power differential, such as a teacher/researcher removing themselves from being an assessor of the student

participant's work (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018). As I stated to the students in my participant information sheet, "I want to make it clear that although I am the LACC Music Department Chair, there should be no concern that not participating in the study may affect your grades or standing as a student." Although I am the chair of the department, I have not taught for many years; I did not teach any of the potential participants and I had no influence on their progress or the grades they received in any of their classes.

All the students I contacted were given time to reflect on their decision to take part and were made aware that participation would not impact their standing as a student at LACC.

#### **d. Portrayal and confidentiality**

I did not want participants to be identified from the data included in my thesis. Throughout this thesis I use authentic quotations from the participants to provide primary data in support of my arguments and to allow readers to make their own interpretation of the data. I am also aware that some of the findings might be sensitive to the participants, especially to those students who ultimately might be portrayed as not having succeeded in the program. I made sure not to include any specific details that could possibly lead to a participant being clearly identified. I assigned pseudonyms to the participants. I found the most popular baby names by gender in California in 1994 (United States Social Security Administration, 2019), which was average year of birth of the participants when I interviewed them, and I removed any duplications. I input the names of the male and female participants into an online list randomizer (random.org), did the same with the most popular names by gender, and matched the lists in order, thereby assigning a random pseudonym to each participant.

All the data remains confidential on a password protected computer, including the recordings, transcripts, and my data matrices.

## Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

Student engagement with a community college music transfer program curriculum is impacted by student cultural capital and the cultural capital of the music curriculum itself. Students who succeed are able to increase their level of engagement with the music program. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (1977, 1990) provides a framework for understanding how students use their capital when they enter a music program and how the development of their capital impacts their engagement with the curriculum. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's concepts of situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation (1991) and Wenger's concept of communities of practice (1998) provide a framework for exploring how students are able to use their capital to engage with the various communities of practice that comprise the music program. My research uses these two theoretical frameworks in an attempt to better understand how a student's level of cultural capital impacts their ability to become legitimate participants in communities of music practice, and whether cultural capital and participation in CoMPs is related to a student's emotional engagement with the curriculum.

### 4.1 Forms of capital; field and habitus

#### 4.1.a Capital

Bourdieu defines *capital* as accumulated experiences that allow a person to take ownership of and enter into social structures (Bourdieu, 1986). Capital provides value to the holder and the amount of capital that someone has impacts their power and position in economic and social structures. For Bourdieu, the different types and subtypes of capital form the structure of the social world. The three fundamental types of capital are economic, social, and cultural.

Economic capital can be converted into money. Most students choose to enter higher education with the intended outcome of finding a job with good pay and opportunities for career advancement (Strada-Gallup Education Consumer Survey, 2018). Bourdieu argues that people with a higher socioeconomic status are able to acquire more capital than people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, giving them an advantage in areas, including education (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

Social capital comes from connections, networks, and relationships. Social capital provides the holder with recognition and trust, proves their legitimacy within a social group, and provides value as it can influence status and power, including the possibility of converting it into economic capital. Social capital

comes through sustained efforts to engage in social exchanges, create cultural goodwill, and to make oneself welcome by a group (Bourdieu, 1986).

#### **4.1.b Cultural capital**

Bourdieu uses the concept of *cultural capital* extensively in his discussions on education. He defines cultural capital as a type of knowledge and resource acquired through family and social experiences that allow an individual to appreciate cultural relations and artefacts, thereby impacting educational attainment (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu, 1993). The cultural capital acquired through upbringing—including such characteristics as knowledge, ability, taste, style, and mannerisms—changes based on one’s social class and thus provides each individual with a unique set of credentials and cultural assets based on that upbringing. A student’s taste or preference for a specific music genre, for example in classical music, can provide that student with opportunities to acquire cultural capital that they can utilize and benefit from when they enter a higher education music program.

Cultural capital can exist in three forms (Bourdieu, 1986). The embodied state are long-lasting personal qualities, such as knowing how to play an instrument, being able to read music, or having an accent when singing in a second language. The objectified state are objects and artifacts that are accrued during one’s experiences in the culture, such as the physical instrument itself, a music textbook, or a collection of music scores. The institutionalized state is a qualification or credential, such as an Associate of Arts degree, that provides the holder with authority, proof of their value to the culture, and recognition by the institution that one possesses the requisite cultural capital.

Additionally, cultural capital can be converted into other forms of capital. In its institutionalized state in the form of degrees or by providing a sense of identity with others who hold the same cultural capital, it can be used as social capital. In a music education program, students in the same discipline or who play the same instrument form groups or social networks based on their shared capital that can contribute to educational success and enhance one’s social standing.

##### **4.1.b.1 Cultural capital and inequality**

Cultural capital can explain the unequal achievement of students coming from different social classes (Bourdieu, 1986). For Bourdieu, educational institutions expect students to hold the cultural capital that only comes from the dominant culture in society:

By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture. (Bourdieu, 1973)

Bourdieu argues that the dominant economic class imposes its own culture and ideology onto the systems of society (Bourdieu, 1984). The educational system is designed to support the dominant culture, putting students with divergent cultural capital at a disadvantage in terms of access and the social mobility that comes with education. As the educational system is based on “the hereditary transmission of cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1986, p.48), those not possessing such cultural capital are less likely to succeed and achieve social mobility. Socioeconomic status and hierarchies influence one’s knowledge, ability, taste, style, and mannerisms. Cultural capital thus reinforces and reproduces social hierarchies based on how well someone can master the practices and symbols of the dominant culture (Bourdieu, 1984).

Indeed, numerous studies over the past decades have argued that students acquiring appropriate cultural capital from their family in their upbringing are more likely than students who do not acquire such cultural capital to meet standards, achieve higher grades, go to college, and complete programs of study (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2002; Jaeger, 2009; Tramonte & Willms, 2009; Jaeger & Mollegaard, 2017). The concepts of embodied, objectified, and institutionalized cultural capital also have been used to determine the value of an education in terms of knowledge and future employment (Claussen & Osborne, 2012).

Although cultural capital is a resource that can be used and transformed into another type of capital, socioeconomic factors can limit the amount of cultural capital for some social classes. The possession of cultural capital is unevenly distributed in society, resulting in power struggles and the possibility of exclusion and exploitation of those who do not possess the required cultural capital.

One response to inequality in education is culturally responsive teaching, which is defined as the use of “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2010, p.31). Studies have demonstrated that culturally responsive teaching can help instructors connect with students and can inform and enhance student outcomes (Leigh Hamm Forell, 2006) and that providing



specialized educational approaches to diverse or marginalized music students can create equal learning opportunities and shape identities (Watts & Ridley, 2012).

#### **4.1.f Field**

For Bourdieu, society is comprised of various spheres of action, which he labeled fields. The *field* is an arena where people can utilize their capital to gain status and power. These fields, such as science, art, music, and education, have specific forms of capital and can contain various subfields. People entering a field familiarize themselves with the practices of the field and find their place within the field, resulting in power struggles as people use their capital to stake claims within the field due to the unequal distribution of capital between members of the field (Bourdieu, 1986). In the field of the social classes, for example, people “wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital” (p.250). Power struggles occur between members of the field competing for resources.

Individuals progress within a field based on how much social and cultural capital they possess. Bourdieu (1973) describes how individuals who possess cultural capital of the dominant culture can use their cultural capital to secure advantages within the educational field. A specific type of cultural capital, for example classical music, can provide the holder with advantages when they enter higher education. In order to find a place in a field, the individual must use their capital to engage and successfully interact with the established practices of the field. Jensen (2006) summarizes Bourdieu as suggesting three criteria for the existence of a field: the existence of various people in stable relations of power with each other, the existence of a certain amount of autonomy, and a demonstrated existence of a form of capital that is specific to the field.

The practices of a field can change. Bourdieu provides the example of visual artists working to overturn the artistic approach of the previous generation, establishing a new dominant practice within the field. Over time, a new generation of ‘avant-garde’ artists work against the established positions in the art field (Bourdieu & Johnson, 1993). The history of Western classical music history can be considered in the same way, with Renaissance composers thinking of themselves as being reborn from the lacuna of the dark age, galant artists labeling the previous generation as a ‘misshapen pearl’ (Portuguese *borrocco*, leading to the term Baroque), and modern composers writing in a consciously anti-Romantic style. The history of Western music shows the continuous reestablishment of the dominant culture.

#### 4.1.g Habitus

The way people perceive themselves and their place in the world, their *habitus*, is defined by past experiences and the amount of cultural capital they possess (Bourdieu, 1993). Habitus is a habit or a disposition that helps people make sense of the world and informs their actions and their perception of their actions. Habitus is “durable and transposable” (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990, p.35). It is durable because it forms over a long period of time starting through upbringing, culture, and education; and it is transposable (or transferable) because people in the same social class will view themselves in the similar way. In the field of higher education, habitus is a physical embodiment of one’s cultural capital that informs how someone reacts to a certain situation, like a feeling and comfort level one has for how to respond correctly in certain social environments, a sense that provides a feeling of knowledge. Habitus is an acceptance of, or adjustment to, the relevant field which may be defined by other forms of capital. Habitus occurs like a second nature or a routine and is expressed in tastes, appearances, and how people interpret others and act in social situations. Habitus results from the internalization of one’s culture starting from childhood. As such, habitus is “society written into the body, into the biological individual” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 63).

Habitus is important to the maintenance and reproduction of class and social hierarchies, since social groups have different habitus that shapes their thoughts and actions (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus is formed due to prolonged exposure with the culture of a particular social class. The identity of the dominant class is formed through people with a shared habitus. It is the “immediate adherence...to the tastes and distastes, sympathies and aversions, fantasies and phobias, which more than declared opinions, forges the unconscious unity of a class” (Bourdieu, 1984, p.77).

For Bourdieu, taste is a result of class-based habitus. One’s taste, especially in terms of aesthetics in art, is shaped by their position in the social class hierarchy. Bourdieu (1984) places a value judgement on musical taste, saying that “Nothing more clearly affirms one’s ‘class’, nothing more infallibly classifies, than tastes in music...there is no more ‘classificatory’ practice than concert-going, or playing a ‘noble’ instrument” (p.18). He accepts the narrative of classical music as being the taste of the dominant, upper class, arguing that an appreciation of classical music comes through exposure during upbringing, with people from lower socioeconomic families not having access to and therefore not forming a habitus appropriate to high art (Bourdieu, 1984).

#### **4.1.h Capital, field, and habitus in higher education music programs**

Music students with the appropriate habitus or with a willingness and opportunity to change their habitus participate in higher education to acquire more cultural and emotional capital in the fields and subfields that are relevant to their musical goals.

Bourdieu provides a framework for the student educational experience in terms of cultural capital, how students view themselves, and how they feel they can utilize their capital. Through self-awareness and a reflection on their habitus, a student can change their actions and thus transcend their habitus. Without such self-awareness, however, the student likely will choose the educational path with which they are most comfortable: they will choose an educational path that most closely aligns with their habitus.

In higher education music programs, students who have sufficient cultural capital to appreciate classical music and a familiarity or even participation in the subfield of classical music will have an advantage over those students who do not. Students whose cultural capital on entering higher education does not incorporate an appreciation of classical music, which is typically considered the dominant genre in the field defined by cultural capital, will either place a higher value on their lack of habitus and work to develop their disposition, or they will struggle to succeed.

The acquisition of cultural capital is what encourages music students to enter higher education and determines the extent of their engagement with the curriculum. Students who lack the appropriate cultural capital will feel unfamiliar with the curriculum and will have to negotiate the curriculum because it is not designed or intended to align with their level of capital. If there is a disconnect between the cultural capital of the curriculum and the student, the student might struggle to identify with the curriculum.

#### **4.1.i Critical analysis and evaluation**

A common critique of Bourdieu, which has been repeated for decades, is that the concept of habitus is deterministic (DiMaggio, 1979; Jenkins 1982; King, 2000; van Zanten 2005). This interpretation of Bourdieu's theory considers structures to be reproductive and that one is forever stuck with their habitus. Although much of Bourdieu's writing suggests such a deterministic interpretation, he also supports the role of individual agency on habitus, and states that habitus can respond to new situations (Bourdieu 1992). In my research I consider habitus as the physical embodiment of a student's cultural capital, in that it determines how a student reacts to their social environment and informs how

comfortable they feel within the educational system. My research shows that students choose LACC in part because the institutional level of capital matches their individual levels of capital. As cultural capital can increase throughout the student's education within the LACC curriculum, the student has the ability to transform their habitus in the field of music education.

Yang (2014) proposes several conditions for how habitus can transform: "change can only happen when there is an open system that provides possibilities; there also have to be 'interrupters' who take advantage of that open system; and, lastly, 'reflexivity' has to overtake the inertia generated by the dysfunctional habitus when the interrupters enter the new field." In short, "change is attainable in Bourdieusian theory if we can successfully identify the 'mismatch' between the field and habitus that can trigger the awakening of consciousness" (2014, p.1536). In this context, LACC students can change their habitus if: (a) there are multiple opportunities for students to connect to the curriculum, such as through theory and performance, (b) students are aware of the mismatch between their habitus and the field of music education and work to overcome the gap, and (c) students learn to value the curriculum and recognize that their own transformation is important and necessary. The structure of the LACC music educational system appears to support each of these conditions.

My research strongly suggests that the LACC music educational system reproduces social and cultural inequality. Within this context, however, students are able to acquire cultural capital through a transformation of their previous habits and dispositions, thereby changing their habitus. Through my research I suggest that by being aware of the impact of the dominance of the curriculum over students who enter with lower levels of cultural capital, faculty can work to change the structures of the system. Recognizing student capital as a strength rather than a deficit can lead to recontextualized teaching methods. The changing of student habitus can be facilitated by faculty who appreciate a student's existing cultural capital and by providing a context whereby students can recognize that change is necessary. Faculty have the opportunity to provide explicit pedagogy through awareness, empathy, culturally responsive lessons, and other forms of support to help the student recognize the value of transforming their habitus.

## **4.2 Situated learning; legitimate peripheral participation; community of practice**

### **4.2.a Situated learning**

Lave and Wenger describe learning as “an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, pp.49-50). For Lave and Wenger, learning occurs through social interactions and depends on the situation in which it takes place. *Situated learning* occurs by the acquisition of knowledge and understanding through shared activity and social participation, rather than by an individual learning facts.

Transformative learning comes through a meaningful social practice that engages students, gives them access to resources to enhance and encourage their participation, and allows them to identify with their learning through actions, discussions, and reflections that help them value their participation (Wenger, 1998). The practice must be meaningful for students, including participation in a community. The curriculum that a student engages with in education is situated and is experienced in the form of interactions with faculty and other students.

### **4.2.b Legitimate peripheral participation**

For Lave and Wenger, learning occurs when newcomers learn from others through participation in the social and cultural practices of a community. As the newcomer becomes more involved in the processes of the community, they participate at the periphery, then become more engaged, and ultimately they are recognized by the community as a legitimate participant. *Legitimate peripheral participation* thus describes the relationships between participants in the learning process and the components of the learning process (activities, identities, artifacts) that are formed as learning takes place in a social situation. Over time the participant becomes more engaged in the community, ultimately leading to mastery as a full participant in the practice. For Lave and Wenger, learning comes through evolving, renewed experiences that are situated within a social context. Novices learn from others through social relationships, first at the fringes of the shared community and then gradually moving to legitimate (feeling welcome and a sense of belonging) peripheral (part of a community) participation (in a social setting).

Lave and Wenger describe legitimate peripheral participation as the defining characteristic of learning through situated activities. They offer the term as a way to understand the learning process whereby individuals use situated learning to become full participants in their practice.

#### 4.2.c Community of practice

Learning through social situations results in the creation of a community that shares a “concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p.4). This *community of practice* implies “participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and for their communities” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p.98).

There are three elements that constitute a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The first is a shared *domain* of interest that defines the identity of the community and provides value to the participants. The domain defines the knowledge and skills that the community of practice will provide to its participants. In music education, for example, students begin as newcomers in the general subject of music, then progress to their specialized area that in most cases involve classical music. Students must be committed to the domain and develop competence in their specialized area in order to succeed. The second element is the *community* itself, which develops through group activities that allow students to support and learn from each other, share information, and build relationships. The students learn to care about their fellow participants and their relationships with each other, leading to a mutual commitment to the community. The third element is the *practice* in that the participants in the community are practitioners in their specialized area of interest. Over time the participants acquire resources that they can use and can share with others in the community, including activities, experiences, tools, and ways to learn. In music education, newcomers start by learning the language of music and then progress to more specialized applications that they can put into practice and can share with other participants in the practice. The community of practice is a way for students to actively engage with the educational curriculum.

A successful community of practice must be meaningful to the individuals in the community (Wenger, 1998). The community values the efforts of the newcomer and provides recognition of competence to the master. Participation in a community leads to reification (making something real; giving form to experiences) for the participant. Reification in education comes in the form of the curriculum, which can both facilitate and be a barrier to learning. The curriculum allows students to increase their level of engagement through identity transformation and meaningful membership in the social learning environment.

Communities of practice provide “shared histories of learning” (Wenger, 1998, p.86). Students learn how to engage in the shared community, develop mutual relationships, and discover the roles of members of the community and decide how they can benefit from other members of the community. Participants hold each other accountable and recognize that they are in a joint enterprise that allows them to support each other as they engage with the community. Participants also acquire a shared repertoire whereby they produce artifacts and tools to facilitate the learning process, create a shared history with other participants, and discover new ways of learning. Students can participate in multiple communities of practice at once (Wenger, 1998).

*Boundaries* are borders that determine whether a student will join a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). The crossing of a boundary results in learning, with inspiration resulting from the questioning of old ideas and the development of new ideas. Boundaries, however, can create challenges for the student and can prevent membership in a community. A broker, such as a teacher or another student, can help the student manage a boundary by adapting or simplifying the community of practice and communicating to the student in ways so they can understand the reasoning behind a practice that is creating the boundary.

Through the process of learning in a community of practice, individuals change who they are and create new personal histories. Over time the *identity* of a participant will change in terms of what they know, what they want to know, and how they know (Wenger, 1998). Learning is the process of transforming one’s identity. Identity informs how the student interacts with the community and how willing and capable they are in overcoming boundaries. For Lave & Wenger (1991), “Moving toward full participation in practice involves not just a greater commitment of time, intensified effort, more and broader responsibilities within the community, and more difficult and risky tasks, but, more significantly, an increasing sense of identity as a master practitioner” (p.111). Furthermore, educational institutions can be judged on the content of their teaching and the “experiments of identity that students can engage in while there” (Wenger, 1998, p.268).

Curriculum must support the formation of student identity or it will only engage those students who already have an identity of participation with the material. Rather than a list of subjects and learning outcomes, a meaningful curriculum supports student identity and leads to transformative experiences of participation for the student. The community of practice is organic, needs to evolve, and considers the

value provided to the participants (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002).

Curricular changes may be required to ensure that the education corresponds in a more meaningful way with what students need to succeed once they leave school, including identity transformation through a community of practice (Wenger, 2006). This transformation will be supported if the students feel that they are members of the community, are engaging with their peers, and are able to cross boundaries through the support of a broker, such as a peer or a teacher who can provide coordination, transparency, and negotiability.

In higher education, communities of practice support the formation of individual identity through social interactions that allow for the development of meaningful relationships with the material and with peers. Students who are unable to develop an understanding of their identity may struggle with the curriculum. Students who are unable to reconcile their school experiences with their perceptions of the careers in which they want to engage in may be unable to find meaning in the values and practices of music education.

Communities of practice are utilized in higher education through the formation of cohorts and peer-to-peer teacher training. The term more commonly used in formal educational settings is the *learning community*, which can be considered an educational community of practice. There are several elements that define a learning community, including the co-enrollment of a cohort of students into several courses, linked curriculum around a theme, collaboration between the various instructors to share assignments, active and collaborative learning, and additional student support (Weiss et al., 2015; Mayer et al., 2013).

#### **4.2.c.1 Communities of practice in music education**

Higher education music programs include a theory (harmony and musicianship) and performance component and students join communities of practice in both areas. The level of engagement with each community may vary based on whether the student is able to find meaning and reify their participation.

Some students are able to succeed in performance but not in theory, or vice versa, although success in both areas is required to complete the degree. Each area of study may be considered separate communities of practice with a boundary that is challenging to cross or even insurmountable for some students. Students who enter with a limited exposure to classical music may easily become legitimate



peripheral participants in the performance community of practice, which allows for more varied musical genres such as jazz and pop, but these students may have difficulties engaging with and valuing the theory curriculum, which is centered on Western classical music, resulting in challenges in peripherally and legitimately participating in that specific community. Students who become full participants in the general higher education music community of practice need to negotiate the boundaries between the various areas of study.

#### **4.2.c.2 Community of practice and inequality**

Wenger et al. (2002) acknowledge a downside to communities of practice in that they are “focused as much on the interest of those who benefited from the status quo as on innovation in their practice” and can “reflect the narrow, unjust prejudices of their society” (p.139) Education can be considered in terms of the formation of identities and modes of belonging of the students in a program. The Western classical tradition of music theory supports the creation of a community of music practice that rewards cultural capital. The more diverse curriculum in the performance area supports a community of music practice that supports students with both higher and lower levels of cultural capital.

Educators who are aware of the experiences of students can redesign curriculum as necessary towards improved relevancy and equity. Educators who ignore the experiences of students may be reflecting societal prejudice and merely validating the existing constructs of their community of practice. Some students have difficulties finding new ways of belonging or are unable to value, appreciate, or engage emotionally with the curriculum that is the foundation of a community of practice, resulting in issues of membership and an inability to gain legitimacy. For these students, the lack of legitimate peripherality can prevent legitimate participation, thereby raising the question of whether a more broadly legitimate curriculum would result in reduced attrition and increased success. In music curriculum in higher education, for example, the community of practice must value the expectations of the transfer institutions. As such the curriculum may reflect the prejudice of a music institution that is founded primarily on Western classical music.

The concept of the value, or lack of value, that students have with the domain of higher music education again raises the question of whether students would benefit from more culturally relevant curriculum that continues to satisfy the required learning outcomes as demanded by the overall community of higher education music practice. The benefits of a more culturally responsive curriculum and culturally responsive teaching in music require further research.

A student's level of cultural capital and their ability to become legitimate participants in communities of music practice impacts their emotional engagement with the curriculum. A culturally responsive curriculum that recognizes and aligns with the various levels of cultural capital of incoming students will help students in joining a community of practice and will increase their emotional engagement.

#### **4.2.d Critical analysis and evaluation**

Much of the critical research regarding Lave and Wenger's theories is aimed at the concept of legitimate peripheral participation.

Although not directly relevant to my study, one critique found in the literature is that Lave and Wenger have a simplified view that all workplaces are learning environments and that they ignore the complications of hierarchies and power relationships that exist in communities of practice (Fuller et al., 2005). A related concern is that the authors place an "exaggerated emphasis" on legitimate peripheral participation as being the central way for learning in all situations and environments, with the focus being exclusively on new learners rather than more experienced learners (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005, p.3). These critiques are not directly applicable to my research as I consider the role of legitimate peripheral participation specifically for new learners in a formal educational setting, not the workplace.

A second critique is that legitimate peripheral participation does not properly explain how learning occurs in a classroom that focuses on the teaching of facts or procedures, a setting in which a student is always going to be participating in the periphery of the practice (Boylan, 2010). A related critique suggests that learning as participation minimizes cognition and ignores that there are many ways in which students acquire knowledge (Yakhlef, 2010). My research considers the learning community in a larger sense than just the classroom, including social learning in study groups, informal learning in the practice room and with professors and colleagues, and the type of learning that occurs in rehearsals for ensemble performances. Furthermore, the music classroom infrequently involves rote learning and more typically includes active participation. My research is not concerned with classroom settings that support the transmission of facts, but in the overall learning experience.

A third critique is with Lave and Wenger's apparent lack of considering the importance of learning within a variety of cultural spaces. These critiques are more ways to redefine the community of practice in terms of affinity spaces (Gee, 2005), knowledge collectivities (Lindkvist, 2005), and knowledge

communities (Earl, 2001), among others. A more pointed critique of the spatial connotations implied in Lave and Wenger's definition of legitimate peripheral participation comes from Consalvo, Schallert, and Elias (2015) who find it "surprising, and troublesome to us, to think of students in a classroom as peripheral to the purpose of the classroom" (p.4). In my opinion these authors seem to misrepresent what it means for a student to be at the periphery. Students begin at the periphery not because they are peripheral to the purpose of the classroom, but because they do not yet feel a sense of belonging and identity within the social learning environment. Indeed, the student moving from peripheral to legitimate practitioner can be considered to be the true purpose of the classroom.

Consalvo, Schallert, and Elias (2015) propose six criteria that can be used to judge whether the concepts of legitimate peripheral participation and community of practice are being properly applied in research on teaching and learning (p.15):

- Principle 1: There is an established and bounded practice that creates and supports a community into which learners are apprenticing.
- Principle 2: Learners/apprentices have a legitimate role in the community and its practices.
- Principle 3: Newcomers show a high degree of interest and mental and physical commitment to the practice.
- Principle 4: The proportion of learners to experts is low, fewer, in general, than 5:1.
- Principle 5: Experts generally prefer to communicate with other experts but allow for some "showing" and some explaining to newcomers along the way.
- Principle 6: The learners handle the real product(s) of the practice in some way.

Assuming these are the most effective criteria by which to judge application of Lave and Wenger's concepts, the structure of the theory and performance educational programs at LACC meets each of these criteria.

## **Chapter 5: Cultural Capital and Music Education**

The lower level of institutional capital of LACC attracts students with lower levels of cultural capital, since students tend to choose the educational paths that are most readily accessible to them. At the same time, the LACC music curriculum has a Western classical music focus that aligns with a higher level of cultural capital than incoming students typically possess. In order to better understand the compatibility of the cultural capital of LACC music students with the curriculum, it is important to first establish the cultural capital of the music program itself.

### **5.1 The cultural capital of higher education music programs in California**

#### **5.1.a Cultural capital of the California college system**

The California Master Plan for Higher Education specifies the functions of public postsecondary schools (California State Department of Education, 1960). The University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) schools provide undergraduate education and the California community colleges provide the first two years of lower division undergraduate education in academic and vocational programs. Community college curriculum must articulate and align with the UC and CSU curriculum in all subjects to allow for transfer.

The California community college system is designed to address issues of equity in that all students—regardless of socioeconomic status, background, and level of acquired cultural capital—have access to higher education. Although community colleges in California provide students with workforce training, basic skill courses, vocational certificates, and terminal AA degrees, the additional mission of preparing students for transfer to a four-year institution means that colleges must design their programs to serve as preparatory programs for students to transfer to UC and CSU schools. Although unique curriculum can be created to serve unique functions, doing so would mean offering multiple educational tracks that may cause pedagogical and financial challenges. As a result, almost all California community college programs, in all disciplines, offer courses that articulate with four-year institutions.

The decision to align the community college curriculum with that of the four-year schools makes pedagogical sense in that the larger system defines itself through institutional capital that is intended to support the dominant culture within the field of higher education. In disciplines like music that reward

cultural capital, however, the noble and equitable intent of the community college system puts students with lower levels of cultural capital at a disadvantage.

### **5.1.a Cultural capital of the California four-year public college music curriculum**

Classical music is the foundation of Bachelor of Arts (BA) music degree programs throughout California public colleges. The four-year music program at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), for example, offers degrees in musicology, ethnomusicology, music performance, music education, and composition. The required theory sequence for each of those degrees is based on Western classical music. Theory topics include 15th and 16th century modal counterpoint, species counterpoint, four-part chorales, composition using baroque dance forms, figured bass notation, chromatic harmony from 1800 to 1850 and after 1850, and 20th-century harmony such as nonfunctional, polytonality, free atonality, serialism, and minimalism. Also required is a multi-semester survey of Western music from 1700 to the present that examines classical music in its cultural context. The music degree offered at California State University Los Angeles similarly requires a sequence of theory courses founded on Western classical harmony and a two-semester survey of the styles, genres, and forms of Western classical music within its cultural contexts.

Colleges do not share official policy or statements of philosophy that indicate why their core music courses are based on classical music. What is likely is that music programs at UC and CSU schools continue to offer music programs based on Western classical music because it has been a component of the ‘contemporary’ or ‘Western’ civilization core curriculum offered at many liberal arts colleges for generations. At the same time, national educational standards appear to be moving in the direction of a less Western-centric approach. One of the larger advocates for music education in the United States is the National Association for Music Education, which publishes standards in various music disciplines. The general music and composition/theory standards avoid direct reference to any Western classical tradition, instead using more general terms such as the “elements of music” and “iconic or standard notation” without defining what those entail (National Association for Music Education, 2014). The interpretation and the details of the curriculum are left up to the individual school that chooses to adopt the standards.

Arguments for why the Western classical music tradition should be advocated by music education policy makers have been offered by Jorgensen (2003), including that the tradition is widely known; it has a rich repertory; it represents many cultures (ancient Greek, Christianity, Eastern Orthodoxy, Judaism, Middle

Eastern, Northern African); its long history provides students with a better understanding of Western civilization and links Westerners to their past; and it has influenced many genres, including jazz, rock, country, and gospel. Jorgensen argues that musical notation is one of its “singular achievements” and that becoming literate in music notation “provides a way of recording the nuances of performance, intellectualizing music, propagating it widely...and quickly learning new pieces of music” and that failing to provide such literacy in a notated music tradition to students “stunts and prevents their further development” (p.135). The further argument that Western classical music is an “intellectual achievement” that fosters critical thinking, arouses emotions, and cultivates the intellect supports the notion that its study should continue to be a central part of the contemporary civilization core curriculum (p.136).

For Bourdieu, Western classical music has the highest capital value in the field of music as it signifies social position and social class (Bourdieu, 1984). More recent researchers have extended Bourdieu’s concept of the music field to include music education, all music genres, and the music industry (Burnard, 2012; Irwin, 2016). As the cultural capital of the California four-year public college music curriculum continues to use Western classical music as a foundational component, four-year college education policy makers appear to continue to agree that classical music has the highest capital value for their students.

A community college that considers moving from a Western classical (conservatory) music curriculum to one that aligns with the cultural capital of its incoming students puts the college at risk of losing articulation with four-year music schools and negatively impacting the likelihood that students will be able to meet audition requirements and transfer. Additionally, higher education music theory curriculum based on a conservatory approach prepares the next generation of students in the same way that many community college music faculty themselves were educated. As Jorgensen (2003) suggested, a classically based curriculum maintains the Western heritage and ensures that students remain connected to Western history and culture. More practically, classical studies allow students to learn the chords and harmonic progressions used in Western music, even Western popular music based on jazz, so that the traditional theory will provide a foundation to allow a student to learn about any Western music genre. The belief is that once a student learns to hear and perform classical music, they can apply that knowledge to any other genre. In this argument, Western classical music works particularly well to allow students to develop analytical criteria that can they use to assess any music from any part of the

world through clear models, forms, and compositional approaches that have been used for centuries and continue to be used to create and perform music.

### **5.1.b Cultural capital of the California community college music degree**

Sufficient funding must be available if a college wishes to offer unique curriculum for cohorts of students, such as those seeking a degree, vocational certificate, or basic music training. A common approach that community colleges use to limit costs is to 'stack' programs, whereby students can get basic training and a vocational certificate while on the same path that will ultimately grant them an AA degree and prepare them for transfer. As California community colleges are funded in part on the number of awards (both degrees and certificates) that students receive, the stacking approach also allows schools to collect funding for students who complete a certificate along the way to a degree. Schools that stack programs to reduce expenses and increase awards production, like LACC, must therefore design all of its curriculum, for all of its programs, to articulate with four-year schools regardless of the type of program.

California community colleges thus choose to use Western classical music as the foundation for their music programs to ensure alignment with the institutional capital of four-year transfer schools. At schools like LACC, alternative programs designed to support the lower levels of cultural capital of students are impractical due to the high cost of having parallel tracks, or unlikely due to a lack of awareness or a concession to the expected institutional capital by educational policy makers.

Many LACC music students decide to pursue the AA degree because of their high level of cultural capital or because they had positive experiences engaging in or performing popular music prior to college. Almost all student interviewees appreciated music during their formative years; most of them played instruments and performed music in public. LACC music student formative experiences with music are central to helping them make the decision to study music in a higher education setting. Incoming students do not expect the curriculum to be culturally relevant, yet they may not realize the extent to which the curriculum is the product of a dominant culture that may not correspond to or support the type of music they wish to pursue. The expectation of the college is that incoming students, regardless of level of cultural capital, will accept and learn to value that their college education will be defined by the Western European classical music tradition.

### **5.1.c Cultural capital of California community college music courses**

The course descriptors for California community college music courses describe the expectations of transfer four-year schools (C-ID, 2018).

The transfer-accepted course descriptor for introductory theory states that the course must be “an introduction to the notational fundamental elements of Western music” (Music Fundamentals C-ID, 2018). The subsequent courses in the music theory sequence become progressively focused on Western classical music. The descriptor for the first level of music theory includes “cadential formulae, chord function theory, and four-part voice-leading principles” as well as “period phrase structure” and “figured bass theory” (Music Theory I C-ID, 2018). Each of these music topics is rooted in Western classical music. Four-part voice-leading principles are appropriate for writing classical music and have some utility in jazz, but those principles are tangentially related to how chord progressions work in much popular music and not relevant to much music from elsewhere in the world. Figured bass is an even more extreme example of Western cultural heritage, in that it is only applicable to classical music of the 17<sup>th</sup> through 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and has no function at all in jazz or popular music. The course descriptor for the theory courses includes as part of the course content a “broad historical and cultural context,” but exactly how the instructor is supposed to apply this context is not specified. The inclusion of a broad historical and cultural context is one of 11 elements that must be covered in the course and it appears that through this element individual instructors can choose to present the topics in ways that are more culturally sensitive or appropriate to the student body. The methodology for music instruction is left to the instructor and non-traditional, activity-based methods including Jacques-Dalcroze, Kodály, Orff, and Suzuki could be utilized. Although such non-traditional approaches may be more enjoyable for the student, the methods have as a goal the appreciation and performance of Western classical music.

The course descriptor for applied music does not have a particular historical requirement outside of expecting that the student play or sing as “appropriate to the literature being studied” and in an “appropriate manner suitable to the genre, period, and style of the literature” (Applied Music C-ID, 2018). There is an additional expectation for vocal students, however, of “a minimum of three languages selected from English, Italian, German, French” and although additional languages may be included, they cannot be substituted for the European languages. The requirements exclude other significant European music traditions including the vocal music of Spanish and Eastern European classical composers, as well as every other language outside of English. The expectation is likely based on the importance of opera



arias in Italian, German, and French and the classical art song in German (*Lieder*) and French (*chanson*) in four-year classical music programs. The implication is that applied music lessons should focus on Western classical music.

Music history courses are two-semester surveys of Western European music and culture from antiquity to the present day. No alternative music surveys, such as World music or popular music, are transferable or allowable towards the degree. If schools decide to utilize the one-semester general music appreciation course, it must be “a survey of art music in western [sic] civilization” (Music Appreciation C-ID, 2018). Music history and music appreciation thus are limited to the study of the history of Western classical music.

The course descriptor for performance ensembles includes no culturally specific language, only indicating that the repertoire selected should be “appropriate to each ensemble” (Major Ensemble C-ID, 2018). In addition to technique, scales, and sight-reading, the course descriptor for all levels of piano includes chord progressions and harmonization without specifying the type of harmony expected (Piano III C-ID, 2018). The suggested textbook in the course descriptor, however, covers Western classical harmonies and the majority of the pieces in the textbook are Western classical genres. Again, the implication is that group piano classes should focus on Western classical music.

The music curriculum does not directly cover how music produces emotion in the listener, even though this is one of the primary goals of a musical performance. Given its central role, the concept of emotion in music is indirectly part of the curriculum, yet it is not specifically stated as a learning outcome. In the performance curriculum, the expectation is that students will focus primarily on technique and then start to consider basic aspects of musicality, which may lead to being able to convey emotion through the performance.

## **5.2 The cultural capital of LACC music students**

While only 50% of beginning LACC music students complete the first semester theory course, success in the beginning ensembles is significantly higher (Table 4.0).

<b>Theory (combined harmony and musicianship)</b>	<b>Success</b>
Level 1	50%
Level 2	60%
Level 3	71%
Level 4	73%

<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>Success</b>	
Level 1	College Choir	83%
	Rehearsal Orchestra	87%
Levels 2-4	Community Orchestra	91%
	Wind Ensemble	96%
	Percussion Ensemble	90%
	Guitar Ensemble	88%
	Studio Jazz Band	88%
	Philharmonic Choir	88%
	Chamber Chorale	92%
Chamber Music	95%	

*Table 5.0: Three-year LACC music student success rates in theory and performance courses, Fall 2014-Spring 2017*

Although many factors can cause a student to fail a course, the comparative success rates of the two areas of study suggest that a high percentage of incoming students do not have the capacity to meet the learning outcomes of the beginning theory curriculum, while they are able to do so in performance. Another element shown in the data is that success rates improve each semester as students move through the theory curriculum, although they never reach the success rates attained in the performance curriculum. The data suggest that there are determining factors that inhibit success in beginning theory, support student success in beginning performance, and allow for improvement in theory success rates over time.

### **5.2.1 Cultural capital prior to college**

Almost all of the participants in the study (13 of 15) graduated from the Los Angeles Unified School District, which is comparable to the general student population at LACC. Of the two students who did not complete public school, Amanda “had to drop out when I was 17 because my mother was going to get deported,” although she ultimately completed her high school degree after the fact, and Jennifer was home schooled.

LACC music students tend to come from low-SES backgrounds and attend low-SES high schools. The majority of interviewees (9 of 15) said they were “low class,” “working class,” “poor,” or “lower middle class.” The others (5 of 15) described themselves as “middle class,” and one mentioned being “in decent socioeconomic status.”

Almost all the participants (13 of 15) had some amount of music education in grade school, either formally or informally, and many of them played in bands or participated in extracurricular after-school music programs. Although socioeconomic factors may have prevented those students who did not succeed at LACC from learning to play a classical instrument as a child, which is a critical factor in whether they will have the attitude and self-belief that they can learn to play an instrument later on (Albert, 2006), the data cannot inform this research since the majority of the participants played instruments prior to coming to college.

Almost half of the participants (7 of 15) had some amount of private music training or lessons, though only a few (5 of 15) had lessons for more than a few years. For some, socioeconomic status prevented them from having private lessons. Sarah was able to start violin lessons but “had to stop after a year because of financial issues.” Jennifer was unable to receive any lessons until college “mostly for financial reasons, just, we couldn’t afford lessons for a while. I wanted to learn since I was two, but [was unable].” Stephanie felt that her inability to have music instruction at an early age impacted her abilities as a student: “If I had learned music when I was younger, I probably would have been a more disciplined student than I am now.”

Many LACC music students acquire cultural capital through informal learning experiences during their upbringing. Amanda did not receive formal music training before college but benefited from singing in church choirs since she was nine years old. The majority of students engage in informal music making experiences, which provides opportunities for acquiring capital. For Daniel, despite having private lessons in high school, he felt he “learned the most” playing informally with friends.

### **5.2.2 Cultural capital prior to college**

Most students acquire cultural capital through learning experiences with popular music during their formative years. Participants in the study were asked to describe the genres or types of music they identify with most. As the responses included a variety of different terms that implied similar genres, I use the standard terminology from the top 11 music genres based on consumption in the United States (Nielsen, 2018). The majority (10 of 15) “most closely identified” with rock, pop, and hip-hop/R&B prior to entering LACC, and six of 15 had experience performing those genres in bands. Only two of the 15 participants said that they most closely identified with classical music prior to college. The most commonly mentioned music genres that students currently listened to regularly were rock (8 of 15),

classical (7), jazz (6), pop (4), hip-hop/R&B (3), and country (3). None mentioned music of their culture, even though the majority of the students were first-generation immigrants.

Students who have had emotional experiences when playing in bands prior to college can utilize their formative connections to music to help shape their educational goals once they enter college. Michael had significant musical experiences during his 15 years playing the guitar and bass in rock groups prior to college, which contributed to him developing a passion for jazz and experiencing “emotional involvement” with the big band and jazz ensembles and his decision to transfer to a four-year college as a jazz performance major. Anthony played electric guitar in bands for several years prior to college, which shaped his habitus and informed his decision to become a classical guitar major after taking an introductory class at the college. He described emotional experiences in performance classes and ultimately he transferred to a four-year college as a guitar major. Similarly, Ashley had significant musical experiences playing the guitar informally in bands prior to college, became a guitar major only after taking introductory music classes at LACC, was able to describe an “emotional connection” in her performance classes, and ultimately transferred as a guitar major.

Students recognize that their formative musical interests may not align with the institutional capital of higher education music programs. Sarah, who acquired music experience prior to college and benefited from the alignment of her capital with the institutional capital of LACC, stated that her preferred genre is Romantic classical music, as “it gives me chills when I listen to it and I never felt that way listening to any other genre, maybe besides jazz, but you know....” The trailing off of her sentence suggests that she believes jazz is not a serious musical endeavor, and that preferring non-classical genres may indicate to others that she does not have high levels of cultural capital. Similarly, Samantha’s preferred genre is influenced by her perception of the music educational system: “I identify most with world music more than classical, although, like, in school you have to choose between classical and jazz.”

Although a student’s cultural capital may not align directly with the institutional capital of much of the majority of the LACC music program as defined in the curriculum, formative musical experiences contribute to whether students will pursue higher education in music and their long-term goals in the music industry, and shape their habitus from powerful emotional experiences listening to or singing or performing on an instrument in those non-classical genres.

### 5.2.3 Cultural capital and choice of college

The LACC music program is open access, there are no minimum requirements or standards for entry, and the tuition is significantly lower than any local four-year college. Many of the participants in the study mentioned proximity and cost as primary reasons for choosing LACC. Michael said it was the “closest place,” Sarah said it was “close to home,” and Amanda said “it was close by.” Both Christopher and Sarah said they chose the college due to “financial reasons,” and Jose said it was because he was able “to get student discounts.” Jennifer and Elizabeth both stated they “wanted to go to community college” without providing further explanation, but the implication is that proximity and low tuition were primary reasons. Since the total cost of education includes not just tuition, but also textbooks, food, transportation, and housing, proximity and cost should be considered to be related factors. The fact that all 15 students in the study are from low- and middle-SES backgrounds, which is representative of the LACC music program as a whole, supports existing research showing that students attending low- and middle-SES high schools have significantly higher levels of two-year college attendance than those from high-SES schools (Engberg & Wolniak, 2014).

Several participants suggested that another primary factor in choosing LACC was because the college provided an environment that would support their habitus. Matthew decided against attending a four-year school because he “didn’t know what he would do there.” He instead chose a community college since it was a place where he could “figure myself out.” Similarly, Ashley entered community college “because I wasn’t sure exactly what I wanted to do.” Samantha and Ashley entered LACC without declaring a major and Jennifer and Anthony started in another major; all of them became music majors only after taking an introductory music class. Only two of the 15 participants (Stephanie and Daniel) said they chose LACC because they compared various other music programs and felt that LACC was the “best” music school for them, although there were mitigating factors for them as well.

The data thus support existing research that proximity and cost are primary factors in college choice (Bowers & Pugh, 1973; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Douglas, Powers, & Choroszy, 1983; Lay & Maguire, 1981), that students from low-SES area schools are less likely to enroll in selective colleges (McDonough, 1997; Palardy, 2013), and that SES impacts college choice (Bowers & Pugh, 1973; Chapman, 1981; Chapman & Jackson, 1987; Hearn, 1991; Hossler et al., 1989, 1999; Litten, 1991; Stage & Hossler, 1988).

Bourdieu’s (1984) theory supports the data in that students choose an educational path that most closely aligns with their habitus. The data confirm the critical role that habitus has on college choice, and

agrees with existing research that students select a college in which they feel comfortable, a sense of acceptance, and where they believe they will fit (Nora, 2004). The data also support research that considers college choice in terms of feelings of exclusion rather than inclusion, in that students avoid institutions that they feel are just 'not right' for them (Reay, David, & Ball 2005; Crozier et al., 2008; Crozier, Reay, & Clayton 2010).

#### **5.2.4 Compatibility of cultural capital and institutional capital**

Interviewed LACC music students were aware that they needed additional knowledge and skills to become effective musicians and to ultimately find employment in the music field. The majority of the participants (8 of 15) said they wanted to become better musicians, with most of those seeking to improve performance on their voice or instrument; other responses to what students hope to gain from the music program were transfer (3), general and broader musical knowledge (3) and in the case of the one music production student, the acquisition of technical skills (1). Students primarily hope to use their education to perform (10), teach (9), and complete a degree (7).

Students believe that the LACC music program will provide a social setting that will lead to an AA degree, or ultimately to a BA degree after transfer, that will demonstrate the value of their efforts and recognize their competence to the music community. The majority of student interviewees believe that higher education is necessary to help them reach their musical goals. Jose realizes that "for me to actually, you know, make an impact in this industry and get my gigs, I definitely need to know how to compose." Students see their education in practical terms, believing that the program will give them "knowledge," "ability," "expertise," and "skills." Some think of education in terms of how it will impact their ability to be artists. David, for example, wants his education to provide him a "broader perspective of music" where he can be "creatively free." Stephanie desires to "open up a center for disadvantaged students who can't afford lessons" and Amanda wishes to perform as a way of "giving back to the community."

Students studying music at LACC hope to gain a well-rounded knowledge of music theory and performance, preparation for transfer, performance skills, and the ability to network and gain music connections to help them find a job. Most of the students who make it through the entry level courses intend to transfer to a four-year institution as a music major. Those students who want to complete their program at LACC and then start a career in the music industry are commercial music students who have a goal to perform, compose, record, or produce music. Students assume that the curriculum is appropriate to allow them to find a job in the music industry, either immediately upon graduation or

after continuing with higher education at a four-year school. For these students, the process of engaging in music studies is a way to develop the skills they will need to enter the music industry community of practice and improve their chances of getting a job in the music industry.

The large number of participants who plan to use their education to teach supports existing research that low-SES students gain social capital from their families that makes them value education and want to be role models and give back to their communities (Auerbach, 2006; Rendon, 2006; Heath, Fuller, & Paton, 2008; Gofen, 2009). Other capital acquired by low-SES students by their families, which are assets that they can use once in college, include a strong work ethic, being multilingual, appreciating culture, overcoming hardship, being resistant, and overcoming stereotypes (Rendon, 2006), which are features shared by many LACC music students. The fact that LACC music students are able to use their upbringing as an asset and decide to use education as the way for them to overcome their financial hardships and better their position in society supports asset-based research that considers the unique skills students acquire during their low-SES upbringing (Yosso, 2005; Walker, Gleaves, & Grey 2006; Rendon, 2006; Clegg, 2011).

#### **5.2.4.a Impact of cultural capital on student success**

Although numerous studies have shown that habitus formed by factors including SES, gender, ethnicity, and being a first-generation student can impact educational outcomes in music programs (Burt & Mills 2006; Burland & Pitts 2007; Feichas 2010; Nettl, 2005; Pitts, 2003, 2005; Moore, 2012), my research is unable either to support or contradict these studies. The gender, ethnicity, and educational background of the students in the study who ‘succeeded’ (i.e., transferred or completed a degree) were as mixed as those who ultimately did transfer. Low-SES students succeeded at similar rates to middle-SES students.

Of the three students in the study who did not have a previous degree and ultimately failed to transfer or complete a degree at LACC, all entered with low levels of cultural capital. Although the data only produce a small sample, the fact that all the students in the study who ‘failed’ (i.e., did not transfer or complete a degree) had low levels of cultural capital—without exploring the reasons why they had low levels of capital—supports numerous existing studies that low cultural capital does impact student success in higher education music programs (Creech et al., 2008a; Burt & Mills 2006; Burland & Pitts 2007; Feichas 2010; Nettl, 2005; Pitts, 2003, 2005; Moore, 2012).

One factor that appeared to be consistent among interviewed LACC music students who entered the program wanting to complete a degree and transfer, but ultimately did not succeed, was their level of engagement with the theory classes. When asked to describe their level of involvement or interest with harmony, musicianship, and solo and ensemble performance, students overwhelmingly said they were more connected to performance than to theory. Of the three students in the study who did not have a previous degree and ultimately failed to transfer or complete a degree at LACC, all of them did not acquire additional capital through engagement with the theory classes. Ashley admitted that she did not put effort into musicianship," Christopher admitted that in theory "I kind of learned what I needed to learn, but if it didn't come easy to me then I [would] just not do it," and although Stephanie was "very interested" in theory because it could help her to write songs, she focused on her jazz voice development and struggled with theory. The data thus support a study demonstrating that the disconnection in students with non-classical music backgrounds is more likely to occur in subjects such as harmony and musicianship (Feichas 2010).

Although LACC music students struggle with theory at the beginning of their educational program, they are able to learn to recognize the value of the field and learn to appreciate the classes. An overwhelming majority of interviewees came to appreciate theory, despite it being "tedious" and "requiring work." Jennifer is not uncommon in that she "was not expecting to love theory," as she "came into it knowing less than nothing," but ultimately she learned to "love it." Matthew knew that "getting to know the theory of music would help me play better." These findings support existing research suggesting that music theory is the strongest predictor of success in introductory core classes (Rohwer 2012). LACC music students who are near the end of their studies at the college become invested in music theory, fully recognizing its importance in performance and the understanding of music. These students learn to value theory not just because Western music theory is the dominant culture of the four-year transfer school, but also because it improves their ability to perform, compose, and ultimately for them to reach their goals.

#### **5.2.4.b Acquiring cultural capital and changing habitus**

Students with low levels of cultural capital who ultimately succeeded (transferred or completed a degree) acquired higher levels of cultural capital through their exposure to classical music in both the theory and performance curriculum. What distinguishes successful students with low cultural capital from unsuccessful students is the level of engagement with the theory curriculum. Successful low-



cultural capital students change their habitus by learning to recognize the relationship between theory and performance, and to value the classical theoretical nature of the theory program. The data thus support the concept that habitus can respond to new situations (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004; Conde, 2011) and can change over time (Kingston, 2001; Goldthorpe, 2007; Clegg, 2008).

All the participants who entered with a higher level of cultural capital (6 of 15) continued primarily to perform classical music throughout their studies, although many of them performed a variety of other genres in performance classes. Those who entered with lower levels of cultural capital (9 of 15) continued primarily to perform or create the type of music they were interested in when they began the program, either in popular music (5), jazz (3), or electronic music (1), although they did increase their engagement with the classical music field through numerous performances of classical music.

One of the goals of the LACC performance program is for students to strengthen their abilities in their existing areas of interest while being exposed to and learning to perform a variety of music genres. In this way the performance curriculum increases engagement by empathizing with and supporting student interests, and by including more informal pedagogy. Both approaches have been shown to increase student engagement in music classes (Wright, 2008; Karlsen, 2010; Irwin, 2016). At the same time, the curriculum exposes students to new genres of music, especially classical music. The use of a variety of genres in the LACC performance curriculum has the potential to align with existing student capital and allow opportunities for students to add cultural capital. As such the research supports existing studies demonstrating that culturally relevant curriculum values community and helps the student define an identity that results in appropriate capital in the higher education field (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Yosso 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Clegg, 2011).

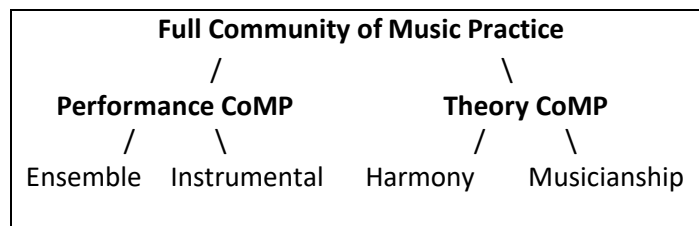
Elizabeth is representative of a student who enters the program with a low level of cultural capital and who works to develop the requisite capital not because they change their habitus, but because they believe that value will be added to their career by completing a higher education program. Even after several semesters in the program, Elizabeth believed in the value of commercial music and felt that the program was not allowing her to develop skills that she needed to further her career in commercial music. She stated that she would be more engaged with the curriculum if her passion, commercial music, were taken more seriously and be an equal part of the program. Despite completing several semesters in the program and succeeding in the theory courses, the dissonance between her cultural capital and the institutional capital persisted.

The question of how students learn to engage with the curriculum, and the levels at which they engage with the curriculum, is explored in more detail in the next chapter.

## Chapter 6: LACC Music Student Engagement with the Curriculum

### 6.1 The LACC music program as a community of music practice

The novice LACC music student becomes aware that the program supports the formation of two communities of music practice (CoMPs). These informal communities form around students who are working towards common learning outcomes, and they are indirectly supported by faculty within and outside of the classroom. Given the nature of the curriculum, comprised of equal parts of theory and performance, they learn that full engagement with the program is contingent upon their ability to engage with both CoMPs (Fig. 1.0).



*Fig. 1.0 Communities of Music Practice within the LACC Music Program*

Situated learning in the LACC music program occurs in these two social settings. Theory and performance are CoMPs through which students acquire social and cultural capital, and validate their identity. The two CoMPs at LACC share the same characteristics as identified in the literature: a shared repertoire towards a shared goal (Waldron, 2009; BeineKe, 2013; Partti, 2014), mutual engagement (Partti, 2014), and identity formation through membership and brokering (Morrison, 2001; Blair, 2008; Mantie & Tucker, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010; Partti, 2014; Luebke, 2013). The existence of theory and performance CoMPs at LACC supports research that CoMPs can exist within the various musical genres that exist in music education (Countryman, 2009; Hewitt 2009a; Burnard, 2012).

Students begin to engage with the curriculum through social learning experiences and faculty who help them learn to value the curriculum as a whole. As students begin to commit to the domain and acquire a shared competence in their chosen specialty, a community forms whereby they engage in joint activities, help each other, share information, build relationships, learn from each other, begin to care about their standing in the community, and begin to be accepted by the community. Lave and Wenger's theory of situated learning helps explain how LACC music students engage with CoMPs, find value in CoMPs, and learn by doing.

## 6.2 Peripheral participation in a CoMP

Novice LACC music students realize that their existing level of music knowledge, which delimits their cultural capital, can be utilized more successfully in the performance CoMP than in the theory CoMP. Engagement is more immediate with the ensembles (choir, orchestra, band) than with the theory courses, as they are less formal social environments that provide direct contact with music. Michael describes collaborative performance in the jazz band as “the thing I’ve been most emotionally involved in...because that’s where I am excelling and that’s what I want to do.” Similarly, Christopher says that performance is “more of what I want to do.” Existing research indicates that students starting a music program are more likely to have emotional learning experiences in instrumental and performance classes than in music theory or musicianship courses (Mitchell, 2017; StGeorge, Holbrook, & Cantwell, 2014).

Although the ensemble and solo instrumental classes provide learning experiences on a primary instrument, which is what LACC music students most want to do when they enter the program, the novice finds that the beginning solo instrumental courses are more formal and internal than ensembles, as they focus on technique and provide less opportunity for direct engagement with the music. At this point in their studies, LACC music students value performance more than theory because performance has clearer real-world practices that can help the student persist and enter the music community more quickly, which support existing data (Mantie & Tucker, 2008).

These LACC music students find some opportunities for social bonding in harmony and musicianship, but the theoretical and formal nature of the primarily Western classical music curriculum may seem less immediately valuable to the student.

LACC music faculty play an important role in engaging the novice student, especially in the formal classes where the student cannot rely as much on their cultural capital or their emotional connection to music. In such classes, the novice student will benefit from professors who engage them intellectually and emotionally, and who inspire them with passion, energy, interaction, and creative lectures that support their engagement with the music and tap into the emotions that music can arouse. The initial experiences in the classroom are critical in helping the student find value in the music curriculum and gain the confidence to begin to engage with the CoMPs.

LACC music faculty also play an important role in guiding students on their musical pathways upon graduation or after continuing with higher education at a four-year school. Possible pathways include completion of the AA degree at LACC and beginning a career in the music industry, and transfer to a four-year institution as a music major. The process of engaging in music studies is a way for students to develop the skills they will need to enter the music industry CoP or transfer towards increased opportunities for having a musical career.

The data show that the novice music student enters the LACC music program expecting to gain a well-rounded knowledge of music, preparation for transfer, performance skills, and/or the ability to network and gain music connections. Novice students without a clear concept of how the various components of the curriculum can help them reach their music goals may end up resisting elements of the curriculum that appear to be tangential to their goals. Since most students at this stage see more practical applications to their career through the performance courses, they are likely to find the boundary to the performance CoMP to be less challenging than the boundary to the theory CoMP.

#### **6.2.a Entering a CoMP: Changing interest in music genres**

There does not appear to be a link between the music genres students previously identified with prior to entering the program and their ability to engage with the curriculum. During their studies, LACC music students learn to identify with new music genres and recognize that expanding their areas of interest will help them reach their music goals.

As they progress in their studies, LACC music students are able to change the primary music genres with which they identify. The musical genres with which interviewed students identified as they neared the conclusion of their studies were (in order of preference) rock, classical, jazz, pop, hip-hop/R&B, and country; over half of the students interviewed identified with rock and nearly half identified with classical music. Through their participation in the program, numerous interviewed students began to appreciate jazz, despite the fact that the subject is not part of the required music major curriculum. Over their academic careers, Stephanie changed her primary musical preference from R&B to jazz, Michael changed his primary preference from rock & roll to jazz, and Jennifer learned identify with jazz and musicals. Students acknowledged that they had broader musical tastes as a result of their studies. Elizabeth developed “very eclectic tastes” and David now identifies with “all music.” Anthony is a good example of this type of student, one who “started out as a giant metal fan” and then through his studies developed “more eclectic musical tastes” from “classical guitar, Bach, to country, bluegrass, anything in

between.” These new interests do not replace previous interests; students continue to appreciate and connect to the pop, rock, and other music genres that they identified with before they entered the program.

Few interviewed students identified with classical music at the beginning of their studies. Nearing the end of their studies, almost half of the interviewees mentioned that they were able to identify with classical music, which is important given its central place in the curriculum, although only a small minority identified classical music as a primary interest. Elizabeth stated that she learned to “love classical” as a result of participating in the program. Two students mentioned they now prefer classical to all other genres. Amanda clarified her choice of classical with “of course,” stating what she thought was the expected outcome of studying music in higher education. Samantha, who identified most with world music, was able to find meaning in the music curriculum by believing that there is a shared repertoire of learning built into the curriculum. In order to join the CoMP, she felt that she had to align her interests with the curriculum by choosing between classical and jazz. Her preferred genre, and her engagement in the CoMP, thus became influenced by her perception of the music education system.

LACC music students who persist in the program are able to appreciate, and in some cases identify, with the music genres that form the basis of the curriculum. Once students complete several semesters in the program, their musical tastes broaden to include both classical and jazz, in addition to those genres they appreciated prior to entering higher education. Ashley now tries “to listen to everything, so I have an idea of what everything should sound like.” Some students feel the need to widen their musical tastes for educational purposes. Stephanie now prefers jazz as “it’s a more complex genre.” Some students learn to place additional value in classical music. Sarah, who came into the program interested in classical music and believed that an appreciation of classical music was important in higher education, narrowed her preferred genre specifically to the Romantic period within classical music during her studies. As with Samantha, Sarah’s stated preference for musical genre is influenced by how she thinks her choice will be perceived by the music higher education community of practice. These students feel that the LACC music curriculum, which they believe will lead to their inclusion in the music higher education CoP, requires them to value classical music above all other genres in order for them to be accepted by that community.

The findings suggest that the LACC music curriculum can increase student appreciation of new music genres, including classical. An increased appreciation for a variety of music genres benefits the student

in that they have additional opportunities to engage with other students who have similar broad tastes and thus supports their participation and engagement in CoMPs.

### **6.2.b Entering a CoMP: Classical and non-classical genres**

Classical and non-classical students are likely to become peripheral participants in a CoMP at different rates. LACC music students who continue throughout their studies to identify most closely with their initial preferred genre of popular music are still able to enter both the theory and performance CoMPs, but they may take longer to do so.

The motivations of LACC music students are consistent whether the student has a classical or non-classical focus. Regardless of area of focus, students overwhelmingly believe that by acquiring additional knowledge and skills through higher education, they will become better musicians. Their motivation comes from engagement with the program and with other musicians towards improved abilities, which they hope to use to perform, teach, and/or complete a degree. The majority of participants believe that higher education is necessary to help them reach their musical goals. Jose realizes that “for me to actually, you know, make an impact in this industry and get my gigs, I definitely need to know how to compose.” Students thus see their education in practical terms and think of education in terms of how it will impact their ability to be artists and start a career in music.

What LACC music students believe is that the music program will provide them with social interactions that, through the acquisition of institutionalized capital through an AA degree or transfer towards a higher degree, will reward their efforts and help them feel part of the full music community. Although existing research suggests that non-classical music students have different motivations concerning their study of music in higher education (McMillan, 1997; Lebler & Carey, 2007, Creech et al., 2008b, Lebler et al., 2009), my findings suggest that LACC music students can see the value of both CoMPs regardless of whether they are interested in pursuing classical or non-classical paths.

Successful LACC music students, regardless of classical or non-classical focus, recognize the value of developing their musicianship skills. For Michael, a jazz student, musicianship “is probably the most important thing I’ve gotten out of LACC.” Stephanie, also a jazz student, feels that “musicianship is probably more beneficial than theory.” Ashley, a rock and pop student, says that “if you took the time to do it [musicianship] every single day like you’re supposed to, it would help.” Jennifer sums up the responses from both classical and non-classical students in her belief that musicianship is arguably the

most valuable course in the program, a course that “is painful but necessary, and the more I do it the more I like it because the more I get it.” The data does not fully support the research that classical and non-classical students perceive themselves differently in a higher education setting (Creech et al., 2008a; Hewitt, 2009b; Welch et al., 2008). According to these studies, students in the community of classical music practice are most interested in notation and aural skills, and have a stronger desire to excel musically and technically than non-classical students, which I did not find to be the case in my research.

According to the same research studies, students in the non-classical CoMP are more interested in memorization and improvisation. My research only somewhat supports this theory, as students with a non-classical focus are able to use classical theory to inform their own area of interest. Michael, who is focused on being a jazz musician, says he does not “particularly like classical theory [and] is not that into classical music” and rather is most interested in performance in jazz ensembles since that is what he is most passionate about: “That’s where I am excelling and that’s what I want to do.” Christopher on the other hand, who is interested in becoming a pop musician, has learned to apply the classical theory to his interest in popular music: “I have a strong interest in it [theory] because...I always relate things back to pop music.”

LACC music students recognize that the music major curriculum requires them to participate in two separate and distinct areas of study (theory and performance) and that they must learn their position in both of the communities that develops around these areas. Ashley’s “interest is high for all” of the subjects, for example, and Jose is “completely interested in [everything] LACC has to offer.” Students consider theory and performance as distinct areas of study, they are able to compare their levels of engagement with theory and performance, and they can describe specific emotional responses to the two areas of study.

LACC music students who enter the program most closely identifying with classical music are likely to enter the theory CoMP more quickly than those students who enter without high levels of cultural capital. Matthew, who had prior classical music experience, said that the first subject that he was “very into” was theory because “I knew that I knew this stuff, but I didn’t know it anymore and I knew that getting to know the theory of music would help me play better.” Sarah, who came into the program with some experience with music theory, found the classes “fun.” Conversely, students who are interested in popular music genres are more likely to enter the performance CoMP more quickly than the theory



CoMP. Daniel, who came into the school as a rock and jazz musician, learned to “really like theory” though he “had to work really hard at it.” Similarly, Ashley, who entered as a rock and pop musician, acknowledged that despite theory being “like math” and “tedious,” she recognized its importance to her musical career, saying that “once it clicks, it’s like, okay, yes, you feel better about yourself.” Samantha felt musicianship to be “harder” than other classes because she started music “informally” without a classical background. Although these students ultimately succeeded in theory, they believe they had to work harder to do so.

An important factor shaping student learning in music programs is the learning experience and opportunity that exists in a program that has hierarchies among multiple fields (Perkins, 2013), which is supported by my research. These fields provide a variety of learning experiences involving the whole person through both intellectual and embodied knowing (Conkling, 2016). My research also supports existing research showing that a music program that allows students to engage in multiple CoMPs gives the students access to members in the community, relevant technology, and the support they need for active and conscious self-reflection (Karlsen, 2010).

### **6.2.c Entering a CoMP: Informal and formal learning**

Incoming LACC music students engage more readily and are enthusiastic with the informal learning that occurs in performance classes. Daniel values “the number of performance opportunities” he had at LACC, which for him “were pretty incredible....I would say that’s probably the [aspect] I like the most: performance.” Similarly, for Anthony “most of my involvement and interest relies on the solo [performing]” and for Samantha the performance part of the curriculum is “what I live for.” Amanda sees the future benefit of the performance curriculum in that “by the time I transfer I should not be scared, I shouldn’t be worried, I shouldn’t be terrified, because I’ve been doing this [performance].”

My research supports the theory that the addition of informal learning opportunities in a music program can help students with an interest in popular music (Green, 2001; Green, 2008); can help students join CoMPs (Folkestad, 2006); and that a combination of formal and informal learning can support students from a variety of different backgrounds to form their social, cultural, and musical identities (Karlsen, 2014). Wenger (1998) argues for the presence of both internal and external educational experiences in a curriculum. The LACC music curriculum is designed to support both internal educational experiences in the classroom and external educational experiences through performances and engagement in CoMPs. Through internal educational experiences the student has opportunities for deep learning when they

cross boundaries. By putting theory into practice through external educational experiences, students increase their level of engagement with the curriculum.

### **6.3 From peripheral to legitimate practice**

Meyer and Land's (2003) description of conceptual gateways or thresholds, related to Wenger's concept of boundaries, is useful in framing the experience of the LACC music student transitioning from peripheral to legitimate participant. A student who passes through such a threshold transforms their perception, has a new understanding and view of the subject, and has an irreversible change of identity and a strong memory of the experience. The crossing of the gateway occurs when the student sees the interrelationships between subjects that previously were hidden.

#### **6.3.a Legitimate practice: Connecting theory to practice**

Success rates improve as LACC music students move into the higher levels of theory due to attrition and the student having an increased familiarity with the subject matter. Christopher's level of interest was related to his ability to comprehend the material: "I kind of learned what I needed to learn [in theory], but if it didn't come easy to me then I was kind of like, I'll practice it another time or just not do it or whatever." As Sarah put it, "It's much easier to connect to something that's relatable." For most students, music theory is challenging but as they progress through the sequence the initial uncertainty leads to appreciation and even fondness for the subject. Daniel "had to work really hard at [theory], but then I got it and it kind of clicked." Similarly, Jennifer stated, "I was not expecting to love theory. I came into it knowing less than nothing, I thought different types of notes were style choices. I had no idea. But I do, I love it." Michael admitted, "I don't particularly like classical theory, I'm not that into classical music, but I did have a good time taking the...theory class I took." For Ashley, "theory is like math, because it's very, like, tedious. It requires work. I don't really enjoy theory, but I also, like, need it. Once it clicks, it's like, okay, yes, you feel better about yourself.... [and when it finally clicks], then it's like, 'yes', like a relief just washes over you."

Jessica found that the entry level of theory "was just, like, they teach you the notes and the triads." Engagement increased, however, in the subsequent levels: "Once you get to higher levels of theory you can do, you know, arranging things and different types of chords and how voicing works."

Similarly, Stephanie, who was focused on vocal jazz, is “very interested in theory because, I originally came to LACC to learn how to write my own songs, and theory helped me out so much, helped me out to the point where I can compose my own music and I couldn’t do that before LACC.”

Although many students learned to value the theory program (Samantha became “interested,” Matthew became “very into theory,” and Jennifer learned to “love it”), a number of students remained less connected to the theory program even after several semesters. David felt “frustration” in theory and “in musicianship I feel it’s a good struggle as you develop your own musicianship.” Elizabeth, who admitted she was out of her comfort zone in theory, “felt like all these people around me were really good at it. So, it made me kind of scared of it and not wanting to do it, like fight it a little bit.” Elizabeth feels that “theory helped me as a musician altogether,” but for her “theory” means “classical music” that can only be appreciated by a “nerd:”

I also want to score a short film one day...and I do some classical inspired pieces that are shorter, [where] theory is definitely involved.... I’m weird because I’m, like, [studying] electronic [music], so I think that learning the audio engineering DAWs (digital audio workstations), that interested me the most and has gotten me the most gigs. But I also did enjoy theory and musicianship. I didn’t do that well because I never did the homework, but I did enjoy it because I’m a nerd.

Some who took the theory courses felt that the musicianship component was more valuable than harmony. Michael, for example, stated, “musicianship: that is probably the most important thing I’ve gotten out of LACC thus far.

The gradual appreciation of harmony and musicianship courses occurs when the student starts to see the connection between harmony, musicianship, and performance. They develop a shared repertoire of resources and begin to reify their learning experiences by seeing the relationships between the topics. As Amanda put it, “you understand [theory] better, once you, like, put the emotional part and the actual theory part together.” Students are able to recognize the importance of the skills learned in the musicianship class in terms of their improvement as musicians. As with harmony, students in musicianship become more familiar with their classes as they progress through their studies. For Jennifer, “the more I do [musicianship] the more I like it because the more I get it.”

Musicianship poses a challenge for students in part because of the anxiety caused by performing in front of peers and their instructor, and an inability to engage in a meaningful way with the Western classical

melodies, rhythmic patterns, and harmonic progressions they are expected to audiate and perform. For Sarah, this anxiety subsided once she progressed in the theory sequence: "Coming from someone who has anxiety issues, [the theory courses became] fun." For Ashley, "I feel like I'm always super stressed about having to go into a musicianship test and like freaking out and I always have anxiety and I never eat in the morning if I have musicianship that day. But then once I take it, I feel like 20 times better." For these students, participation in the CoMP and learning through shared musical experiences provided opportunities for them to cross a boundary.

The data suggest that students can use their initial participation in a performance CoMP to help them overcome the boundary to the theory CoMP. Once they begin to see the connection between theory and practice, and how theory will inform and improve their performance, they work to increase their engagement with the theory curriculum.

### **6.3.b Legitimate practice: Defining identity**

The experiences described by interviewed LACC music students support the notion that initial engagement with a CoMP helps to build identity and strengthen a student's commitment to the program. Matthew thought community college was where he could "figure myself out," and he ultimately completed the program and transferred to a four-year school as a music therapy major. Ashley initially "wasn't 100% sure whether I wanted to choose music as my major, but then realized that "this is what I have to do, so then I started taking [music classes]." She took longer to complete the program due to having to work full-time during her studies, but she completed the program and transferred as a performance major. Jennifer took a single beginning music theory class and "was hooked, had to keep going." She completed the program quickly and transferred as a performance major. Similarly, Anthony started in another discipline and switched to music. He too completed the program quickly and transferred as a performance major.

All the students who did not succeed (did not transfer or complete a degree) struggled to find their identity within the full curriculum. While in the program, Jose "figured out along the way that I could sing." He initially studied voice but attempted several other instruments and composition. Although he finished the program, he failed to see himself as a musician, did not transfer, and ended up in a different field. Christopher's interest in theory developed mainly from his ability to connect to pop music. He failed to find value in theory and focused exclusively on his pop music performances. He ultimately failed to transfer as a music major. Stephanie originally came to LACC to learn to write songs and stated

that she was able to use the theory she learned to help her with her songwriting. Despite finding these benefits from the theory courses, she resisted the theory CoMP, was unable to pass, and ultimately did not transfer to a four-year school. Although these students may have understood the value of both theory and performance, they struggled to find their identity within the music program.

For Wenger (1998), education is the process of “exploring new ways of being that lie beyond our current state” (p.264). As such, learning can be defined as identity transformation. For Wenger, curriculum should address issues of identity and not just serve those who students “who already have an identity of participation with respect to the material in other contexts” (p.269). A meaningful curriculum provides students with a range of experiences to support identity transformation through social learning (Wenger, 2006). The dual nature of the LACC music curriculum provides students with such an opportunity.

LACC music students who experience a sense of full membership in both CoMPs learn from faculty and peers who recognize their legitimacy. These students cross boundaries, participate in creative activities, and feel agency and power. Each of those factors is part of Wenger’s definition of a successful curriculum that supports identity transformation. My research thus supports the theory that a music curriculum that gives students a sense of the real world of actual practice in the field of music can help them persist and become a member of a music community (Mantie & Tucker, 2008).

As they complete the courses in theory and performance and acquire new skills, LACC music students become more involved in the processes of the community, develop their identity and a sense of belonging, and become legitimate peripheral participants. Without the community, many students may not have succeeded. As Anthony puts it, “the department is what kept me there.” These experiences mirror the experiences of students who engage in Lave and Wenger’s concept of situated learning, in terms of progressing from novice to master through learning by doing and defining one’s identity.

### **6.3.c Supporting legitimate practice**

LACC faculty play a significant role in helping students engage with the material and feel that they have the ability to join the CoMPs. Michael is “very interested in listening to a good lecture by someone who not only knows the material very well but is passionate about it.” Jennifer found that when her teachers asked her to consider her performance in an emotional way, those experiences “forced me to figure out what I really want to be singing and how I actually want to be singing it.” Amanda’s instructor helped her

with interpretation, teaching her that she “should feel also, ‘cause that just gives so much more to the repertoire.” After a solid performance “where I was singing all the notes correctly,” Ashley’s instructor told her that although the notes were right, she “need[ed] the confidence.” After Ashley heard this comment, the next performance “felt better.” For many students, faculty, especially private instrumental or voice instructors, help them cross boundaries through memorable experiences that provide deeper learning.

LACC faculty also have a role helping a student cross a boundary by designing a curricular pathway that allows them to find meaning and develop their identity, which are necessary components for students to become legitimate participants in a CoMP. The experiences of Daniel (who “had to work really hard at [theory], but then I got it and it kind of clicked”), Ashley (who feels better once theory “clicks”), and Anthony (“musicianship melodies...were, you know, first semester, [a] gigantic pain for me and then as they went along they just kind of just clicked”) are indicative of Wenger’s crossing of a boundary and transforming identity through a sense of connectedness, expansiveness, and effectiveness. For Wenger (1998), students “must be able to understand where they come from and where they can go” (p.272). The ‘lightbulb moment’ when something ‘clicks,’ when a student can see the value of their collective learning experiences, can be a formative moment in that student becoming a legitimate participant in a CoMP.

The data suggest that a number of factors influence student engagement with the LACC music curriculum, including cultural capital (level of engagement with classical music prior to entering the program), prior positive experiences with music (level of engagement with non-classical music prior to entering the program), inspiration from faculty, learning to value the theory CoMP (harmony and musicianship) and performance CoMP (ensemble and instrumental), and developing a sense of identity in the program. The negotiation of these factors contributes to how far a student is able to progress and how long it takes a student to progress on the journey towards legitimate participation.

## **Chapter 7: LACC Music Student Emotional Experiences within the Curriculum**

Most LACC music students enter the program with low levels of cultural capital and without having had emotional experiences with classical music. The LACC music curriculum (both in the theory and performance sequence of courses) does not mention 'emotion' in course descriptors or student learning outcomes for any music course and there is no method for gauging and assessing student emotional experiences. The data show that although most LACC music students do not feel they are provided the opportunity within the curriculum to consider the material in terms of their emotions, and that most students lack the vocabulary to describe emotional experiences, students feel they would benefit from being asked to engage with the music or material in a more emotional way. LACC music students use their emotional engagement with their preferred musical genres initially when they decide to enter the program and later on to sustain their interest with the curriculum. The data show that despite the lack of formal inclusion of emotion in the curriculum, LACC music students are able to describe emotional experiences, most typically in performance classes. A few students were able to describe an emotional 'lightbulb moment' whereby they recognized the connection between theory and performance, facilitated by faculty.

### **7.1 Expectations of emotional experiences in the classroom**

The interviewed LACC music students agreed that within the curriculum, faculty ask them to focus on the technical rather than the emotional side of music. As all course descriptors must align with the expectations of four-year transfer institutions, the LACC curriculum focuses on the development of technical proficiency; the expectation is that emotional development will occur independently. LACC music students are thus more likely to pass a course due to their technical abilities rather than their ability to process and interpret music emotionally.

Although individual courses do not include the concept of emotion, the combination of the theoretical and performance components of the curriculum helps the student become more aware of the role of emotion in music. Interviewed LACC music students described discussions of emotion most commonly in master classes, despite the topic not being part of the formal course outline or expected student learning outcomes.

As students progress towards becoming legitimate participants in the CoMPs and begin to understand the connections between theory, practice, and history—as well as growing from personal experience—they learn to appreciate the value of having emotional experiences with the music being studied. These emotional experiences occur more often in performance than in theory. The ability of students to connect emotionally with the material helps in part to explain why some students become legitimate peripheral participants in the performance CoMP more quickly than they do in the theory CoMP.

## **7.2 How students benefit from emotional experiences in the classroom**

LACC music students have difficulties describing emotional experiences in the classroom. The majority of interviewed students were unable to articulate at length any experiences where they felt an emotional connection to the material or performance practice, experiences where they were asked by the instructor to consider the material in terms of their emotions, or how those experiences resulted in a deeper understanding of the material or performance practice.

At the same time, LACC music students overwhelmingly agree that they would have a deeper understanding of the material taught in all music courses if they were asked to engage with the music or material in a more emotional way. Tapping into emotion in music courses would be “helpful” (Stephanie), “make a huge difference” (Jennifer), provide “new motivation” (David) and a “better understanding” (Jessica), make the learning “personal” (Jose), help the student be “connected” (Amanda), and “absolutely” would help (Daniel).

All students recognize the importance of emotion in performance and see how emotional experiences could be beneficial in performance classes. As Daniel put it:

If you play without, you know, without feeling, like a robot, then that’s no good, that’s not art. When you’re trying to make art, you’re not trying to just make sound, you’re trying to make it connect to somebody else. And, you know, the emotional aspect is key for that. Without it you won’t connect with anybody.

Similarly, Anthony felt that his practicing and performing would benefit “if from the get-go I would start thinking emotionally instead of just notes and trying to get everything right, I would be a lot more connected to the piece from the beginning.”



Although the majority of students considered the benefits of emotional experiences in terms of their performance courses, Amanda was able to see how emotion could benefit a theory course, saying that “it becomes a part of you, you feel, you understand it better, once you put the emotional part and the actual theory part together.” Students are unable to articulate clearly how emotional experiences might occur in the classroom, but they are able to imagine the benefits of a professor taking such an approach.

Some students are uncertain that emotional engagement is possible in all music courses. Although Michael agreed that “something like [emotional experiences] would be really epic,” he was unable to imagine how emotion could be part of the curriculum:

I feel that a lot of times some of the course work in general...other students that I see, and probably myself as well, they aren't emotionally connected and they look at a lot of the music classes like they would look at a math class or as they would look at a history class.... They don't care, they want to pass, they want to get through it and that is not the purpose of a music school at all, it's to not only further your skills, but music is very personal and you have to be in tune with yourself both mentally, physically, emotionally. It would definitely be positive to find a way to enact more of [emotional engagement], but I have a little bit of a hard time envisioning what that would be.

Samantha believes that the only way to learn about emotions is through personal experience rather than what a teacher can provide in the classroom:

I feel, like, the only way you'll be able to [have emotional experience] is just, like, more experience as opposed to just, like, telling you, 'Hey, you have to do more emotions,' like, 'How do I do that?'

Students are aware that their life experiences can impact their ability to connect emotionally to their performances. Stephanie described a performance of a song in her applied music course:

At the time I had lost two people in my family, like, within two weeks, and I had to sing it for applied that same week. And, uh, I started to sing it and I started to get really emotional, I cracked a little bit, but that was the first time that I ever felt that I actually, like, conveyed emotion when I sang.

Stephanie was able to draw on emotions from a powerful experience outside of school to channel her emotional connection to the music.

The student's level of general musical knowledge can also impact the perception of music. For Elizabeth, “taking music history classes and stuff made me more appreciate [the emotions of the music]. Actually

knowing things always helps.” David put it simply, “The more you know about the piece, the more you can express about it.”

Students who enter the program with previous performance experiences are likely to have emotional experiences from the beginning of their studies. Amanda, who sang in church choirs since the age of nine, found that emotional experiences happened “all the time” in her performance classes. David, who played piano since age six and oboe and trumpet in a youth orchestra in high school, “always [felt] emotional and passionate” in his performances throughout college.

### **7.3 Emotional experiences in the performance curriculum**

Research suggests that emotional learning is more likely to occur in instrumental and performance classes than in music theory or musicianship courses (Mitchell, 2017; StGeorge, Holbrook, & Cantwell, 2014), which supports my findings with LACC music students.

Performance is the main reason most LACC music students want to participate in the music program and the majority of interviewed LACC music students had emotional experiences when singing or performing on their instrument once they entered college. Emotional experiences occur in ensemble and solo performance classes, most notably in private lessons and master classes, where discussions of emotion occur “a lot” (Daniel), “all the time” (Amanda), “any time I perform” (Jennifer), or “always” (David). For Michael, “I feel [in the master class] in particular most teachers at least comment on ‘how do you feel’ [or] ‘what are you thinking’, and that’s crucial.” For Michael, ensemble performances provide emotional involvement: “The thing I’ve been most emotionally involved in is definitely the jazz band, because that’s where I am excelling and that’s what I want to do.” Similarly, Christopher says that performance is “more of what I want to do.” These experiences are facilitated by faculty who help the student engage with the curriculum and motivate them to participate more fully in the performance CoMP.

For some students, live performance can produce fewer positive emotions in that they need to memorize, avoid technical mistakes, and deal with performance anxiety. Sarah mentioned “anxiety issues,” Ashley said “I always have anxiety,” and Amanda mentioned being “scared...worried...terrified.” Michael’s anxiety stemmed from a lack of connection to the genre:

For the classical music that I’ve been working on last semester, I was never as confident and most of it was my nerves and my level that I knew I could play the piece at was well below

where that piece deserved to be played. So that played a lot into the level of emotional involvement I was going to have with the piece.

Students who need to focus on more technical aspects of a performance and do not have a basic level of proficiency will be less likely to have an emotional connection to the music during a performance. If the student has to focus on basic technical components such as playing correct notes, rhythms, and fingerings, they will not be able to incorporate basic interpretative components such as phrasing, dynamics, and fluctuations of tempo into their performances. Without basic technique and a level of comfort with the fundamental aspects of the music, students will be less likely to have emotional experiences during performance.

Ensemble performance provides opportunities for shared emotional experiences with other students, thereby supporting student engagement with the performance CoMP. For Michael, “we all [in the jazz band] are really are passionate about music, which makes [an emotional connection to the material] happen.” The performances themselves can create emotions. In choir, Ashley experienced “a few times where we were performing and then, like, we hit a certain harmony super solid and then it’s like, you get goosebumps cause it’s like, ‘it’s so good’.” Solo vocal performances and vocal ensembles are particularly well suited for an exploration of emotion due to the presence of a text. For Ashley, emotional experiences occurred in choir classes “because of certain pieces that required us to really look at the text and reflect the text with our face or with the way we sang some things.”

#### **7.4 Emotional experiences in the theory curriculum**

Few LACC music students have emotional experiences in theory courses and most are unable to articulate whether they would have a deeper understanding if they were asked by the professor to engage with theory in a more emotional way. Although some LACC music students learn to appreciate and value the harmony courses, few interviewed students could describe emotional experiences in the courses and very few felt they were asked by faculty to engage emotionally with the material during the courses. Harmony caused “frustration” for David and Michael admitted he was “not into” the course. Elizabeth, a commercial producer who is able to feel an emotional connection to the commercial music she creates in the studio, recalls that she “wasn’t really asked” to consider emotion in theory courses, “it was just, ‘read it, sight read it, you know.’” Her initial disconnection from theory in large part had to do with her incoming level of cultural capital:

I didn't often feel [emotionally connected] in theory or musicianship. It wasn't that I disliked it, [but] it was out of my comfort zone, you know. I was so new to it and so I felt like all these people around me were really good at it, so it made me kind of scared of it and not wanting to do it, like fight it a little bit. I never really felt [emotionally connected] in theory and musicianship, I always felt like I had to catch up with others.

The LACC theory curriculum does not require that students consider the material in terms of their emotions. Most students could not recall any of their theory professors ever using the word 'emotion' at any point in any class. Ashley "didn't think I've ever been asked to [consider the material in terms of emotions], not in those words" and she did not "feel like it's ever happened in any other class" outside of performance. Christopher's response is indicative of what most students feel, in that "it's not too often [that professors] asked me to [consider the material] by emotions, it's all about the technique."

Those who were able to describe emotional experiences in theory classes compared those to the greater number of experiences in performance classes. Although Christopher felt that emotional experiences "happened a couple of times," in theory classes, they occurred "more often" in solo instrumental and performance classes. Elizabeth recalled one occasion in an advanced musicianship class, but "before that it wasn't really asked." Christopher "never really felt that much, not emotionally at least" in theory. Jennifer felt that "[answering this question] is so hard." David felt that the courses were "a good struggle." For Ashley, the theory courses were "a gigantic pain for me and then as they went along [I had a sense of] a giant accomplishment."

Some LACC music students believe that emotions do not belong in theory courses. When Jose was in harmony and musicianship, he "would always take [the courses] out of the emotional connection, and [instead would] try to analyze it [and] internalize the rhythms, the progressions, and the interval relation to the chord progression" rather than consider the material in an emotional way. Michael had "a little bit of a tough time envisioning" how theory faculty could support emotional experiences since "most of what we study in [theory] is very set out: 'these are the intervals, this is what you need to do, [so] go practice'."

### **7.5 Emotional experiences that bridge the theory and performance curriculum**

LACC music students are able to have emotional experiences when they begin to comprehend a difficult subject such as theory and when they start to see the connections between theory and performance.

For these students, emotional experiences can be described as ‘lightbulb moments,’ which support their crossing of boundaries and helps them define their identity.

Ashley noted, “when you’re completely confused and don’t know what you’re looking at on the board, and then finally it clicks, and then it’s like everything, it’s like, ‘yes’, like a relief just washes over you. That’s happened a few times.”

Similarly, for Daniel,

There were some times in theory where I was—I don’t know if I felt an emotional connection—but I was pretty impressed by some of the stuff that we were looking at. It seemed so mathematical on paper and then when you listen to it it’s just like, sublime and beautiful and I thought that was really meaningful to me. I felt like I fully understood it when I looked at it from that perspective.

And for Jessica, the applications possible in the higher levels of theory “made it more emotional for me because I then could hear how certain chords work and I was, like, oh my god, I love the way that sounds and I love the way it goes to this place instead of this place and stuff like that.” She was able to “feel an emotional connection [to the curriculum as a whole] more, now that I have a better understanding of theory.”

Elizabeth did not have emotional experiences in theory, but she did feel “an emotional connection” in her applied lessons with private instructors, where she “would apply the musicianship and [harmony]” she learned to create her music. Although Samantha did have emotional experiences in theory, she agreed that those courses “are the foundations.... You, like, need those to help you figure out how to emotionally connect.”

My research supports the theory that students are capable of having strong experiences with music, which can motivate them to continue with their studies (Lamont, 2012) and that the ability to experience emotions in music is influenced by exposure to, learning about, and connection to the music (StGeorge, Holbrook, & Cantwell, 2014). For Wenger (1998), boundaries are frontiers where competence and experience diverge; the ability to cross a frontier can help determine whether a student will join a CoMP. Ashley, Daniel, Jessica, Jose, Elizabeth, and Samantha could describe their ‘lightbulb moments’ as occasions when their previous learning in theory converged with their experience with the music they were studying.

For these students, the crossing of the boundary supported the creation of new concepts, allowing them to reconsider their previous more neutral or negative experiences with the theory classes, and causing them to recognize that their learning can support an emotional connection to the music. These moments change how the students think about their learning. For Wenger (1998), identity is comprised of what students know, what they do not know, what they choose to know, and how they know. For beginning LACC music students, a boundary exists between theory and performance. After the 'lightbulb moment' the students may unconsciously cross that boundary, with valuable learning occurring through a transformation of their identity. In support of Wenger's (1998) theories that identity transformation occurs with connectedness, expansiveness, and effectiveness, the 'lightbulb moments' of these students may result in a stronger connection to each other based on their shared history, increasing their social participation, and resulting in the crossing of the boundary between the theory and performance CoMPs.

### **7.7 How faculty support emotional experiences in the curriculum**

The structure of the LACC music curriculum supports students in having emotional experiences which they can use to cross boundaries and transform their identities. For Wenger (1998), crossing a boundary requires a 'broker' who can give coordination, transparency, and negotiability by inspiring the student to develop new ideas and challenge old ones. In the LACC music program, the broker often is a faculty member willing to coordinate (adapt or simplify a CoMP to reduce boundaries), increase transparency (by helping students at the boundaries to better understand why the curriculum is structured the way it is), and negotiate (by supporting communication to help students engage with CoMPs).

Faculty can facilitate emotional experiences in performance courses by discussing what it means to be musical (musicality) in addition to the development of technique. Faculty, either in a one-on-one setting in a private lesson or in a group setting in a master class, can encourage and support the student as they engage with the CoMP. The role of the faculty member is substantial in that students trust that the faculty are masters of the material.

For LACC music students, emotional experiences can occur while listening to or performing music, either inside or outside of class. Students who described "being asked" or "told" by their private teacher or applied music master class teacher to consider and discuss their emotions in class were able to describe

these experiences in specific terms, suggesting that these were memorable learning experiences for the student.

In the performance of a guitar piece, Anthony received a practical suggestion for connecting with the music:

[The instructor asked me to] play as though I had forgotten [the piece] and I was trying to remember it, and that was the first instruction that actually made me think of something outside of, 'oh, just play it sweetly'. This was actually, like, 'oh, I'm trying to remember it, trying to pull it out of the air'...[which] made me connect more with the music.

Other instructors asked their students to “physically show more emotion” through body language when performing (Samantha), “figure out what I really want to be singing and how I actually want to be singing it” (Jennifer), “expose more” of himself (David), and “hear everything in context” (Jose). Students believed that considering their emotions resulted in playing that was “not as mechanical” (Michael), “helps with the performance” (Ashley), “bring the music to life” (Samantha), cause him to “pay more attention” (Matthew), provide a “deeper understanding” of the music (Daniel, Christopher), or results in “progress with my phrasing and musicality” and “getting in touch with some of the emotions that I don't really express that much in front of other people” (Sarah). For Christopher, deeper understanding came “especially in [the] master class because we talk about [emotions], when they kind of tell us, like, ‘this is happening because this is the emotion [the music] is supposed to portray, this is what the composer was thinking’.”

For Amanda, empathy for the composer resulted in a more emotional performance:

Once you understand the emotional part and actually understand, like, the composer chose these lyrics for a reason...it's like [there is] a reason he wanted to repeat that word, a reason he wanted to phrase it like this.... Actually trying to put myself in his shoes or trying to understand, to put my own life into the song helped me so much to express the song and it came out better.

My research supports other studies suggesting that a feeling of belonging in a CoMP occurs when students believe the pedagogy is inclusive, supports a shared musical space that encourages participation, levels power relationships, and allows them to feel safe (Mellor, 2011). My findings also support other research concluding that music curriculum is more relevant to the student when it supports the creativity and the making of music, rather than the technique required to play music (Finney & Philpott, 2010).

For LACC music students, emotional experiences are more likely to occur when they feel they are part of a CoMP, what Mellor (2011) calls a 'sense of being.' My research supports Mellor's (2011) findings that higher education community music programs have the capacity to develop dispositions towards, energy, and commitment and qualities of emotional learning.

LACC music student emotional experiences are facilitated by faculty and provide the student with a sense of acceptance and formation of identity within the CoMPs. Students describe such experiences as resulting in "letting...go," becoming more "aware," and "getting in touch" with their feelings. The fact that these students were able to recall very specific emotional experiences and describe those moments in detail, coupled with the fact that students feel they would benefit from being asked by faculty to consider the material in terms of their emotions, confirms that faculty who actively work to include discussions of emotion in their classes will increase student opportunities to cross boundaries and join CoMPs.

The most significant engagement occurs when a student no longer senses a barrier between the theory and performance CoMPs. These emotional experiences provide the student with a sense of legitimacy and a recognition of the value of the curriculum as a whole. Full participation occurs when the student is no longer defined in terms of skills they lack or possess as a result of their cultural capital, but instead occurs when the student is defined by their integration into the CoMPs. They define their identity in the CoMPs and believe that they are accepted as equal members of the community.



## Chapter 8: Discussion

### 8.1 Themes emerging from LACC music student journeys

*i. Students select a community college music program because of their formative musical interests, the college's low level of institutional capital, and because they believe the program will help them develop the cultural capital necessary to reach their musical goals.*

LACC music students choose to enter the music program because of their formative musical interests. The capital and habitus of LACC music students is gained from their families and through life experiences, including their musical interest prior to attending college, and is in part dependent on their social class and exposure to learning opportunities. Many students have informal training and previous exposure to music in their formative years, with many of them singing and playing instruments and performing music in public, and as such they develop an interest in a variety of music genres. The formative musical experiences provide value, as it impacts a student's decision to study music in higher education. The most commonly identified reasons for attending the LACC music program are location, cost, and the desire to study music. An additional factor is that the program provides no barriers because there are no minimum requirements or standards for entry.

My data support Bourdieu's (1984) theory that students tend to choose an educational path that most closely aligns with their habitus. This decision-making occurs at a subconscious level and functions as a filter between the student and the community they are trying to enter. Music students who believe that their background does not support the conservatory or traditional four-year music school model will not bother trying to enter that academic path. Students exclude themselves from places from which they feel excluded. Habitus thus helps explain, in part, why students with lower levels of cultural capital decide to study at a community college. Most critically, students do not need to possess the dominant cultural capital that is expected at schools that have admission requirements. This lower level of cultural capital, however, is at odds with the music curriculum that, even in the entry levels, rewards those students who possess the dominant cultural capital. There is a disparity between the college, which has a low level of institutional capital and attracts students that have low levels of cultural capital, and the expectations placed on students by the music program, which rewards higher levels of cultural capital than incoming students typically possess. The disparity between the institutional capital and student cultural capital results in the LACC music curriculum being challenging to many incoming students.

- ii. *The community college music curriculum rewards students with cultural capital.*
  - a. *Students with higher levels of cultural capital can utilize their capital to quickly enter both theory and performance CoMPs.*
  - b. *Regardless of level of cultural capital, students tend to enter the performance CoMP more quickly than they do the theory CoMP.*
  - c. *Regardless of level of cultural capital, students are able to learn to value the curriculum as a whole.*

LACC music students—regardless of economic background, age, gender, ethnicity, previous identification with particular music genres, musical goal, area of interest, type of instrument, performing experience, and capital acquired in their upbringing—have the capacity to become legitimate peripheral participants in both the theory and performance CoMPs. Students who enter with higher levels of cultural capital have an advantage in that they do not need to acquire as much additional capital, and as a result they enter both CoMPs more quickly than students with lower levels of cultural capital. Students who enter with higher levels of cultural capital tend to enter the theory and performance CoMPs at the same rate. Students who enter with lower levels of cultural capital tend to enter the performance CoMP, which has more informal/external learning opportunities, more quickly than they do the theory CoMP, which has more formal/internal learning.

As they progress in their studies, LACC music students are able to change the primary music genres with which they identify, while maintaining their initial interests. Students expand their level of interest in other music genres and begin to identify with classical music or jazz as much as they do with the music genres that they identified with before they entered the program. As these students learn to identify with genres including the classical repertoire, they begin to find meaning with and strengthen their connection to the classically based curriculum. By aligning their musical tastes with what is being studied in the curriculum, students on the periphery can increase their engagement with the CoMPs.

*iii. A community college music program supports the formation of CoMPs, which provide a student with multiple ways to engage with the curriculum.*

My data support existing research suggesting that a CoMP offers students a shared repertoire towards a shared goal (Waldron, 2009; Beineke, 2013; Partti, 2014), mutual engagement (Partti, 2014), and identity formation through membership and brokering (Morrison, 2001; Blair, 2008; Mantie & Tucker, 2008; Pellegrino, 2010; Partti, 2014; Luebke, 2013). The situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation that occurs in a CoMP occurs socially, creates identity, and can change over time (Zaffini, 2018).

Existing research suggests the CoMPs exist for various musical genres, can provide social and cultural capital, and can validate identity (Countryman, 2009, Hewitt 2009a, Burnard, 2012). Theory and performance CoMPs—including ensemble, instrumental, harmony, and musicianship—provide students with opportunities to support existing capital, develop new capital, and validate identity. The numerous opportunities for situated learning through these various CoMPs allow LACC music students to find value in the curriculum as they begin to learn by doing. As students participate in these areas of study, they recognize the existence of the CoMPs and learn what they need to do to enter a CoMP.

The data suggest that LACC music students are shaped by the learning experiences and opportunities provided by engaging with multiple CoMPs, including wider access and interactions with other students, overlapping intellectual and embodied learning experiences, and the development of shared competencies and histories that strengthen engagement with the curriculum. These findings support similar conclusions in existing research (Perkins, 2013; Conkling, 2016; Karlsen, 2010).

*iv. Although the community college music curriculum is not designed to gauge and assess emotional experiences, students experience emotions in the classroom and feel they would benefit from being asked by their professors to engage with the curriculum in an emotional way.*

The data suggest that despite the lack of formal inclusion of emotion in the curriculum, LACC music students are able to describe emotional experiences, most typically in performance classes. Some students are able to describe an emotional ‘lightbulb moment’ whereby they recognize the connection between theory and performance, typically facilitated by a faculty broker.

Both the theory and performance components of the community college music curriculum support technical rather than emotional learning. None of the course descriptors or student learning outcomes for any music course within the articulation agreements with the most common transfer institutions includes any mention of the concept of emotion, and as such faculty do not assess whether a student has an emotional connection to the music. Four-year transfer schools either expect that community college music students will learn the emotional side of music independently or develop emotional proficiency later on once the student transfers.

Many interviewed LACC music students struggled to describe emotional experiences with music and lacked the vocabulary necessary to articulate such experiences. Students who have emotional experiences, however, want to learn emotionally, and they believe that if they were taught how to learn

emotionally that they would benefit from such a learning modality. Students recognize the importance of emotion in performance and see how having an emotional connection to the material could be beneficial for them. If the curriculum supported emotional learning experiences, LACC music students believe that they would be more motivated to continue their studies.

*v. Emotional experiences, either facilitated by faculty brokers or through experiences with peers, can motivate students to engage with CoMPs.*

LACC music students use emotional experiences to help see themselves as legitimate peripheral participants in CoMPs. Their ability to have such emotional experiences also helps them be seen as legitimate participants by the rest of the community. By having an emotional connection to the material, in addition to a theoretical and technical understanding, students strengthen their engagement with the CoMPs. In the beginning levels, emotional experiences occur more often in performance than in theory due to the nature of the performance curriculum, which is more external, informal, culturally responsive, inclusive of genres with which the student is more likely to identify, and supportive of collaborative shared experiences. Emotional experiences occur most often when inspirational faculty brokers provide the student with an experience that provides them with a sense of belonging in the CoMP.

Faculty brokers can support the student in having moments where the material ‘clicks,’ providing the student with a sense of self-worth, accomplishment, and connection to the material, which in turn adds to their legitimacy within a CoMP. Students connect to a subject when they can relate to it and when they can see the value of the subject to their learning. Legitimacy is likely to occur when students reinterpret previously learned material in a way that makes clearer the purpose of the material and how it relates to their musical goals. The reinterpretation of material may happen with a single CoMP, but a stronger type of legitimacy occurs when the student crosses boundaries between CoMPs and acquires a shared repertoire of resources.

*vi. The most significant learning experience occurs when students have a ‘lightbulb moment,’ whereby they see the connections between theory and performance.*

My research suggests that students in CoMPs who see the connections between theory, performance, and their life experiences have the capacity for a ‘lightbulb moment,’ whereby they appreciate the value of the curriculum, recognize their legitimacy, and gain confidence that they can succeed as musicians. LACC music students make emotional connections between music subjects. They describe these

moments as being “impressive,” providing “relief,” containing “beauty,” being “sublime,” having “magic,” making one “appreciate” more, and inspiring “love” for the experience. During the ‘lightbulb moment’ a student crosses a boundary and transforms their identity. Such a learning experience occurs during courses and provides an emotional connection and validity to the curriculum, motivating the student to continue with their studies.

## **8.2 What inhibits and enables LACC music student engagement with the curriculum**

The interviewed LACC music students engaged with the curriculum at varying levels and at different rates. The data suggest that several factors can enable student engagement with the curriculum.

### **8.2.a Initial engagement through the performance CoMP**

LACC music students engage early on with the performance courses. Students who have emotional experiences in performances use those experiences as a way to engage with the rest of the curriculum. All the participants who entered the program without previous exposure to classical music (Jessica, Elizabeth, and Anthony) became committed to the program after taking a performance class. Anthony entered as a philosophy major before taking a classical guitar class, Jennifer started in astronomy before taking introductory voice and becoming “hooked” and Ashley “wasn’t sure exactly what I wanted to do” before realizing that guitar “is what I have to do.”

For the majority of LACC music students, the playing of music is what they enjoy the most. Samantha’s years of experience with classical music in high school provided the foundation for her emotional experiences in performance classes. She stated that performance is “what I live for” and that emotional experiences in music came at “any time” whether she was “practicing or performing.” Daniel, who had performance experience prior to college, said the performance opportunities “were pretty incredible” and “that’s probably the one I like the most: performance.” Similarly, Michael had some formal performance experience prior to college and found that “the thing I’ve been most emotionally involved in is definitely the jazz band, because that’s where I am excelling and that’s what I want to do.” Anthony, who had more informal performance experiences prior to college, was still able to find that emotional experiences occurred “all the time” in solo performance classes. Ashley, who had no previous exposure to classical music and did not have any lessons prior to college, said her interest in performance is “all the way up there.”

The majority of LACC music students who have emotional experiences in solo performance classes are inspired by faculty. Private lessons and master classes, which include critiques of performances, provide a student with direct opportunities for emotional experiences. In master classes, students compare their emotional reactions to different interpretations, learn what occurred during the performance to produce such emotions, and begin to apply those concepts to their own performances. Michael felt that “the master class is probably the time that [emotion] comes up the most, as the teachers “comment on ‘how do you feel’, ‘what are you thinking’ and that’s crucial.” Daniel considered the material in terms of his emotions “with my private teacher...a lot.” David was “always being asked to expose more and more emotion” in master classes and was told that his performance “has to be musical, has to have emotion, a range of sounds and feelings in it.” Anthony received guidance from his guitar instructor to play “as though I had forgotten” the piece, which was the first time he had received instruction that made him “connect more with the music.”

Amanda initially struggled in the program as she had no previous musical experience, but she attributes her transformation into an engaged music student to dedicated faculty and interactions with students in performance classes. Her applied program private teacher invested much time into her development and fostered emotional experiences: “[My instructor] helped me a lot with interpreting [a] song. [He said] it’s not just something to sing, it’s something that you should feel also, because that just gives so much more to the [performance].” Christopher, whose primary interest in higher education was to improve his performance skills and who never fully engaged with the theory CoMP, found emotional experiences occurred

...when other people are performing, especially in master class, because we talk about [emotion in the music], when [the instructors] kind of tell us, like, ‘this is happening because this is the emotion [the music] is supposed to portray, this is what the composer was thinking’ ...that definitely results in a deeper understanding.

LACC music students find that emotional experiences also occur in small and large ensembles. Students in ensembles have a wide range of experience and skill, which provides opportunities for students to learn from each other. Michael noticed that his high level of interest in the jazz ensemble, which included students of many different levels, came because all the students “really are passionate about music, which makes it happen.” Emotion in ensemble performance is supported primarily from the conductor. Ashley felt that “in choir, analyzing the material helps” and that emotional experiences can be supported by conductors who “require us to really look at the text and reflect the text.” Faculty

support emotional experiences in ensembles by including a varied musical repertoire that allow students to perform genres with which they may connect to in an emotional way.

Another factor influencing emotional experiences in performance classes is whether students have sufficient technique so they can begin to focus on musicality. The learning outcomes of applied music classes, for example, are to play with precise rhythm and correct pitches with accurate intonation; correct articulation, dynamics, and phrasing; and expression appropriate to the literature being studied (Applied Music C-ID, 2018). The implication is that technique can be used as a foundation for expression. LACC music students unable to describe emotional experiences find in part that their instructors focus on technique over interpretation.

LACC music students recognize the strong relationship between technique and emotion. Daniel argues that “feeling music is so much more important than all these things you practice in the practice room, like scales and time, playing the right notes at the right time and everything, so being able to feel it with an emotional connection, it is a deeper understanding.” His engagement was strongest with jazz performance, which increased once he learned more about the underlying theory and became more fluent as a performer: “To learn how to play jazz you have to understand so much of it and then you also have to let it go at the same time. The letting it go part is particularly emotional because you have to listen to yourself.” Anthony finds that “the best way I learn is if I go into my applied instruction just learning the technique, learning the notes, and learning how to phrase everything correctly, and the master class is where I truly learn how to, you know, get emotional with the piece, feel it a different way.” For these students, a solid technique allows them to focus on musicality. Students who enter with lower levels of cultural capital or have no previous musical experience, or those students who do not put the time into practicing their technique, logically will take longer to reach this stage of learning.

### **8.2.b Using the performance CoMP to engage with the theory CoMP**

LACC music students use their initial engagement with performance to motivate them to engage with theory. Students recognize how theory can influence performance during analysis, when they learn to identify precise moments that arouse emotion, analyze those moments, and begin to value analysis and as a way to explain the emotions they are feeling. Students then can use this theoretical knowledge to inform their own performances.

LACC music students recognize the value of a diverse curriculum that provides multiple experiences and opportunities for engagement. Few students enter the program with an appreciation of music theory. Jennifer, Anthony, and Matthew, however, were engaged with theory from the very beginning of their studies. All three students completed the program quickly and transferred to four-year schools as music majors. Jennifer quickly became “hooked” with theory. Her appreciation of theory was for its intellectual component, “because it’s kind of like a puzzle and I like puzzles. I really like the mental side of it.” Although she entered the program without a significant music background (“I came into it knowing less than nothing”), she became a legitimate peripheral participant in both the theory and performance CoMPs and transferred within a few years as a performance major. Anthony described theory as his “most invested class” because it “just clicked.” Matthew was a strong performer and felt that he could “click with a piece when I...feel an emotional welling within me” and was “very into” theory and “knew that getting to know the theory of music would help me play better.”

Most LACC music students learn to appreciate theory over time, especially once they are able to connect theory and performance and see how one subject benefits the other. Amanda learned to connect theory and performance, saying “it becomes a part of you, you feel, you understand it better, once you, like, put the emotional part and the actual theory part together.” She mentioned faculty involvement as a contributing factor to her transformation, which occurred once she learned to “love theory.” She added, “I’m kind of sad it’s over...I noticed that it’s helped me so much with music, like I kind of feel now where the music is going to go, where it’s going to take me. [Theory] helps me understand [performance at] a different level.” Similarly to Amanda, Ashley struggled in her introductory classes, but she learned over time to “feel an emotional connection more now that I have a better understanding of theory.” Like Amanda, she worked full-time and took longer to finish the program, although she eventually transferred as a performance major. Sarah excelled in theory and performance classes and used her knowledge of theory “to connect” to her performances.

The ability to connect theory and performance provides LACC music students with emotional learning experiences. David believed that “in order to perform [music] correctly you have to think on a more, deeper way to understand the context of the music and perform it the way it should be performed, stylistically.” Like Samantha and Matthew, David valued theory for its impact on his performances and its ability to help him express his emotions in music. He completed his degree and began gigging as a performer. Jose entered the program with a well-rounded music background, was “completely interested” in all the course offerings, and he appreciated the connections between theory and



performance: “A lot of people say that learning music [theory] would, you know, make you have lost the magic and like lost the appeal for the song, but I say it’s quite the opposite, it actually makes you appreciate the song a lot more and, like, why it actually hits you hard.” Similarly, for Amanda emotional learning “becomes a part of you, you feel, you understand it better, once you...put the emotional part and the actual theory part together.” As David put it, “When you bring emotion into the equation, then there is a new motivation because it’s no longer just some assignment or some piece, [but instead it] is something you wish to express out of your own heart.”

### **8.2.c Learning to value the curriculum as a whole**

The journeys of two successful students illustrate that a student who is not emotionally connected to the material is still able to engage with the curriculum if they appreciate its value toward their future careers in music.

Elizabeth entered the program with no previous experience playing music and limited cultural capital. Throughout her studies she never altered her goal, which was to develop skills in music technology and music production. Although she had little emotional connection to either performance or theory, she recognized the importance of both subjects in helping her in composing and producing and was able to devote her energies to these areas of study. She recognized that “taking music history classes and stuff made me more appreciate [the emotions of the music]. Actually knowing things always helps.” She worked full-time throughout college, which caused her to take six years before completing the program, three times the expected length. She believed she was “a very emotional person” and had the capacity for emotional experiences with music, although the core music classes at LACC did not provide her with the opportunity to connect emotionally.

I feel if there was...I know that [other schools] have commercial theory and stuff...and so it would be cool to, like, learn more of that. And I feel like commercial stuff needs to be more up to par with learning classical stuff.... I feel like if that was taken more seriously, it would make me more emotional about it, you know what I mean?

Elizabeth remained dedicated to music technology and utilized the curriculum as a means to an end. She recognized the value of the program towards her musical goals; she completed her degree and transferred as a music technology major.

Although he took only one theory course, admitted that “I’m not that into classical music,” and he struggled with musicianship, Michael was still able to use his experience at LACC as a vehicle to transfer

as a jazz performance major to a four-year college. His journey reveals one side of the relationship between two and four-year colleges, in that the transfer application process for performance majors at many four-year colleges includes an audition, which determines acceptance into the program, and a theory placement exam, which determines the level of theory the student will be placed into if they are accepted. The four-year colleges are thus looking more at the student's skill in performance than their ability in theory. For a performance major interested in jazz, like Michael, strong performing skills can mask an inability or unwillingness to fully engage with theory. Like Elizabeth, Michael valued the theoretical side of the curriculum, albeit as a means to an end.

#### **8.2.d Factors that inhibit engagement with the curriculum**

The participants in the study who were unable to join the full music CoMP (Stephanie, Ashley, Christopher) completed several semesters of coursework, but they either did not complete a program of study in music or they did not transfer. All three participants had lessons and performance opportunities during their upbringing. Despite the advantages provided by these experiences and the ease with which they joined the performance CoMP, these students had limited engagement with the theory courses and lacked identity within the music department, even after several years in the program. These students struggled with higher education, had issues attending class and completing homework, and did not have the motivation to devote sufficient energy to learn the theoretical side of the curriculum.

##### **(a) Lack of value for the curriculum**

Stephanie took eight years to complete the program and although she took performance classes each semester, she took time off between theory classes and was inconsistent in her approach. Her commitment to theory was in terms of how it could benefit her singing and writing popular songs and she never learned to value classical music theory. Similarly, Christopher acknowledged that classical theory could help him interpret popular music, but if the material "didn't come easy" he might "practice it another time or just not do it." His hope for the theory course was that he would be able relate it to his interest in pop music. Neither Christopher nor Stephanie had emotional experiences in any theory class. For these students, emotional experiences and the building of identity may have been more likely had the material focused on popular or jazz theory. Stephanie and Christopher continued to struggle with theory and neither became legitimate peripheral participants in the theory CoMP. A further challenge for both Stephanie and Christopher was that they had to work full-time during their studies,

which in part contributed to the extended amount of time it took them to complete their coursework. Neither student transferred.

Ashley's story is illuminating in that she entered the program with several years of musical experience starting as a young child. She had financial support and did not have to work during college. A significant challenge for Ashley, however, was her self-doubt, which caused performance anxiety. The anxiety prevented her from performing solo, but she persisted in the program as early on she developed a passion for choral singing. Her commitment to the performance CoMP and ability to experience emotion when performing the genres of music that she appreciated were sufficient to keep her in the program, and she was able to describe numerous emotional experiences in the choir. Her inability to perform solo, however, prevented her from becoming a legitimate peripheral participant in the performance CoMP and resulted in a lack of motivation that prevented her from committing fully to her studies. As with Stephanie and Christopher, Ashley was unable to engage with her theory courses. She found theory "tedious," only took the courses because they were required, and could only "half-ass" musicianship. Although she was capable of persisting in theory and described that if the material in theory "clicks" she could "feel better about [herself]," she continued to struggle with theory and never engaged with the theory CoMP.

#### **(b) Lack of emotional experiences in the classroom**

Both Stephanie and Christopher were performers prior to entering college. Stephanie's father was a musician and Christopher played in church bands and popular music ensembles. Both were singers and quickly became legitimate peripheral participants in the performance CoMP. In college, Stephanie focused on jazz, while Christopher remained interested in popular music and continued to pursue his goal of being a pop singer. Although Christopher felt an emotional connection to performance, since that is "what I want to do," he could not recall any emotional experience facilitated by an instructor in any of his classes. He was a top performer with natural talent and excelled in performance classes without much effort. Similarly, Stephanie's talent provided her with motivation and an identity in performance classes, and like Christopher she was unable to describe any significant emotional experience during her studies.

Despite Ashley's numerous advantages (talent and previous experience in performance, capacity for emotional learning, financial support), she was unable to overcome her lack of confidence and inability to engage with the theory courses, leaving her on the periphery. Her journey is troubling in that she

likely would have benefited from engaged faculty serving as brokers, who could have provided tools to help her begin to overcome her anxiety. She described one emotional experience as she sang a melody in a musicianship class and the instructor said, “[all the notes] are right, you just need the confidence.” The validation from her instructor was a powerful learning experience and for that moment she “felt better” about herself and her performance. Additional faculty interventions may have provided Ashley with the emotional support she needed to become a full participant in the music department CoMP.

### **8.3 Summary**

LACC music students choose community college because their cultural capital aligns with the capital of the institution and because they believe the curriculum will provide them with the additional capital they need to succeed. Through theory and performance CoMPs, students have multiple ways to engage with the curriculum. Students engage more easily with the performance curriculum and in the initial stages use the performance CoMP to sustain their engagement with the program. Students who engage with both the theory and performance curriculum are supported in part by faculty brokers and they sustain their engagement by recognizing the connections between the subjects and valuing the long-term benefits of the curriculum as a whole.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

### 9.1 Personal experiences

My research questions (What factors contribute to how LACC music students engage with the curriculum? How can the music department increase student engagement with the curriculum?) evolved from my experiences in music prior to college, my experiences during my nearly 20 years at LACC, my concerns with low student success rates in my department, and a recognition that I needed to better understand how students engage with the faculty and music program, and in turn how the faculty and music program engage with the students.

Research suggests that student-faculty engagement is the best predictor of persistence in Latinx community college students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997) and that faculty student engagement is a significant predictor of black male community college students feeling a sense of belonging (Newman, Wood, & Harris, 2015). These findings are of particular important to LACC in that the majority of students are Latinx and the highest disproportionately impacted group is black males (Los Angeles City College Program Review Data, 2017). A significant finding of Cejda and Hoover's study is that faculty can engage Latinx students by developing an appreciation of culture: "The community college faculty we interviewed stressed that "culture matters," and pointed to knowledge, appreciation, and sensitivity to Hispanic culture as the key component to successfully engaging Latino students" (p.142).

Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005) conclude in their study of the role that college faculty play in student engagement that "the educational context created by faculty behaviors and attitudes has a dramatic effect on student learning and engagement" (p. 180). It is through self-reflection that teachers can better understand how their culture impacts their relationship to their students and to question whether they need to teach differently from how they were taught.

I provide my own reflections on my experiences as a music student because, like many of my students, I entered a music community as an outsider and benefited greatly from situated learning with other students and inspirational faculty. My story can be readily compared to the journeys of typical LACC music students and is intended to underscore one of the reasons why I decided to pursue this study, which is that in my experience students want to study music with which they have a strong emotional connection. My story may suggest pathways towards increased engagement with a music curriculum.

### **9.1.a Before college**

My own journey as a novice in the classical music community occurred in a manner similar to LACC music students who acquired cultural capital prior to entering college, except in my case I had significant exposure to classical music throughout my entire upbringing. I began to study music in private piano lessons starting in South Korea at the age of four. I learned to value classical piano and classical music, although I did not have a choice of whether to practice, nor did I have a choice of which genres to perform. My classical music linguistic and cultural competence came as a direct result of my family, who expected that I would play classical piano. My family was aware that classical music is the dominant culture in music education and that the study of music would help me throughout my education. My parents valued classical music and believed I would get social, emotional, and intellectual benefits from my studies. Their assumptions were based more on culture than research, but the social and cognitive benefits for adolescents studying music are widely documented, including phonological awareness (Gordon et al., 2015); reading skills (Standley, 2018); language, memory, hand-eye coordination, study habits, teamwork, and mental processing and problem solving (Silverstone, 2018); behavior, self-confidence, empathy, self-esteem, and social abilities (Chao Fernández et al., 2015); and quality of school life (Eerola & Eerola, 2014). I developed strong musicianship skills and continued my piano studies once I emigrated to the United States at the age of 12. I had no prior experience with the English language or American culture, and I can attribute, in part, my ability to adapt to my new environment and quickly master English as a second language to my fluency with music. ESL classes did not exist in my elementary school, so I had to 'sink or swim' and had no other choice but to learn English quickly, which I did through television shows and language immersion courses. Although I did not consider it at the time, I am certain that the musicianship skills I had developed over many years proved useful as I learned to hear and imitate my new language. My math skills, study habits, and mental processing were already well developed, as was my confidence from years of musical performances. My school experiences were not all positive, as I endured stereotyping and racist insults from ignorant classmates who had never before met an Asian. At times I felt uncertain with and excluded from the dominant culture of the other students. These degrading and unsettling experiences have stayed with me to this day, and I can attribute some of my empathy, resiliency, determination, need to continue to improve myself (which comes with a need to prove myself to others), and emotional and passionate nature to having to protect myself and manage through these traumas. My experience as a cultural outsider provided me with many of the assets that LACC music students possess, including modeling and a strong work ethic, being multilingual, appreciating culture and adapting to new cultures, valuing higher

education, wanting to be a role model and give back to one's community, knowing how to navigate liminal spaces, being able to understand contradictions, overcoming hardship, developing resistance, and overcoming stereotypes including macro and micro-aggressions (Rendon, 2006).

Through practicing and studying with a piano teacher throughout high school and situated learning with fellow student musicians in multiple settings, I believed early on that I was a full member of the classical music community of practice. My participation was legitimate, I was committed to the domain of classical music, had a shared competence with other classical musicians, and I identified myself as a member of the community. My educational experiences, lessons, continuous study of music, and shared repertoire with other classical musicians grounded my learning in the actual practice of classical music. Peripheral forms of participation occurred in communities outside of school through public performances with other musicians. Unlike most LACC music students, I acquired significant cultural capital and had the resources and skills to proceed directly to a four-year college. I had a deep appreciation for classical music, had powerful emotions both listening to and playing the music, and had many affective memories of shared musical experiences throughout my upbringing. I developed an affinity for music in the sense described by StGeorge, Holbrook, and Cantwell (2014): I explored the world of classical music and had fun playing my instrument, I was committed to classical music and knew I would continue performing it throughout my life, I had many emotional experiences with classical music, and I identified my inner self as a classical musician. I was able to perceive and understand emotion in myself and others, integrate emotion in facilitating my thoughts and interpreting my music, and regulate my emotions, which are all characteristics of emotional intelligence (Corcoran & Tormey, 2010, 2012, 2013; Cougar Hall & West, 2011; Dacre Pool & Qualter, 2012; Hen & Walter, 2012; Kocoglu, 2011; Perry et al., 2004). I felt a sense of community with fellow musicians and had a sense of being, which allowed me to feel safe in emotionally engaging with classical music.

### **9.1.b In higher education**

My full participation in the CoMP in college came from situated learning with peers and faculty mentors. I strengthened my individual identity and formed social groups that resulted in mutual relationships allowing for the sharing of information and collaborative learning. The benefits I experienced in these CoMPs are supported by recent music research. Student peers with a shared area of interest or instrument can create a community that provides opportunities for reflection in action, a sense of belonging, and a deeper understanding of the music discipline (Reid & Duke, 2015). A CoMP of music

students and faculty mentors provides a sense of belonging, situated and shared learning, identity building, mutual accountability, and models for students to become professional musicians (Kenny, 2014; McClellan, 2018). Similarly, a community of music educators provides novice music educators opportunities to learn from multiple veteran mentors (Blair, 2008; Zaffini, 2018).

Mentors were of critical importance to my development as a musician and my engagement with the curriculum. One particularly influential piano professor required that I play shorter, lesser known, highly emotional compositions when at the time I preferred to play more well-known, flashy, crowd pleasing pieces. I resisted at first, but I quickly became emotionally connected to these works. Mentors in a study-abroad program in Florence, Italy strengthened my interest in European culture and history and deepened my classical music cultural capital. My interest in travel and learning about European culture was of critical importance for my ability to engage emotionally with and interpret classical music.

Research suggests that there are numerous benefits for students in travelling abroad and experiencing new cultures, including developing cultural capital and greater knowledge, continuing in their studies, and increasing employability skills leading to future employment benefits, especially for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Cisneros-Donahue et al., 2012; Potts, 2015; Trower & Lehmann, 2017).

My experiences in the cultures of numerous CoMPs, led by a dominant class of classical musicians, was transmitted and rewarded by the educational system once I entered higher education, completed my degrees, and utilized my capital in the marketplace to join LACC as a professor of music.

## **9.2 Practice implications: Increasing student engagement with the curriculum**

The data suggest that LACC music students select a community college program because of their formative experiences with music and the college's low level of institutional capital. Students enter the program with the belief that completing the program will help them develop the capital necessary to reach their musical goals. Students tend to enter the performance CoMP more quickly than they do the theory CoMP, since there are more immediate opportunities for engagement during performances. Due to its emphasis on classical music, the LACC music program rewards students with cultural capital (those who have a background in classical music) and these students are more likely to quickly enter both the theory and performance CoMPs. The data suggest that LACC music students with lower levels of cultural capital, which are the majority of students, struggle more with the part of the curriculum that does not



align with their preferred music genres, but they have the ability to learn to value the curriculum and become members of both the theory and performance CoMPs.

The implications are that music student initial engagement in the performance curriculum can support engagement with the theory curriculum, that students can define identity by engaging in CoMPs, and that engagement increases when students learn to value the curriculum as a whole.

The practices described below focus on changes that can be made within existing music curriculum, with the awareness that a community college curriculum must continue to align with the dominant culture of transfer institutions. The changes are intended to support students in acquiring additional cultural capital and engaging with CoMPs, with the goal of helping students engage with the curriculum as a whole.

### **9.2.a. Preparing the incoming student: Valuing the curriculum as a pathway to a career in music**

#### **(a) Introductory courses that provide context**

The data suggest that introductory courses that provide context for the music student can help them better understand the elements of the theory and performance CoMPs and learn the value of the curriculum as a whole.

Music appreciation, a course that typically exposes a student to Western classical music, is not required for the state-approved degree, but it is an option among other humanities courses in many community colleges. Beginning music majors who are required to take a music appreciation course based on Western art music, either in a bridge program or during the first semester, may be able to better appreciate the history and elements of classical music that form the basis of the theory and performance curriculum.

Similarly, an introductory course that illustrates the connection between music education and the music industry is not required in the curriculum. Beginning music majors may benefit from a course that provides information about the educational requirements for entry into fields in music industry (performing, composing, recording, business, education, journalism, public relations, therapy, or instrument work, among others) and the likelihood of finding employment in those fields. Students will benefit from knowing that the higher education curriculum is designed for transfer and ultimately find work in the music industry, and thus will require them to engage with Western classical music. Incoming

students may be encouraged by knowing ahead of time that the music curriculum supports the formation of multiple CoMPs through formal and informal educational experiences that will ground their learning in practice and connect their practice with their learning.

Introductory music courses can align with the musical interests of incoming students and prepare them for the type of music they will be expected to learn during their studies. An entry survey of incoming music majors could provide data that would allow a music department to compare the type of harmony a typical student desires to learn (the harmony of the music they want to play or with which they were raised) with the existing theory learning outcomes, and can be used by faculty to begin discussions on whether the curriculum could more closely reflect the cultural capital of incoming students. The goal should be for faculty to be more aware of and responsive to the cultural capital of incoming students.

#### **(b) Ensemble performances as a gateway to CoMPs**

The data suggest that the LACC music program supports the formation of theory and performance CoMPs, which provide a student with multiple ways to engage with the curriculum. These CoMPs provide students with opportunities to support existing cultural capital, develop new cultural capital, and help define identity. Since students are more emotionally connected to the music they perform, they strive to join the performance CoMP more quickly than they do the theory CoMP. By including a variety of different genres in ensemble courses, students may have additional opportunities for emotional experiences in the classroom, regardless of incoming level of cultural capital. As ensembles provide opportunities for engagement and can help motivate the student, the curriculum should support numerous ensemble performance opportunities for beginning level students.

Research indicates that the integration of informal pedagogy and contextualization of the curriculum to more closely align with student interests may support emotional learning in introductory classes (Green, 2001; Green, 2008; Wright, 2008; Finney & Philpott, 2010; Karlsen, 2010; Irwin, 2016). Performance courses by nature provide such informal learning opportunities. The integration of informal pedagogy and contextualization of the curriculum to align with student interests is likely to support emotional learning and legitimate peripheral participation in the performance CoMP earlier on in a music program.

### **9.2.b Continuing students: Increasing engagement across the curriculum**

Student engagement can be supported by better aligning the curriculum with student interests through approaches including culturally relevant curriculum, and by supporting students who are engaged with performance to recognize the critical connections between theory and performance, leading to the crossing of boundaries and full acceptance into both the theory and performance CoMPs.

#### **(a) Towards culturally relevant curriculum**

The data suggest that LACC music students with lower levels of cultural capital struggle more with those components of the curriculum that do not align with their initial music interests. Although many students are able to learn to value the curriculum and increase their cultural capital, a curriculum that is more culturally relevant and aligns more appropriately with incoming student music preferences may increase student opportunities to engage with the material.

Lucy Green (1988) takes as a foundational argument in her work that what is necessary to “attack” an ideological aesthetic assumption is “viewing music in a substantial relationship to the historical era in which it was born and in which it survives; interpreting the personal, sometimes influential musical experiences that we have as individuals; and understanding these in relation to the movement of history and the changing development of consciousness” (p.6).

A related point is made by Bourdieu (in Young, 1971):

...the cultural field is transformed by successive restructurations rather than by radical revolutions, with certain themes bring brought to the fore while others are set to one side without being completely eliminated, so that continuity of communication between intellectual generations remains possible. In all cases, however, the patterns informing the thought of a given period can be fully understood only be reference to the school system, which is alone capable of establishing them and developing them, through practice, as the habits of thought common to a whole generation.

Keddie (1973) argues that rather than placing the blame for student failure on cultural deprivation during upbringing, the school curriculum itself can be seen to contribute to the reproduction of cultural hierarchies. Building on these concepts, the sociological view of music education suggests the development of alternative music curricula to provide students with “musical experiences that are fulfilling and meaningful, both personally and culturally” (Vulliamy and Shepherd, 1984, p. 264).

As the arbiters of the music education system we should ask ourselves the following as we consider our curriculum: Does our music curriculum support our community of students in finding careers that are central to the current musical culture? Is our music curriculum defining and supporting the current musical culture, or does it reflect our own past musical learning experiences and what we personally believe to be legitimate? If our students enter a music program with capital derived from the current musical culture, could a curriculum that supports that musical culture benefit a greater number of aspiring musicians?

There is a growing awareness of the relationship between the music curriculum at many schools of higher education and social inequality, and there is much existing research on the value of culturally relevant curriculum. Although culturally responsive teaching has been shown to help instructors connect with students and increase student success (Leigh Hamm Forell, 2006), and an awareness of cultural capital can influence faculty to develop culturally relevant curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Yosso 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Clegg, 2011), such changes in California community college music programs must be done within the existing framework of preparing students for transfer.

A student's past musical experiences and interests can be supported in the classroom to facilitate meaningful musical instruction (Thies, 2013). Faculty can promote student engagement in the classroom by interacting with them about matters and content related to the course and through active and collaborative learning techniques that involve students in their own learning (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Alterations to the existing curriculum could use models that align with student interest and which are being to be employed more regularly in higher education music programs (Robin, 2018; Hovis, 2016).

Exposing a student to multicultural music outside of traditional notation and theory may open up knowledge of other musical cultures and prevent the narrowness of music education based on the Western Canon (Regelski, 2002). The work of Regelski inspired the field of praxial music education (PME), whereby faculty plan a music curriculum around reflexive, creative music-making that aligns with student interests and goals. Constructivist teaching strategies proposed through PME include targeting attention, coaching, modeling, problem finding and solving, scaffolding, and student reflective practices including social critiques in ensembles, journaling, and listening logs (Elliott, 2009; Elliott, 1995). One such constructivist approach to music education is 'sound based music,' which can help beginning students increase their engagement by teaching about music as sounds rather than as a theoretical

construct or a new language with a new vocabulary, approaching music as a creative endeavor, and teaching the student how to listen as a composer (Holland, 2015). The combination of constructivist learning strategies with a culturally sensitive curriculum may prove beneficial in engaging beginning students with lower levels of cultural capital. Student engagement may also be supported by incorporating music and movement techniques—such as Orff, Kodály, and Dalcroze—where learning occurs through trial and error, the imitation of others, and in support of personal expression. Such techniques have proven successful for decades in early childhood music education.

The learning of traditional music notation is like learning a new language and requires a type of disciplined study that is challenging for many students, especially those who want to learn music because of their emotional reactions rather than their desire to approach music as an intellectual pursuit. Culturally relevant curriculum could increase engagement in a theory class and help provide the “broad historical and cultural context” (Music Theory I C-ID, 2018) required as part of the state-approved course descriptors. Notation of rhythms and chords can be presented using the notation of popular music as well as classical music, rhythmic exercises can focus on those rhythms that are typically used in popular music, chord progressions can be learned through popular or culturally appropriate music, and students can be introduced to the vocabulary needed to describe music-making in emotional terms. The addition of culturally appropriate repertoire in instrumental classes may increase student engagement without impacting the learning outcomes for the courses and program. As an example, the learning outcomes of advanced group piano classes are to play scales, arpeggios, and cadences with correct notes, rhythm, and fingerings; and perform repertoire with correct technique, tempo, dynamics, phrasing, and interpretation. Repertoire need not be classical to meet these outcomes. Classical repertoire must remain in some respect for advanced students, however, as schools such as California State University, Los Angeles require students—even commercial music students—to audition on an instrument with classical pieces from the Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th Century periods.

Although technology courses typically are offered as electives within a transfer music program, music technology by nature is culturally relevant to the younger generation of students. Music technology is more closely connected to non-classical music genres and as such it is an area that many incoming students may engage with relatively easily early on in their studies. Using technology in theory and performance classes can increase engagement and support acceptance in and a sense of belonging in CoMPs. Approaches to foster creative engagement include the increased use of audiovisual materials and considering classical music in terms of its contemporary usage to generate emotions, such as in

movies and popular culture (Moccozet et al., 2014). In this way emotions are shared by students and between students and faculty, thereby providing a common language and making a more meaningful and engaged learning experience.

Faculty professional development can be used to increase awareness of the cultural capital of incoming students, the benefits of culturally responsive teaching, and recognition of the relationships between social justice and music education (Ballantyne, 2008, 2015; Cejda & Hoover, 2010-11). In a school like LACC, which is primarily low socioeconomic status and serves a highly diverse study body of minority ethnicities and races, discussions among faculty about issues of equity could be a starting point for a reconsideration of the curriculum. Increased faculty awareness of the challenges faced by incoming music students—including the impact of socioeconomic factors on the acquisition of musical cultural capital—may lead to an understanding of the need for a multicultural music education in support of student equity. As Koza (2008) puts it, a consideration of music programs in terms of its impact on such factors as race “can open the door to different explanations for resistance to change as well as different avenues for movement.” Faculty as a whole must agree to these changes, as the integration of popular music studies into a higher education environment without receptive faculty may result in “less academic openness and the creation of power hierarchies” (Dyndahl et al., 2017).

#### **(b) Supporting engagement with CoMPs**

Wenger (2006) offers a number of suggestions that faculty can use to overcome the status quo of a community of practice. According to Wenger, a paradigm shift can result from curriculum that corresponds in a better way to the learning trajectories, values, identities, and cultural capital of the students who enter a program. Wenger’s solutions include shifting focus from teaching to learning; focusing on identity transformation; creating meaningful curriculum; supporting experiences that foster membership in CoPs; peer-to-peer learning; and activities that allow for creativity, force cross-boundary negotiation, and support agency and power. The faculty as a whole can serve as brokers by adapting or simplifying a CoP so it is more useful across boundaries, making boundaries between CoPs more transparent, and providing communication to the student so boundaries between CoPs can be bridged.

The constructivist learning strategies of coaching and modeling continue to be the preferred approaches to working with students in private music lessons and applied music classes. Social critiques occur in master classes and when done properly the student engages in critical listening and critical thinking that is facilitated and modeled by the faculty broker. Constructivist learning strategies may provide a

framework for how to support student legitimate peripheral participation in the performance CoMP. Given the benefits of such approaches in facilitating student acceptance in CoMPs, a music curriculum should expect students to engage in private lessons, applied music, and group performance classes. The data suggest that LACC music students found that their most emotional experiences occurred in master classes and applied lessons with private instructors. The methods that LACC master class instructors used with the participants to foster emotional learning—including considering the music in non-technical ways, being empathetic to the text or the story behind the music, physically showing emotion, exposing more of one’s personality during a performance—can be utilized in all courses to avoid mechanical playing, bring the music to life, make the student pay more attention, and provide a deeper understanding of the music. LACC music students find the curriculum to be more relevant when they are creative and are making music, which supports existing research (Finney & Philpott, 2010). LACC music students feel that they have more opportunities for emotional connections during performance because they are able to connect in a safe environment with other students, which also supports existing research (Mellor, 2011). A music curriculum thus will benefit students by encouraging many performance possibilities facilitated by coaching and modeling, including master classes, solo performances, and ensembles.

CoMP formation can be supported by creating informal learning opportunities for students. As many students come to LACC having played informally in bands, the additional of popular music history and ensembles may be of interest. The formation of popular music communities of practice has been shown to increase participation by students interested in those genres (Folkestad, 2006). Engagement with a CoMP also can be supported by creating a hybrid structure that includes formal and informal learning, which can be especially useful to shape identity, support engagement in multiple CoMPs, give students access the technology they need to make music, and provide support needed for active and conscious self-reflection (Karlsen, 2010; Karlsen, 2014). An approach that combines formal and informal learning, and also makes an effort to work across cultural boundaries, has been shown to support multicultural students in forming their social, cultural, and musical identities (Karlsen, 2014), which is especially relevant to a music program like LACC.

Lucy Green’s (2001) research into how popular musicians learn and the applications to the music classroom are particularly relevant to this study. Her research suggests that students interested in popular music who attend music schools based on a classical music curriculum do not benefit from lessons and feel alienated in the traditional music education setting. Similar students who are able to

participate in a curriculum that included various styles of music (folk, popular, jazz, classical, world), music listening, performance, and composition had more positive responses as they more closely identified with the music being studied in the program and were able to make connections between the formal and informal learning opportunities.

Green acknowledges the benefits of models based on Lave and Wenger's apprenticeship learning. In her 2001 study and in a later study (2008), she proposes ways to bring informal popular music learning practices into the classroom, including (a) asking students to engage in purposive listening to a recording and then imitating it on their instrument (playing by ear rather than from a score), (b) asking students to copy or sing along to recordings of any style of music, (c) supporting peer learning through student performances with friends in the absence of a teacher, (d) engaging in 'haphazard' learning without structured guidance (as opposed to formal learning with a planned syllabus), and (e) integrating listening, performing, improvising, and composing in all aspects of the learning process (as opposed to formal learning that focuses more on reproduction than creativity). An additional suggestion is that teachers attempt these informal learning practices themselves to see the benefits.

Green (2001) concludes:

By opening out our understanding that there are a multitude of ways in which to acquire musical skills and knowledge, surely we can reach out to more learners and reveal a much higher number of people with the capacity to make music for their own pleasure, a larger proportion of learners who would warrant being 'counted as musical' within formal settings, and a more open attitude towards music-making both on the part of those who specialize in it and on the part of amateur networks of families, friends and others in the community (p.146).

Using these findings, other researchers have found positive applications in the classroom, including in introductory music education (Heuser, 2008), one-on-one studio instruction (Brook et al., 2017), and distance education in music (Motoyama, 2018).

### **(c) Supporting the crossing of boundaries**

The data suggest that student learning in music programs is shaped by the learning experiences and opportunities provided by a curriculum based on the overlaps between multiple CoMPs. The learning experiences provided by these CoMPs provide the student with wider access and interactions with other students, various overlapping learning experiences, both intellectual and embodied, and the



development of shared competencies and histories that strengthen student engagement with the curriculum.

LACC music students learn to recognize that the curriculum will help them develop institutional, embodied, and objectified capital, which will help them reach their long-term music goals. A significant component of that recognition is learning to connect theory and performance and see how one subject benefits the other. The data also show that LACC music students who are able to recognize the value of the combined theory and performance program have additional opportunities for emotional learning, often in the form of a 'lightbulb moment' where the material "clicks" for the student.

LACC music faculty who succeeded in providing students with such moments of clarity did so by providing context, helping the student reach a level of competency where they could move beyond technique and begin to focus on interpretation, and using theory to enhance an existing emotional connection to a performance. These emotional experiences help the student transform their identity and become accepted as members of the theory CoMP, which is the final step to engaging with the curriculum as a whole.

### **9.3 My experiences as a researcher**

My experiences while conducting this research taught me that I need to take additional steps to collect useful case study data, especially given the limited amount of time available to conduct the interviews. If I could recreate this research, I would structure my data collection so I could find out more about how LACC music students initially engaged with the program. I either would interview students at different stages of their educational careers to allow for longitudinal comparisons or ask the students I did interview to reflect more carefully on their engagement level over the span of their time in the program. I also would consider how to get more useful quantitative data prior to conducting the interviews, perhaps through initial surveys on factors like socioeconomic status and acquisition of cultural capital during upbringing. Insight from faculty on what methods they use to engage students in the classroom may have provided me with the ability to expand on the role of faculty brokers in facilitating entry into CoMPs.

I learned that there are numerous challenges to supporting emotional learning in a community college music program. As it is not possible to include emotion as a learning outcome in the official curriculum, the concept must be addressed at a local level through professional development and exposure to

alternative teaching methodologies. I learned that I would benefit as an educator by more carefully considering my students holistically in terms of their cultural capital and their social-emotional learning. The majority of students at LACC come from the immediate neighborhoods surrounding the campus. By learning more about that community, attending cultural events, and feeling more of a connection to the neighborhood, I would perhaps empathize more with my students and learn to support them in new ways. Through my research I learned the value of social learning and encouraging the formation of CoMPs through mentoring, peer networks, group activities, and numerous performance opportunities. I realized that small changes in the classroom structure can be made to encourage the acquisition of emotional capital, such as taking a few minutes of each class to discuss emotion in music and having faculty and students share the music that moves them and openly discuss these experiences to foster emotional learning.

I was particularly moved by the journey of Ashley who, despite acquiring a deep passion for music through years of music experience before college, was unable to perform solo due to performance anxiety, which decreased her motivation. She responded well to the few times she was encouraged by faculty to engage emotionally with the material in her classes, but additional faculty interventions, especially in providing her with tools to deal with her anxiety, may have helped Ashley gain acceptance in the CoMPs. She had the requisite skills and aptitude to be a successful member of the CoMPs, but she remained on the periphery and failed to transfer or complete a degree. Her story showed me that in some cases a relatively minor intervention—such as from a respected master instructor who builds confidence through learning experiences that increase the desire to participate—can make the difference to a struggling student.

My next steps will include researching best practices from other schools, especially in European countries, that offer social and emotional growth activities as a prerequisite to learning the technical aspects of an artistic endeavor such as music. Rather than starting with a rigorous theory course as the gateway (which at LACC leads to 50% failure rate in the first level), I may experiment with a first semester music program that only includes ensemble performance such as choir, a music history or music appreciation course in a genre of interest to the student, and social learning activities that support emotional growth. Such an approach may lead to the formation of cohorts and social networks that will increase initial engagement and the gaining of legitimacy, which the student can utilize to help them as they pursue the more theoretical aspects of music in later semesters.

## **9.4 Extended impact**

### **9.4.1 Limitations and opportunities for future research**

My research does not consider whether one of the primary reasons why students abandon the program is because they remain stuck on the periphery and are unable to engage with the curriculum.

Considerations of institutional and cultural capital only partially explain why some students are able to change their habitus and succeed in a music program, while other students from similar backgrounds are unable to do so. There are any number of obstacles to student success in entry-level music programs that were not considered in detail in my study, including high school preparation, amount of general education, economic needs, family obligations, performance anxiety, lack of social skills, emotional instability, and substance abuse, among other factors. I did not ask the participants whether they believed that a more culturally responsive curriculum might have increased their engagement when they first entered the program, or whether they thought such curriculum may have improved their outcomes.

An increase of emotional learning opportunities in a curriculum may facilitate the crossing of boundaries towards full participation in a CoMP only for those students who are in an intellectual, financial, and circumstantial position to benefit from those educational experiences. A study of students who drop out of the program would reveal with more certainty if the reasons why they were unable to join CoMPs include an inability to use their initial interest in music to engage with the classical curriculum, inability to value the curriculum as a whole, or inability to define their identity within the program.

Although my interest in this study remains in how to increase student engagement within the traditional pathway that supports the dominant music culture, some consideration must be given to the creating of a parallel or substitute AA degree in commercial music, as such paths are becoming more common. Of the 152 AA degrees approved by the state of California, 25 (16%) are in commercial music (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, 2018). Of those, 14 (8%) are in general commercial music or emphasize commercial music performance, with the remainder focusing on music technology. Although rare in the California community college system, such degrees have theory and performance courses that are more appropriate for commercial musicians. With options for commercial music being limited in four-year universities, however, these commercial music degrees are less successful in preparing students for transfer.

In recognition of the increased opportunities for student success through the offering of parallel tracks, and with a nod to issues of social justice, some four-year institutions are beginning to provide such pathways based on student interests. Cornell University altered its music theory and history classes to include experiential learning and more diverse types of music to allow for a wider variety of students to become music majors and to provide an alternative to the Western European traditional model (Hovis, 2016). Harvard University created an alternative track in its music program to reflect current trends and support changes in faculty interest and increasing diversity (Robin, 2018). Harvard recognized that music students were taking different paths and that some needed the existing conservatory approach while other students could benefit from a more 'flexible' approach. In the more flexible approach, the department reduced the number of courses a music concentrator needs to take and replaced the music theory requirement with tutorials on how to listen to music. Longitudinal studies on the effects of these changes remain to be seen, but the expectation is increased student access and success. If such an approach were to be taken at a school like LACC, students would need to be provided additional support to help them decide on their track.

#### **9.4.2 Use of the results**

This practice-based study of a higher education community college music program provides tools for the understanding of student cultural capital and how students engage with the music curriculum, and suggests that professional practices can be implemented to address those challenges. Such practices may contribute to faculty awareness of the implications of student cultural capital in a single community college (such as LACC), community college music departments in a district (such as in the nine colleges of the LACCD), and at other community college music and arts departments throughout California that share similar curriculum and serve students from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. The results may also have implications for the design of curriculum and student support for the first two years of four-year higher education music programs.

The outcomes of this study suggest ways to increase equity in a music program by providing increased opportunities for students of varied backgrounds to engage with the curriculum. By first understanding that the cultural capital of incoming students may not be supported by the capital of a traditional music curriculum, faculty can begin the process of being more inclusive and providing opportunities for a more diverse group of students.

As David put it, when faculty can “bring emotion into the equation, then there is a new motivation because it’s no longer just some assignment or some piece, [but it] is something you wish to express out of your own heart.”

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## Appendix A: Los Angeles City College Approval Letter



Office of the Vice President of Academic Affairs

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Los Angeles City College | 855 North Vermont Ave | Los Angeles, CA 90029 | 323.953.4000 ext 2051

January 19, 2021

University of Liverpool,

This letter acknowledges that Ms. Christine Park was approved in 2016 by the Los Angeles City College (LACC) administration to conduct research using LACC student data obtained through student survey. In addition, this letter approves the use of the college's name "Los Angeles City College" and "LACC" in her published dissertation. If you have any questions regarding the approval, I can be reached by email at [lancasj@lacitycollege.edu](mailto:lancasj@lacitycollege.edu).

Sincerely,

Dr. Jim Lancaster

## Appendix B: University of Liverpool Approval Letter

Dear Christine Park,		
I am pleased to inform you that the EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC) has approved your application for ethical approval for your study. Details and conditions of the approval can be found below.		
Sub-Committee:	EdD. Virtual Programme Research Ethics Committee (VPREC)	
Review type:	Expedited	
PI:		
School:	Lifelong Learning	
Title:	Emotional Engagement in the Learning Experiences of Community College Music Students: A Case Study	
First Reviewer:	Dr. Lucilla Crosta	
Second Reviewer:	Dr. Anthony Edwards	
Other members of the Committee	Dr. Morag Gray, Dr. Joseè Reis Jorge, Dr. Marco Ferreira	
Date of Approval:	16/06/2016	
The application was APPROVED subject to the following conditions:		
Conditions		
1	Mandatory	M: All serious adverse events must be reported to the VPREC within 24 hours of their occurrence, via the EdD Thesis Primary Supervisor.
<p>This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the Sub-Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an amendment to the research, you should notify the Sub-Committee by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at <a href="http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc">http://www.liv.ac.uk/media/livacuk/researchethics/notice%20of%20amendment.doc</a>.</p> <p>Where your research includes elements that are not conducted in the UK, approval to proceed is further conditional upon a thorough risk assessment of the site and local permission to carry out the research, including, where such a body exists, local research ethics committee approval. No documentation of local permission is required (a) if the researcher will simply be asking organizations to distribute research invitations on the researcher's behalf, or (b) if the researcher is using only public means to identify/contact participants. When medical, educational, or business records are analysed or used to identify potential research participants, the site needs to explicitly approve access to data for research purposes (even if the researcher normally has access to that data to perform his or her job).</p>		
Please note that the approval to proceed depends also on research proposal approval.		

Kind regards,  
 Lucilla Crosta  
 Chair, EdD. VPREC

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Describe yourself.
2. Describe your music education background, both formal and informal.
3. Describe the genres or types of music you identify with most.
4. Describe what made you decide to come to LACC to study music.
5. Describe what you hope to gain from learning music at LACC.
6. Describe your musical goals once you leave LACC.
7. Describe your level of involvement or interest in each of these subjects you have taken at LACC: theory, musicianship, solo instrumental/voice, performance.
8. Consider the classes you took at LACC in theory, musicianship, solo instrumental/voice, and performance:
  - a. Describe some experiences where you felt an emotional connection to the material or performance practice.
  - b. Describe some experiences where you were asked by the instructor to consider the material in terms of your emotions.
  - c. Describe how the above experiences resulted in a deeper understanding of the material or performance practice.
9. Do you think you would have a deeper understanding of the material taught in theory, musicianship, solo instrumental or voice, and/or performance if you were asked to engage with the music or material in a more emotional way?