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# Dichotomous Musical Worlds: Interactions between the Musical Lives of Adolescents and School Music-Learning Culture

Todd Edwin Snead  
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This dissertation, **DICHOTOMOUS MUSICAL WORLDS: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS AND SCHOOL MUSIC-LEARNING CULTURE**, by **TODD EDWIN SNEAD**, was prepared under the direction of the candidate's Dissertation Advisory Committee. It is accepted by the committee members in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education, Georgia State University.

The Dissertation Advisory Committee and the student's Department Chair, as representatives of the faculty, certify that this dissertation has met all standards of excellence and scholarship as determined by the faculty. The Dean of the College of Education concurs.

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Todd Edwin Snead

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## ABSTRACT

### DICHOTOMOUS MUSICAL WORLDS: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS AND SCHOOL MUSIC-LEARNING CULTURE

by  
Todd Edwin Snead

This ethnographic study investigated the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture in a suburban high school. Participants included two music teachers and seven adolescents. Framed within a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969), data were collected via methods consistent with qualitative inquiry, including an innovative data collection technique utilizing music elicitation interviews with adolescents. Findings emerged from the data via thematic analysis (Grbich, 2007).

Findings indicate limited interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture because participants portrayed and experienced a dichotomy between the musical assumptions and practices inside and outside of school. Interactions occurred when participants engaged in sharing musical capital that overcame segmentation among music learning, out-of-school experience, and elective participation in secondary school music programs.

Supporting findings indicate that the school music-learning culture derived from teachers' negotiating between two major influences: 1) their own musical values, which were based on their musical backgrounds and the long-established professional tradition

of formal performance emphases in school music programs; and 2) the musical values of their students. Adolescents self-defined their musical lives as largely informal musical activities commonly experienced outside of school. They expressed a wealth of personal musical knowledge and described their affinity for music across four dimensions: 1) expression and feeling, 2) relevance, 3) quality in artistry and craftsmanship, and 4) diversity. Three themes describe how adolescents' personal relationships with music influenced their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning: 1) musical roots: nurturing personal and social connections with music, 2) motivated learning: seeking relevance and challenge, and 3) finding a voice: striving toward musical independence.

Findings indicate that music teachers may enhance interactions between adolescents' musical lives and school music-learning culture by acknowledging students' musical engagement outside of school, honoring their personal musical knowledge and interests, and making them collaborators in developing music-learning models rooted in their affinity for, and personal relationships with, music.

DICHOTOMOUS MUSICAL WORLDS: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN  
THE MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS AND  
SCHOOL MUSIC-LEARNING CULTURE

by  
Todd Edwin Snead

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in  
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2010



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
List of Tables .....		v
List of Figures .....		vi
Abbreviations .....		vii
 Chapter		
1	OVERTURE/“INTRO” .....	1
	Rationale for the Study .....	7
	Purpose Statement .....	8
	Research Questions .....	9
2	REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE .....	10
	Introduction .....	10
	Part I: The Musical Lives of Adolescents .....	11
	Part II: Secondary School Music-Learning Culture .....	25
	Part III: Intersecting Perspectives .....	39
	Summary and Limitations of Relevant Literature .....	45
3	DESIGN OF INQUIRY .....	49
	Epistemology and Theoretical Framework .....	49
	Methods .....	55
	Credibility and Quality, Researcher’s Role, Ethics, and Representation..	71
4	MUSIC AT COLLEGE HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL .....	80
	Music with Mr. Owens .....	84
	Music with Mr. Klippen .....	98
5	THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC TEACHERS .....	113
	Negotiating Musical Values .....	119
	Investing in the Interested Few .....	132
	Chapter Summary .....	141
6	RESONATING WITH THE MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS .....	144
	Striking a Chord with Adolescents: Four Dimensions of Music’s Genuine Appeal .....	146
	Making Musical Decisions .....	159

	Musical Roots: Nurturing Personal and Social Connections with Music .....	160
	Motivated Learning: Seeking Relevance and Challenge .....	166
	Finding a Voice: Striving Toward Musical Independence .....	173
	Chapter Summary .....	182
7	MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL MUSIC-LEARNING CULTURE .....	186
	Dichotomy Between In-School and Out-of-School Musical Assumptions and Practices .....	187
	Sharing Musical Capital .....	215
	Chapter Summary .....	224
8	CODA/“OUTRO” .....	229
	Discussion .....	229
	Implications .....	236
	Conclusions .....	244
	References .....	247
	Appendixes .....	259

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Steps of the Constant Comparative Method .....	68

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Musician Role-Identities .....	26
2	Adolescent Participant Profiles .....	59
3	Data Analysis Process .....	70

## ABBREVIATIONS

AP	Advanced Placement
CBO	Community-based Organization
CHHS	College Heights High School
HBCU	Historically Black College or University
IB	International Baccalaureate
LGPE	Large-group Performance Ensemble
MKO	More Knowledgeable Other

## CHAPTER 1

### OVERTURE/“INTRO”

I’m guessing the purpose for learning music here – in school – I guess is probably [to] get an appreciation of the classic, or the like non-lyrical stuff.... And then, once you get out into the real world – I guess you could call it – um, you listen to just like, stuff on the radio. (Mya)

Music is a widespread cultural phenomenon, particularly for adolescents (Blacking, 1973; North, Hargreaves, & O’Neill, 2000). Second to watching television, listening to music is the most popular adolescent free-time activity in industrialized societies (North et al., 2000; Roberts, Henriksen, & Foehr, 2004; Zillman & Gan, 1997). However, Roberts et al. found that listening to recorded music increased from ages 11 to 18, while television watching decreased. It is estimated that adolescents in the United States, ages 15 to 18, listen to music more than 2.5 hours a day, which is nearly one hour more than adolescents ages 11 to 14. North et al. reported similar findings for adolescents in the United Kingdom. British adolescents listen to music an average of 2.45 hours daily, primarily in isolation.

Although the number of musical styles and genres available to listeners seems endless, most research on music preference indicates adolescents make clear distinctions between forms of contemporary popular music (i.e., rock, pop, dance, rap) and the music typically studied in school (i.e., classical, jazz, opera, folk). For instance, North et al. (2000) found that participants preferred listening to popular and dance music; were



moderately interested in rap and rock; and strongly disliked folk, classical, and opera. Hakanen and Wells (1993) found that over half of high school participants favored rock, with pop music being a close second. LeBlanc, Sims, Siivola, and Obert (1996) proposed that music listening preference ratings follow a U-shaped curve related to age. That is, participants at the endpoints of the 'U' (those in first grade at one end and college students at the other) rated a variety of music styles more favorably than those participants in the trough of the 'U' (those in grades six through eight).

Considering this evidence, it appears that high school marks a period of diversifying and increasing interest in music. Understandably, such prevalent listening behaviors translate into 'big business' for the recording industry. Based on research conducted by Piper Jaffray and Company (2008), 87% of adolescents own an mp3 player and 85% download music online. Sixty-one percent of adolescents download music for free through P2P (Peer-to-Peer) file sharing and 39% legally purchase music online. Nearly half of girls who search for information about musicians or bands online spend over \$100 a year on music (Jupitermedia, 2003). The music consumption habits of adolescents may help explain why Disney's *High School Musical* was the top-selling album of 2006, with 3.7 million albums sold (Gallo, 2007).

Adolescents' widespread interests in music motivate them to do more than just listen. North et al. (2000) found that over 50% of British adolescents either currently played an instrument or had played regularly before giving it up. Participants who played an instrument reported spending an average of 1.18 hours per day playing *in addition* to time spent listening to music. Research by Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant (2003) found that 80% of their participants ages eight to fourteen reported having an

instrument at home (usually a keyboard), 50% of the oldest participants (14 year-olds) made music informally on their own, and of those who did not make music, 45% expressed an interest in doing so. Additionally, 20% of participants were enrolled in music classes at school.

Ivey and Tepper (2006) note that while there has been a decline in young people's attendance at arts performances, personal art making is on the rise. New technologies, expanding choices and access points, and the growth of the "do-it-yourself ethos" has enabled young people to create and curate music collections, compose and edit their own music, and exposed them to artists and bands that were once difficult to find (Tepper & Gao, 2008, p. 41). Adolescents may also participate in school music programs, go to school dances, use music for class projects, sing in church choirs, form garage bands, work as deejays, and engage in a host of other music-related activities (Hargreaves & North, 1997).

Adolescents' affinity for music may be driven by the personal and social benefits they derive from engaging with the art form. Larson (1995) notes that music listening may increase dramatically during adolescence because much teen music is specifically produced to address issues that are important to young people (namely autonomy, identity, love, and sexuality). At a personal level, music may aid young people in acquiring a sense of personal identity, enhance their self-image and self-esteem, validate their emotions, and provide an outlet for their frustrations (Lamont et al., 2003; Larson, 1995; North et al., 2000; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). Socially, music preferences may be a result of, or contribute to, peer influence and group processes such as conformity and taste cultures (Lewis, 1995; Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001). This may explain why

musical interests are a prioritized dimension of many adolescents' profiles on internet social networks such as Facebook. Music may also provide adolescents creative ways to express their developmental learning needs, such as the need for active learning, peer-learning, and autonomy (Davis, 2005; Green, 2008; Lewis, 1995; Rutkowski, 1994).

Given music's pervasiveness, popularity, and import in the lives of adolescents, it seems appropriate that a primary goal of MENC: The National Association for Music Education is "encouraging the study and making of music by all" (MENC, 2010). In fact, 90% of public secondary schools offer music instruction (Carey, Kleiner, Porch, & Farris, 2002). However, a relatively small percentage of adolescents are enrolled in secondary school music programs. Campbell, Connell, and Beegle (2007) found that more than one third of adolescent participants (ages 13 to 18) reported being either currently or previously involved in some form of music learning experience. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008), only 21.5% of high school sophomores were involved in a school-sponsored music program (i.e., band, orchestra, or choir) in 2002 – *exactly the same percentage that were involved in 1992*. Furthermore, as adolescents increase in age, the numbers involved in school music programs decrease (Thompson, 1991). Research also suggests that while adolescents enjoy music, they may not enjoy it as a subject in school (Lamont et al., 2003; Rutkowski, 1994; Swanwick & Lawson, 1999). This apparent lack of interest in high school music programs seems to contradict adolescents' increasing and expanding interests in music as a valued dimension of their lives. This evidence warrants a closer examination of adolescents' perspectives on the secondary school music-learning culture.

The secondary school music-learning culture is largely based on the ‘formal performance culture’ in which music teachers serve as conductors of large-group performance ensembles (LGPEs), such as orchestras, concert bands, and choruses, that emphasize the study of music repertoire emanating from the Western art music canon. Rideout (2005) argues that most secondary music teachers have long emphasized the study of masterworks of the Western art music tradition over diverse and/or more recent music such as world, jazz, and other popular styles. Structuring music classes in this way promotes a musical score-centered and teacher-centered learning environment. Teachers in LGPE classrooms usually give primary attention to developing students’ technical proficiency through various exercises and by focusing on the performance issues required of the selected music. Research also indicates that secondary music teachers rarely engage students in creative music learning opportunities such as composing, improvising, or other autonomous music making activities (Strand, 2006; Ivey & Tepper, 2006).

Great strides to overcome this emphasis on Western art music and the lack of creative learning opportunities in schools were made in 1994 with the adoption of the National Standards for Music Education for grades K-12 (MENC, 1994). The National Standards stress the importance of students performing a varied repertoire of music from a broad range of cultures and historical time periods, and two of the nine standards specifically address the creative musical skills of improvising and composing/arranging.

Although the National Standards include the study of varied repertoire and creative music skills, there has been little evidence of change in secondary music teachers’ pedagogical practices since 1994. Studies indicate that many secondary music ensemble teachers still select repertoire primarily from the Western art music canon

(Forbes, 1999; Suk, 2004) and emphasize performance replication over creativity (Wilson, 2003). Wilson (2003) found that almost half of high school music teachers in Missouri had not changed their pedagogical practices since the introduction of the National Standards. That is, standards one (singing), two (playing instruments), and five (reading/notating) received the most attention in daily lesson planning, whereas standards three (improvising) and four (composing/arranging) received the least. These findings raise questions about how secondary music teachers are trained and the pedagogical decisions they make in their classrooms.

Bouij (1998) argues that the prescribed norms and values of higher education in music, and thus music teacher preparation, support performers and content-centered teachers more than learner-centered teachers. In the university setting, students strive to be known as musicians first and educators second; they are taught to excel at performing first and foremost (Roberts, 2004). One of the primary obstacles for music education majors is to overcome an institutional emphasis on the *production* of music over music *teaching and learning*. It is often assumed that teaching, or *directing*, LGPEs will successfully integrate performance and educational commitments.

Findings by White (1996) support this line of thought by suggesting that students are so heavily influenced by the performance emphasis in music schools that it is difficult for them to envision themselves as music educators who will be influencing the lives of students. Undergraduate music education majors are taught to draw upon the appropriate technical means to solve well-formed musical problems instead of accommodating the emerging music interests and needs of their students (Woodford, 2002).

Woodford (2002) argues that musicians who practice and perform outside the ‘formal performance culture’ often do not pursue the formal study of music or music education in undergraduate degree programs because they do not know basic music theory or do not play traditional classical instruments. Thus, the diversity of musicians available to teach in schools is limited to those who accept and commit to the existing norms and practices of the school music-learning culture. As a result, new music teachers enter the workforce with a teacher-centered perspective that places a heavy emphasis on directed, or conducted, performance rather than a learner-centered perspective that emphasizes exploration, creativity, and students’ needs.

#### *Rationale for the Study*

Established music education scholar Bennett Reimer (2003) contends that a primary goal for the field of music education should be to develop three types of musical participants: professionals, amateurs, and aficionados. Simply put, the goal for music educators should be “to enable all students to develop their awareness of the roles that music encompasses in their culture, so that those roles can be appreciated, understood, and seen as the repertoire of musical possibilities open to all” (Reimer, 2003, p. 252). However, Reimer asserts that music educators stress training professionals and amateurs to function in the ‘formal performance culture’ and disregard the reality that most people in society are music aficionados – those who make intelligent choices to engage in musical activities, but may not necessarily be directly involved in the formal music making or analyzing process. To this end, Reimer advocates opportunities in music education that balance curriculum and activities toward developing intelligent aficionados with *extensions* and *electives* for training amateurs and professionals.

Reimer's broad vision appears to resonate with the evidence that adolescence marks the development and expansion of many young people's affinity for music. Opportunities for adolescents to engage in music participation and learning outside of school are familiar, easily accessible, and diverse. However, opportunities for adolescents to participate and learn music in secondary schools beyond conducted ensembles appear to be largely limited to 'extensions and electives' that they may perceive as unfamiliar, inaccessible, and limited in musical scope. This evidence suggests a need to explore the perspectives of adolescents and music teachers regarding their assumptions about and experiences with music inside and outside of school.

Literature addressing these issues is scarce and often limited (Hargreaves, 2005; Pitts, 2001; Sloboda, 2001; Thompson, 1991). Studies examining adolescents' attitudes toward school music-learning culture achieve a restricted depth of understanding due to methodological constraints such as the use of surveys or correlation statistics (Best, 1981; Franklin, 1980; Hamann, Mills, Bell, Daugherty, & Koozer, 1990). Further, there are relatively few studies of music teachers' perspectives on the relationship between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture (Finney, 2003; Green, 2008; Lamont et al., 2003). Lastly, most of the research in this area has been conducted with British adolescents and schools. Because the British music education system and class opportunities are different from those in the United States, these studies may not be directly applicable to American adolescents and school music-learning cultures.

### *Purpose Statement*

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture from the perspectives

of adolescents and secondary music teachers. Utilizing qualitative inquiry, I pursued a deep and rich understanding of adolescents' personal relationships with music and how those relationships influenced their beliefs and choices regarding music involvement. I also explored the perspectives of secondary music teachers regarding the musical lives of adolescents and the culture of school music. I wanted to explore how these perspectives informed the beliefs and actions of music educators, thus providing insight into the pedagogical choices they made and cultural norms and practices they maintained. The following research questions guided my investigation:

*Primary Research Question*

What interactions exist between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture?

*Supporting Research Questions*

1. How do adolescents describe their affinity for music?
2. How do adolescents' personal relationships with music influence their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning?
3. How do secondary music teachers' identities, beliefs, and actions as music educators influence the school music-learning culture?



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### Introduction

To support the research questions driving this investigation, I reviewed relevant literature regarding (1) the musical lives of adolescents, (2) secondary school music-learning culture, and (3) the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture from the perspectives of adolescents and music teachers. The review is organized into three distinct parts related to these topics.

Three specific areas of investigation are included in *Part I*. First, I present literature pertaining to adolescents' personal relationships with music, including personality and behavioral correlations with music preferences and the interplay among emotions, mood, and music. Second, I explore literature regarding adolescents' social relationships with music. This includes a discussion of the influence of peer groups on adolescent behavior and music preference as well as the differences among adolescent music sub-cultures. Concluding *Part I* is literature that examines adolescents' music learning outside of school.

In *Part II* of the review, I focus on the secondary school music-learning culture. I begin *Part II* by examining how the process of music teacher enculturation impacts the careers of music teachers. Next, I examine research that describes adolescents' experiences within the secondary school music-learning culture. This section includes

discussions of performance ensembles and music learning activities. I conclude with a discussion of how adolescents' general learning and developmental growth outside of school relates to their music learning in school.

*Part III* is an examination of the intersection between the two areas described in *Part I* and *Part II* and thus explores the experiences and perspectives of adolescents and teachers regarding the interaction of adolescents' musical lives and school music-learning culture. I also review emergent literature that provides perspectives on unique and innovative school music programs in the United Kingdom that are attempting to better facilitate this interaction.

#### Part I: The Musical Lives of Adolescents

In the broadest sense, adolescents recognize music's power to influence their lives (Campbell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007). Gantz, Gartenberg, Pearson, and Schiller (1978) found that regardless of particular lyric messages or musical elements, adolescents reported that listening to pop music was "a functional, gratifying experience" (p. 88). Five major themes emerged in a qualitative investigation by Campbell et al. (2007) which examined the significance of music and music education in the lives of adolescents ages 13 to 18: (1) identity formation in and through music, (2) emotional benefits, (3) music's benefits to life at large, including character and life skill development, (4) social benefits, and (5) music in schools. Similar findings were reported by North, Hargreaves, and O'Neill (2000) in their study of the benefits British adolescents perceived from listening to or playing different styles of music. Participants reported that listening to pop music was a way to enjoy music, engage in a creative or imaginative process, relieve boredom, alleviate stress, be trendy or cool, aid in identity construction, please friends, and/or

reduce loneliness. Conversely, respondents believed that people listen to classical music to please parents and/or teachers. Thus, music is an important, and sometimes polarizing, force in adolescents' lives.

### *Facets of Adolescents' Personal Relationships with Music*

Research describing the personal, or individual, relationships adolescents have with music has been conducted mostly in the fields of social psychology and communication. These studies tend to address particular and isolated facets of adolescents' development as they relate to music. I have grouped these studies into two broad categories: personality and behaviors (including identity construction, issues of self-esteem, behaviors, and social judgments of others) and emotions and mood.

*Personality and behaviors.* Lewis (1995) argued that music may provide adolescents a context in which to explore their identities and thus they "choose music not only for its message, sound and/or danceability but also for the ways in which it can bolster their self-image and, like a cultural mirror, send strong reflective messages about them to the rest of their social world" (p. 37).

The connection between adolescents' identities and music may be related to their levels of self-esteem. North and Hargreaves (1999) indicated that adolescents with higher levels of self-esteem more strongly identified with their particular music sub-cultures, thereby strengthening their self-concept. Schwartz and Fouts (2003) investigated this phenomenon in regard to *heavy* (i.e., rock), *light* (i.e., pop), and *eclectic* music listeners. Adolescents in the study with lower self-esteem and higher self-doubt preferred heavy music. Schwartz and Fouts argued that adolescents who exhibited these characteristics listened to heavy music because its themes and sounds matched their identity issues and

feelings. In contrast, adolescents who preferred light music were more likely to conform to social norms while trying to remain emotionally stable. Specifically, Schwartz and Fouts (2003) found that “light” listeners “exhibited some difficulty in negotiating the balance between independence *from* and dependence *on* peers” (italics added, p. 210). Realizing that their experiences are shared by others (i.e., peers and performers), adolescents may connect with music that reassures them that they are not alone, validates their identity confusion, and allows them ways in which to explore and organize that confusion.

Adolescents having eclectic music preferences reported the fewest developmental issues and conflicts. Schwartz and Fouts (2003) suggested that these adolescents used music flexibly according to mood, context, and particular needs. It is unknown if eclectic music preferences help adolescents cope with developmental struggles or if well-adjusted adolescents tend to develop eclectic music preferences. Schwartz and Fouts proposed that exposing adolescents to diverse musical styles might help them with self-exploration, validation, and normalization, thus easing their developmental journey.

Music may also have links to a variety of pro- and anti-social behaviors. Hansen and Hansen (1991) investigated the relationship of heavy metal and punk music preferences to individual differences in personality and social judgments. From the researchers’ perspectives, music reflects and shapes adolescents’ personalities and social judgments. In regard to personality, heavy metal fans exhibited machismo and Machiavellian attitudes and exhibited less need for cognition than nonfans. Punk music fans were less accepting of authority than nonfans. Participants’ social judgments indicated that heavy metal fans perceived more drug use, more Satanism, and less

virginity in society than nonfans. Punk fans estimated higher percentages of vandalism, owning weapons, committing crimes, and going to jail than nonfans. Unfortunately, Hansen and Hansen resolved that no particular theoretical perspective can effectively explain the associations among music preference, personality, and social judgments because there was no way of getting baseline readings of the participants' attitudes and behaviors *before* their exposure to the music styles. Conversely, participants in a study by Campbell et al. (2007) reported that music *distracted* them from anti-social behaviors such as drug use and suicidal thoughts. However, participants in this study had entered an essay contest aimed at justifying and supporting music education programs in schools; therefore, responses may have been skewed toward more positive associations with music.

Contrary to the findings of Hansen and Hansen (1991), Larson (1995) hypothesized that adolescents use music (particularly heavy metal and rock styles) as a symbol of defiance. Thus, Larson would advocate that heavy metal fans and punk fans are not as antisocial as Hansen and Hansen (1991) suggest. Larson elaborated that “turning the amplifier up loud, in most instances, does not say to parents ‘Go to hell’; it says ‘I exist. I have my own tastes that are different than yours’” (Larson, 1995, p. 542). Thus, music allows adolescents a way to express their developmental stresses, which they often feel adults do not understand.

*Emotions and mood.* Larson (1995) describes adolescence as “a period when a person has multiple and fragmented conceptions of who he or she is, *and*, concurrently, a time when responsibility for emotional self-regulation is being transferred, albeit sometimes precariously, from parent to child” (italics in original, p. 538). This

fragmentation of self may lead to increased emotional stresses during adolescence. The intense emotions elicited by music may serve as a way for adolescents to organize perceptions of self. Thus, “the intense emotion expressed in a song provides a strong anchor point for confronting, reappraising, or disassociating oneself from the potent events of the day” (Larson, 1995, p. 547).

Larson’s argument has been supported empirically by the work of David Hargreaves and colleagues. North et al. (2000) found that British adolescents’ primary reason for listening to pop music was that it aided in mood management. In their study of British and Portuguese adolescents, Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) found that 63% of participants named enjoyment and 27.2 % named emotional mood as the primary reasons for listening to music. Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) concluded “both younger and older children seemed to be consciously aware of using music to become happier and forget about their worries when they feel angry, bored or sad” (p. 112). Two out of every three respondents in the study by Campbell et al. (2007) mentioned the emotional meaning and value of music in their lives, specifically the use of music as a therapeutic tool to control emotional states.

Gantz et al. (1978) studied the self-reported gratifications and perceived effects adolescents obtain from exposure to pop music. Though Gantz et al. intended to examine diverse populations of students who reflected the social and demographic characteristics of the United States, they were restricted to a predominantly White (93.8 %) sample living in suburban areas (87.8%). After analyzing participants’ open-ended responses for content, five major content areas emerged, of which two sustained considerable frequency. Specifically, participants reported that music relaxed them and made them feel

happy, good, or excited. This was especially evident among female participants. That is, females reported significantly more affective gratifications than males (see also North et al., 2000).

While the information gathered from these studies does provide some insight into adolescents' reasons for interacting with music, the literature reviewed above is limited by its reliance on deductive rather than inductive reasoning and therefore does not allow fully for adolescents' views of music to emerge. Although this type of research is common in the fields of social psychology and communication, it does not foster a broad nor deep understanding of adolescents' personal relationships with music. An in-depth qualitative approach may help to reveal the strength and impact of adolescents' personal relationships with music.

#### *Facets of Adolescents' Social Relationships with Music*

In addition to the personal benefits adolescents may derive from their relationships with music, music may also be socially important. Kinney (1999) maintains that adolescent development is not purely cognitive, as described by psychology; rather, "both psychological change (growth in cognitive control) and social change (increasing diversity of peer groups and disintegration of boundaries between groups) occur simultaneously as adolescents move through high school and creatively and socially construct peer groups and identities" (p. 33). In contrast with casual acquaintances, high-quality friendships may exert more influence on an adolescent's social development (Berndt, 2002).

Music serves as a way for adolescents to organize their peer relationships; at the same time, peer relationships may influence adolescents' interactions with music.

Regardless, adolescents recognize many social benefits of music participation, such as providing a means to meet new people, providing a sense of belonging, and diminishing socio-cultural boundaries (Campbell et al., 2007).

*Peer influence and social situations.* By examining high school peer groups through the lenses of symbolic interactionism and interpretive socialization, Kinney (1999) found that adolescents exercised control over identity development through collective interpersonal group activities. Specifically, adolescents used music preference and/or involvement in school-sponsored activities to delineate wide strata of adolescent social peer groups; many of which were defined by distinct music cultures. ‘Band geeks’ were grouped with ‘nerds’ because members of both groups were perceived to be focused on academic achievement and lacked social skills. ‘Punk rockers’ listened to punk rock music and classified themselves as an ‘alternative’ culture, whereas ‘headbangers’ listened to heavy metal music, were usually not involved in formal school activities and engaged in many anti-social behaviors (e.g., smoking and skipping class). Many headbangers also formed bands that played heavy metal music.

Tarrant, North, and Hargreaves (2001) used self-esteem and social-identity theory (SIT) to investigate the relationship between intergroup processes of British male adolescents and music preference. Fiske (2004) describes social identity as “the part of one’s self-concept that derives from group membership; it includes evaluations of group attributes, as well as prescriptions about ideal group attributes” (p. 438). Male participants (ages 14 to 15) made a series of comparisons regarding students who attended their school (in-group) and those who did not (out-group). Participants estimated that the in-group would prefer positively stereotyped music (i.e., dance, pop, and indie)



over negatively stereotyped music (i.e., jazz and classical) more than the out-group and that the out-group would prefer negatively stereotyped music more than the in-group.

Tarrant et al. (2001) argued that SIT may predict adolescent behavior in groups “when they make group comparisons along valued dimensions such as music” (p. 576). Specifically, in-group and out-group distinctions may imply positive associations with particular styles of music; therefore, musical styles help define adolescents’ social identity. One limitation of this study is that Tarrant et al. did not account for female intergroup behavior. Data collected from female adolescents may reflect their tendency to form stronger personal bonds with one or two friends over large groups (Maccoby, 2002).

*Adolescent music sub-cultures.* Music, especially music produced for public media, affords adolescents ways to connect or identify with millions of others who share their feelings and struggles (Larson, 1995; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). Thus, studying music sub-cultures and how adolescents perceive differences between those cultures may illuminate an important facet of adolescents’ social relationships with music.

North and Hargreaves (1999) investigated whether adolescents held normative expectations about fans of particular musical styles (i.e., pop, indie rock, and classical). Each musical style was perceived to have fans in distinct age groups (e.g., adolescents perceived classical fans to be primarily over the age of 24) and significantly different personality traits (e.g., physical attractiveness was reported to be more important to pop fans than both indie rock and classical fans). Specifically, classical music fans were perceived as being more religious and being of a higher social class than other fans.

North and Hargreaves (1999) also investigated participants’ evaluations of fans’ general positive and negative traits. Results indicated that the normative expectations of

fans were related to social consequences. For example, fans who liked prestigious music, as perceived by adolescents to be pop, were viewed to be more likely a part of the 'popular crowd.' This was also especially true for male participants in a study conducted by North et al. (2000). They found that a primary reason for males to listen to pop music was to create a positive impression for others.

In a similar study, Hakanen and Wells (1993) collected demographic and music preference data through a questionnaire administered to 1,547 high school students (grades 9 to 12) in a large northeastern city. Music preference ratings were related to the level of the father's education, but were generally not related to social class. Ethnicity also appeared to be related to all music preference categories except for easy listening and pop. Preferences for rock, pop, and new wave were stable across grade levels, whereas country and jazz evidenced a stable dislike across grade levels. Twelfth grade students preferred classical music significantly more than ninth grade students. Females rated all music, except heavy metal and R & B, significantly higher than males. Rock, pop, R & B, new wave, easy listening, classical, and jazz music ratings positively correlated with academic success whereas ratings of heavy metal music were negatively correlated with higher grades.

Hakanen and Wells (1993) then grouped the data into clusters based on music preferences and labeled them 'music taste cultures.' Although their approach to grouping data into clusters seemed arbitrary, the authors argued that "a set of four clusters was chosen based upon [the] comparative unambiguity and clarity, and size of each cluster" (Hakanen & Wells, 1993, p. 64). *Cluster I* was labeled 'Mainstreamers' because these participants liked the main types of commercial music aimed at adolescents (i.e., radio,

TV, and record promotion). This cluster positively rated rock, pop, and new wave music while negatively rating classical, country, jazz, and heavy metal. *Cluster II* was labeled 'Indifferents' because they negatively rated all genres of music. *Cluster III* represented the 'Music Lovers' who rated rock higher than any other cluster, but also enjoyed heavy metal, pop, and easy listening. Further, they gave positive ratings to the usually disliked classical, country, and jazz genres. The fourth cluster represented participants who rated rock and heavy metal much higher than other genres and were accordingly labeled 'Heavy Rockers.'

Much like their analysis of individual differences, Hakanen and Wells looked at the age, gender, and social class differences between these taste cultures. Indifferents and music lovers were evenly distributed among all grade levels, while mainstreamers were predominantly found in grades 11 and 12 and heavy rockers in grades nine and ten. Females made up the majority of the mainstreamers population, which may reflect the marketing trends of commercial media companies to target female adolescent consumers. All other clusters were fairly evenly divided (roughly 45% female and 55% male). Adolescents having college educated fathers (described as an indicator of social class) made up the majority of the mainstreamers and indifferents clusters, while heavy rockers had fathers with high school educations or less. Radio listeners were predictably mainstreamers; recorded music listeners were primarily heavy rockers; and those who listed movies, books, and/or magazines as their primary forms of entertainment were usually indifferents. Although this study is limited by its categorical nature and seemingly arbitrary methodology, it does offer an insight into how adolescents may organize around and within music sub-cultures.

Association with particular music sub-cultures may also influence others' perceptions of identity and behavior. Lewis (1995) studied the congruence between college students' perceptions of music taste culture stereotypes and their self-reported musical identities and behaviors. Participants indicated their favorite music category, or categories, among a choice of ten (rock, country, rap, alternative, classical, reggae, heavy metal, Top 40, world, and easy listening) and their involvement with 'culturally disapproved' behaviors such as drug use and sexual activity. Finally, participants were asked to describe commonly held stereotypes (i.e., demographics and behaviors) they might associate with typical listeners of the ten music categories.

Lewis (1995) found differences in how 'culturally crystallized,' or focused, each stereotype was. For example, participants agreed that rap listeners were likely to be heterosexual Non-White males in their teens with a low level of education. These listeners were believed to be highly sexually active, to use alcohol and drugs, and to actively engage in illegal activities. Lewis also found that stereotypes could be differentiated along their orientations to dominant culture. These divisions were represented by three categories of listeners: (a) reactive (rap, rock, and heavy metal), (b) convergent (country, classical, Top 40, and easy listening), and (c) divergent (alternative, reggae, and world). These categories differed along age, education, ethnic, and behavioral lines. For example, younger listeners were perceived to be members of reactive music taste cultures, whereas older listeners were perceived to belong to more convergent taste cultures. When Lewis compared participants' perceptions of stereotypical taste culture characteristics with self-reported characteristics, he generally found a high level of congruence.

In summation, Lewis (1995) argued that music fan stereotypes held by participants aligned well with the characteristics and behaviors of actual fans; however, distortions were often extremely exaggerated. Lewis (1995) posited that:

It is perhaps best to think of musical stereotypes as likely to be more exaggerated and ‘unreal’ the further one is, culturally and socially, from a particular taste culture. However, when one is relatively close to that culture...the stereotype is likely to have a passable level of goodness-of-fit to actual behavior, even though it is culturally distorted in some of its aspects. (p. 55)

The research cited in this section speaks to the important functions of music in the social lives of adolescents. Most of this research is categorical and reflects *adult* perceptions of adolescents’ social groups, expectations, and behaviors. However, the musical categories that emerged from Kinney’s (1999) research were derived from an intense study of *adolescents’* subcultures. Together with the findings reported by Hakanen and Wells (1993) and Lewis (1995), these studies evidence the many distinct music cultures that may coexist within a high school setting. More importantly, they speak to the significance of understanding how various music cultures interact within school and how those cultures may influence adolescents’ perspectives on and choices regarding the nature and value of music participation and learning in school.

#### *Adolescents’ Music Learning Outside of School*

Little is known about adolescents’ active music making outside of school as it relates to their experiences with the school music-learning culture. Of seminal importance in this line of inquiry is the work of British researcher Lucy Green. Green (2002) wanted to better understand the nature of popular musicians’ informal learning processes and to understand their experiences in traditional school music classrooms. Green collected data via interviews from 14 musicians ranging in age from 15 to 50. Participants made a clear

distinction between *learning* and *being taught*. The former was viewed as an enjoyable and voluntary experience and the latter as formal, disciplined, and unpleasant. Moreover, popular musicians gained knowledge of music and skill acquisition through peer- and group-learning rather than from a teacher. Interacting with music in peer groups outside of school fostered cooperation and commitment to achieving musical aims in an environment where members of the group shared common tastes and intense interests for the music they were learning.

Participants held both negative and positive views of their school music experiences. They described a disparity between their personal music interests and aspirations and those of their music teachers. These musicians were unable to relate to the classroom music experience, but were glad to transfer some of the skills and knowledge they learned in class to their private music endeavors. In light of her findings, Green (2002) advocated that music learning experiences should be driven by students' choices and related to their personal musical lives; thus making music learning meaningful and worthwhile. Green (2002) maintains that these types of experiences may encourage young musicians "to continue playing music, alone or with others, for enjoyment later in life" (p. 56).

Similar to Green's work, Davis (2005) investigated the compositional processes of a three-member adolescent rock band in the United States. Davis found that the group composition process was aided by close personal connections and respect among the band's members, mutual problem solving, sharing of musical preferences, and a deep passion for music and music making. Other key findings included incorporating music that was valued by the band members as a means to develop their own musical style and

the flexible nature of rehearsals and song structures. The participants noted that this flexibility was missing from school band programs. In fact, the “rigid structure of school band music had alienated them” (Davis, 2005, p. 15). Davis advocated that “ownership, agency, relevance, and personal expression fuse at the core of the value [the band members] place on this musical and social experience” (*ibid.*). Davis and her participants also discussed opportunities to establish a rock band ensemble at their high school in which students and the teacher both exercised ownership of the curriculum and pedagogical choices.

These qualitative studies support many of the claims advanced by previous researchers about the multitude of personal and social relationships adolescents have with music. Green’s (2002) and Davis’s (2005) work also provide valuable insight into the culture of informal music learning as well as adolescents’ perceptions of the relationships between the music cultures inside and outside of school.

The research in *Part I* reveals that music’s vibrant and expressive nature aids adolescents in coping with the dynamic and evolving aspects of their personal and social development. Thus, “the predictable selves that come alive in music are a vehicle for navigating the unpredictable and sometimes uncontrollable cascade of adolescent daily life” (Larson, 1995, p. 548). What is perhaps most illuminating about the literature presented above is the magnitude and impact music has on adolescents’ lives outside of school. As their personal and social connections with music engender an interest in music participation and learning, adolescents find ways to grow as musicians without the assistance of formal music instruction. This is perhaps why North et al. (2000) argued

that music's importance in the lives of teenagers "seems to develop outside rather than inside the classroom" (p. 269).

## Part II: Secondary School Music-Learning Culture

Having considered literature regarding the musical lives of adolescents, it is now important to review research pertaining to the secondary school music-learning culture. I first review literature that details how the enculturation process of music teachers through school-music educator training programs affects their professional activities. I then examine literature concerning adolescents' experiences within the school music-learning culture, including performance ensembles and music learning activities. *Part II* concludes with an examination of how adolescents' learning and developmental growth outside of school relates to their music learning in school.

### *The Effects of Music Teacher Enculturation*

Ideally, music teacher training should be a fluid process tailored to the individual and his or her needs. In speaking about the label of *music teacher*, Desmond (1998) argues:

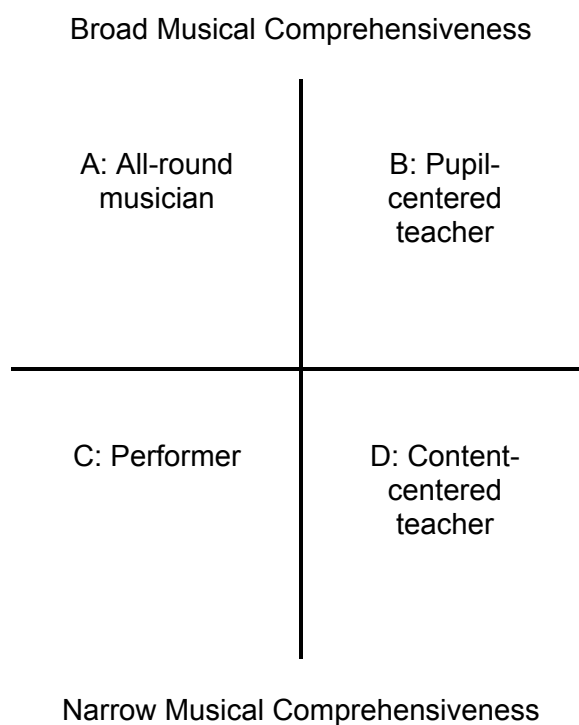
It is the second, basic half of the word which is modified by the first half. Therefore, we are not primarily dealing with the musician but with the teacher whose place of work is the school and not the concert hall. Everything else should follow logically and organically from this premise....However, the musical artistic training in both cases should reach a level which allows the students to experience the quality and intensity of artistic feeling. (p. 19)

Traditionally, music schools in higher education do not foster this sort of 'logical and organic' model of music teacher education. Rather, music teachers are enculturated through music schools that promote and maintain teacher preparation models that emphasize musical performance skills over teaching skills (see p. 5 in *Chapter 1*). This



process not only influences the types of music teachers entering schools, but also how they negotiate their professional careers.

After ten years of collecting more than 169 interviews with Swedish music education students before and during their teaching careers, Bouij (1998) posits that there are four distinct professional musician identities that result from undergraduate music teacher training (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1.* Bouij's (1998) Musician Role-Identities

The horizontal axis represents the professional role that the individual aims to assume, while the vertical axis describes the individual's concept of musical knowledge or level of musical competence. The *all-round musician* wants to know a little bit about everything in music and would be considered a well-rounded educated person in music. The *pupil-centered teacher* is process oriented and wants to develop students *through* music. The *performer* wants to work as a musician and the *content-centered teacher*

models good musicianship, teaches at a high artistic level, and teaches *to* the music (i.e., ensemble director).

Bouij (1998) found that most pupil-centered teachers work as elementary school teachers, while content-centered teachers are attracted to positions with high school performing ensembles. To this end, Bouij posits that content-centered teachers are often not satisfied with their musical experiences in teaching because of the time and effort it takes to develop the skills of their students. Thus, they may become frustrated when their roles as teachers (pupil-centered) cannot fulfill their performance (content-centered) aspirations.

Bouij (1998) contends that during music teacher training, students have multiple identities and struggle to gain recognition for all of them. Unfortunately, due to limited time, energy, and resources, music students resort to developing only one identity. This conflict disables undergraduates from constructing a professional identity for themselves and forces them to model what is available and delineated by university faculty positions. Aspiring secondary music educators thus look to the roles and identities largely determined by the performance faculty of the university or the available jobs found in middle and high schools, which are usually director positions of large ensembles such as bands, orchestras, and choirs (Woodford, 2002). These educators then pass down their expectations and norms to their students, which in turn, begins the cycle again. Thus, the enculturation process of secondary music teachers creates and maintains a perpetual cycle or 'closed loop' that is self-serving and disconnected from the ways in which many people learn and experience music in society.

The enculturation process of music teachers may also have an impact on their professional careers and aspirations (Hoffer, 1982). In her study of six elementary general music teachers, Bernard (2004) found that music teachers are often satisfied with pursuing performing and teaching roles at the same time. By examining themes that emerged from interviews, Bernard was able to categorize three types of ‘role tension.’ One pair of teachers managed this tension as two separate roles. The ‘making music’ role worked to establish an emotional connection to music and people. Conversely, the ‘music teacher’ role was reserved for conveying the basic facts, information, and procedures needed to perform music. Thus, these teachers assumed a dichotomous relationship between their personal musical lives and the school music-learning culture. A second pair of music teachers took a single approach to the two different activities. These teachers approached both making and teaching music as valid ways of knowing music and ways of communicating that knowledge to others in the community. The final pair of teachers believed in transferring their experiences of music making to their students. They described their musical experiences to their students in hopes that the students would have similar experiences in the future. Hence, these teachers’ musical experiences outside of school informed their practices within school.

Clinton (1997) also supports the idea that many teachers find reconciliation by performing *and* teaching. Clinton found that many fine arts teachers in Oklahoma enjoyed their full time teacher role and were satisfied with part-time performing roles. Moreover, they felt that the skills and knowledge from both performance and pedagogical domains complemented each other in their professional lives. After cross-examining the various fine arts disciplines (music, visual art, and drama), Clinton found that music

teachers more strongly identified with a singular educator role, while visual art and drama teachers perceived themselves as artists *and* educators concurrently. Considering the heavy performance emphasis music teachers experience during their undergraduate tutelage, these findings appear to contradict the Bernard's (2004) research.

*Adolescents' Experiences within school music-learning culture*

*Performance ensembles.* The choices teachers make, and the opportunities they afford their students, may have a direct impact on student achievement (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998). Hamann, Mills, Bell, Daugherty, and Koozer (1990) investigated how student and teacher perceptions of high school music classroom environments related to student achievement (as measured by state-sponsored contest performance ratings). High achieving groups were positively correlated with perceptions of classrooms exhibiting high levels of teacher support, order and organization, rule clarity, involvement, and affiliation. Low achieving groups reported high levels of task orientation, teacher control, competition, and innovation. While 'innovation' in the classroom may be an admirable goal for music teachers, it does not resonate with the traditional performance culture advanced by most high school ensemble directors. Innovative practices may detract attention from contest preparation and thus may lower performance ratings. These findings urged Hamann et al. to posit that high achieving music classrooms fostered a student-centered approach; however, this claim is quite a leap from simple correlations between five attitudinal criteria and performance ratings. It appears that Hamann et al. based their conclusions on positive classroom environments rather than actual 'student-centered' pedagogical approaches. Regardless, the authors promote that adolescents want

caring teachers, freedom and inclusion in the decision making process in music classes, and the possibility to develop friendships through music making at school.

Hylton (1981) sought to examine the meaning Pennsylvania high school students ascribed to school choral experiences. An open-ended pre-pilot study asked students to generate statements that described how and why the choral experience was meaningful to them. These statements were then grouped into four broad categories: psychological, communicative, integrative, and musical-artistic. A subsequent pilot study yielded a need to include two more categories: spiritualistic and achievement. These six categories were used to develop a Choral Meaning Survey (Hylton, 1981) which was administered to 673 choral students in 14 ensembles.

Students reported they gained a sense of achievement through noncompetitive opportunities in choir. Hylton (1981) argued that this sense of achievement may contribute to increased levels of self-esteem and well-being. Students also reported a strong religious dimension to their choral experience. Singing in the choir allowed some students to express their faith or acknowledge the “gifts God gave [them]” (Hylton, 1981, p. 297). A more attuned awareness of musical phenomena and the development of musical skill were also reported as important dimensions of the choral experience. Other findings urged Hylton (1981) to claim that students view music as “a vehicle for nonverbal communication and that this [communication] is a potent, valuable, and meaningful aspect of high school choral singing experience” (p. 298).

Students in Hylton’s (1981) study also reported many psychological aspects of the choral experience which contributed to their development of self, increased their personal satisfaction, and helped them identify their strengths and limitations. Finally, many

students commented on the integrative, or social, factors of singing with a group. In fact, Hylton argued that there was a strong relationship between being a part of a group and a sense of accomplishment. “For some students a meaningful aspect of their high school choral singing is expressed in terms of the integrative dimension that emphasizes their relationships with others members of the group and resultant feelings of belonging” (Hylton, 1981, p. 301). As Arasi (2007) reported, these extra-musical benefits of the choral experience may have a more lasting effect on the lives of participants than musical ones.

Although Hylton’s (1981) research could be considered survey research, an important aspect of this study was that the responses used for the questionnaire were generated by adolescents, not adults. Few quantitative studies have addressed musical phenomena using adolescents’ descriptions. However, Hylton only examined the meaning of the musical experience among students enrolled in a school choir and not other music programs or classes.

Adderley, Kennedy, and Berz (2003) interviewed 60 tenth through twelfth grade students enrolled in music ensembles at an upper-middle class suburban high school. They examined students’ motivations to join music ensembles, their perceptions of the ensemble, the meaning and value music engendered for participants, and the social climate of the music classroom. Participants reported that joining an ensemble was influenced by parents and older siblings, liking of the subject, the balance it provided in the school curriculum, and social benefits. Perceptions of the musical groups reflected a sense of personal pride and a view of innate talent. Students also viewed participating in music ensembles as a way of connecting to the larger school community.

At the same time, students viewed ensemble membership as a way to differentiate themselves from the larger school community by belonging to a unique and separate program. These students generally agreed that their hard work was underappreciated, especially when compared to athletes. Most importantly, students' perceptions of identity changed significantly as they passed from middle school to high school. Participants reported that musical ensemble involvement during middle school was considered *dorky* whereas involvement in high school lacked such peer judgment and even bolstered support from peers. Many students took pride in belonging to a performing ensemble and felt they were even *admired* by other students in their school.

Student participants also reported psychological benefits of music, including increased self-confidence, self-knowledge, emotional outlets, and providing a supportive, relaxing, and fun atmosphere in which to learn. Social benefits, such as developing and nurturing friendships, were also mentioned. Some students even saw the ensembles as 'homes away from home,' while others saw them as any other class with a heavier emphasis on group-oriented work (Adderley et al., 2003).

The impact of school music-learning culture on the attitudes of adolescents toward school music may also extend beyond the traditional music classroom. In their three-year mixed-method evaluation of a partnership between schools and a local music center in the United Kingdom, Swanwick and Lawson (1999) found that students' attitudes toward school music declined with increasing age regardless of their participation (or lack thereof) in the partnership. However, students' retained positive attitudes about music outside of school (i.e., with friends or at home). Swanwick and Lawson's analysis revealed gains in students' social maturity, valuing of music, a

positive regard for music and musicians from a wide range of styles, and musical skill development.

Swanwick and Lawson (1999) posit that a lack of ‘authenticity’ in school music may explain why adolescents have negative views of music classes. Training music teachers to be specialists in the enormous variety of music styles and genres currently available is virtually impossible; therefore, music teachers are trained to be generalists. This generalist approach may be turning adolescents off to music in school. However, Swanwick and Lawson (1999) advocate that local partnerships with music institutions outside of school may provide “a richness of resources beyond the school gates if we know how to find and utilise it” (p. 59). This research implies that music teacher preparation and current music class offerings in secondary schools may need to be critically examined in terms of both structure and function.

*Music learning activities.* Exercising student choice in the music classroom may foster students’ appeal and positive ratings of music as a subject (Green, 2008). This may be as simple as allowing students to select their performance repertoire. Renwick and McPherson (2002) found that adolescents may engage in higher level practicing strategies such as silent fingering, practicing for longer time periods, and persevering through difficulties when practicing self-selected repertoire. Similarly, Mercurio (2005) found that self-selected reading programs that are relevant to young people’s lives have the most impact on their reading skill development (see also Cook, 2005).

Increased appeal for learning music in school may also be related to the types of learning activities in which students engage during music class (Thompson, 1991). Rutkowski (1994) reviewed many studies that found students preferred *active* activities



(e.g., playing an instrument) rather than *passive* ones (e.g., completing worksheets on composers). Rutkowski also found that students enjoyed activities in which they were able to make decisions and exercise control. Specifically, students enjoyed classroom activities that included small group or individual composition and creative projects second only to playing an instrument. Rutkowski argued that these types of activities fostered students' means of expression and afforded them opportunities to make their own musical judgments.

Research by Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, and Tarrant (2003) supports Rutkowski's (1994) assertions and provides additional clarity on the topic of music learning activities. Lamont et al. grouped student participants into three categories according to their musical engagement and interests. 'Training' students were those students who were receiving musical training outside of class; 'aspiring' students were *not* receiving training, but expressed an interest in doing so; and 'non-aspiring' students were not receiving musical training and did not express interest in doing so. The researchers found that students with an interest in music (i.e., training and aspiring groups) enjoyed active musical activities such as playing an instrument or composing, whereas non-aspiring students enjoyed listening activities despite not showing an interest in pursuing instrumental training. Regardless, all students consistently liked learning abstract facts about music the least (i.e., music theory and history lessons). Similar findings were reported by Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001), Davis (2005), and Finney (2003).

While this research suggests that adolescents desire active and creative learning opportunities in which they can exercise choice and autonomy, music programs in

secondary schools do not traditionally foster these types of learning opportunities (Seidenberg, 1986). Rather, music classes in secondary schools typically emphasize performance, replication, and conformity over creation and independence (Wilson, 2003). Campbell et al. (2007) reported that adolescents' negative comments about music in the curriculum primarily concerned the lack of opportunities to study rock and popular music and instruments as well as the multiple aspects of the music profession (e.g., music business). Some respondents suggested offering opportunities to form small ensembles where students would learn more relevant music in informal ways. Students also expressed an interest in learning about song writing and composition. A few students complained of boring classes or music that was not challenging or relevant. Unfortunately, little is known about how incorporating these practices may influence secondary music classrooms in the United States. However, relevant work in this area is being conducted by Lucy Green in the United Kingdom.

Based on her previous research with popular musicians (Green, 2002), Green's (2008) study introduced five principles of informal learning into British secondary music classrooms. These principles include: (1) informal learning starts with learner-selected music, (2) skills are developed by copying recordings by ear, (3) informal learning occurs alone and through peer-directed, self-directed, and group learning, (4) skills and knowledge are acquired through trial-and-error and holistic ways, and (5) informal learning integrates listening, performing, improvising, and composing. After being immersed in this project, Green found that adolescents who played together for extended periods of time, often experienced 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), engaged in enjoyable music making and learning, and played with appropriate 'feel.' Although somewhat

controversial to the formal learning practices emphasized in most music classrooms, Green (2008) maintains that the principles resonate with the authentic practices of professional musicians and were “developed by learners, through learning, rather than by teachers through teaching” (p. 22).

Through Green’s (2008) work, one can see the potential polarity and/or disparity between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture. This is not only evident in terms of content (i.e., bringing popular music *into* the school), but also in the nature of learning itself (i.e., ‘learning’ as opposed to ‘teaching’). Green acknowledges this disparity and in no way advocates that music educators should abandon all of their existing practices and traditions. Rather, Green contends that including informal learning principles in schools may connect the musical worlds of young people to school music, making learning relevant, deep, and enjoyable.

#### *Adolescents’ Learning and Developmental Growth Outside of School*

Schools may not be able to provide all of the developmental learning needs of adolescents (Vadeboncoeur, 2006). According to Heath and Roach (1999) an *institutional gap* exists between what traditional institutions (e.g., schools or churches) can offer and what youth between the ages of eight and eighteen need. Therefore, some adolescents may use alternative places to supplement their education and development. This gap is often filled by community-based organizations (CBOs). Fine, Weis, Centrie, and Roberts (2000) describe CBOs as “not just a set of geographical/spatial arrangements but, rather, theoretical, analytical, and spatial displacements – a crack, a fissure, a fleeting or sustained set of commitments” (p. 132). Fine et al. argue that these spaces reach beyond

the borders of traditional schools and similar institutions and are places where adolescents thrive.

Community-based organizations may contribute to adolescent development by providing young people multiple opportunities for expression, allowing youth and adults to interact in constructive and meaningful ways, and building young people's self-esteem (Fine et al., 2000; Heath & McLaughlin, 1994; McLaughlin & Irby, 1994). Heath and McLaughlin (1994) found that "successful youth organizations provide links to the community and mainstream institutions, 'authentic curricula' of the most fundamental kind – a learning, performing group in which it is safe to take risks, to stretch, and to learn new roles" (p. 280).

Most CBOs place young people's experiences, interests, and needs at the center of the creative process through active participation and learning (McLaughlin & Irby, 1994). In their study of 124 youth-based community organizations across the United States, Heath and Roach (1999) found that the project-based work in which adults and youth engaged regularly afforded young people multiple opportunities to provide input through group participation and decision-making (a practice often discouraged in secondary school music programs). The young participants in the study also emphasized "the importance of 'having something to do.' They [craved] experience and productivity" (Heath & Roach, 1999, p. 22). After examining the attendance records of multiple community-learning centers (CLCs), Heath and McLaughlin (1994) argued that:

children are drawn to CLC again and again by its nature of discovery and its relevance to their own lives. Learning in this kind of setting is a (seeming) by-product of activities that excite and engage children, inciting them to be active constructors of their own knowledge. (p. 289)

These findings corroborate the research on adolescents' needs to exercise choice in music classrooms and their preferences of active over passive learning (Green, 2008; Rutkowski, 1994).

Another important aspect of CBOs is that youth and adults interact in engaging and constructive ways. In his case study of two young urban males, Dimitriadis (2003) found that for one participant "most often, school meant having only to defer uncritically to teachers who treated him like a child and perform rote and meaningless tasks" (p. 42). Dimitriadis emphasized that CBOs operate on a less strict and less hierarchical model than schools, allowing young people freedoms and experiences they cannot find in the classroom. Youth in these programs receive instruction and guidance from adults as well as work collaboratively with them to plan, develop, and present their work to the community.

The research presented in *Part II* frames an understanding of secondary school music-learning culture. Because of their training, music teachers often make pedagogical decisions that maintain cultural norms rather than accommodating their students' relationships with music. Regardless, adolescents perceive many benefits from belonging to school music programs, many of which are extra-musical. Whether inside or outside of school, the research presented here suggests that adolescents desire to exercise autonomy and choice during learning. Adolescents also want to engage in active rather than passive learning. Furthermore, as the literature on CBOs suggests, adolescents want to interact with adults in meaningful ways through authentic experiences. All of these activities and relationships may be easily facilitated through music participation and learning if the proper measures are in place.

The strength of this literature is that it gives voice to adolescents and music teachers; however, it is limited in that it does not examine the relationship between adolescents' and secondary music teachers' perspectives on interactions between adolescents' musical lives and school music-learning culture.

### Part III: Intersecting Perspectives

The final part of this review comprises an eclectic collection of studies recognizing (either implicitly or explicitly) the perspectives of adolescents and teachers on music participation and learning. Few researchers have tackled this issue, and therefore the studies presented here do not belong to a traditional or established canon of research. Rather, they are brought together from disparate lines of inquiry because they speak to the essence of my research questions. I begin by examining the divergent perspectives of students, teachers, and communities on school music-learning culture. I then highlight research that elucidates the perspectives of adolescents and teachers on innovative music learning programs.

#### *Divergent Perspectives*

It is not surprising that teachers may perceive their classroom environments more positively than their students. Hamann et al. (1990) argue that “people who have more authority and responsibility in a setting tend to see it more positively” (p. 222). This simple yet powerful assertion may illuminate the discrepancy between teachers' and students' perspectives on music participation and learning within school.

In a community survey, Best (1981) found that community members and band directors supported the extracurricular activities of the band program (e.g., parades and pep rallies) as well as the fundamental objectives and aesthetic values of music; however,

there was a discrepancy between the philosophical aims of the program and practiced activities. For instance, there was much more emphasis placed on marching band than was outlined by the mission statement and descriptions advanced by the band director. Best also found parental concern that the general education practices in band programs did not align with the individual needs and interests of their children. Because of this discrepancy, many parents chose to remove their children from the band program.

In his survey of the differences among school administrators', band directors', and band students' attitudes regarding ten extracurricular band activities, Franklin (1980) found that band directors rated the importance of the activities higher than administrators and students. Furthermore, band students rated the same activities less favorably than administrators and directors. Franklin also found that each group arranged the hierarchies of the activities differently. For example, marching festivals were ranked the second most favorable activity by students, eighth by directors, and tenth by school administrators. Evidence of divergent attitudes between students and teachers may help explain why student dropout rates were found to be a significant problem as students advanced in grade level, particularly in grades eleven and twelve.

A decline in British music class enrollment was the primary focus of a study conducted by Lamont et al. (2003). The researchers interviewed administrators and teachers about their approaches to music instruction and collected input from students ages eight to fourteen. Questionnaires were administered to 1,479 students, and follow-up interviews were conducted with 42 music teachers and 134 students from the original questionnaire sample. Emergent themes from teachers' and administrators' interviews included the importance of music and its developmental benefits, access and inclusivity,

and information and communication technology. Teachers reported that music provided an emotional counterbalance to the academic curriculum as well as a place for students to contribute to the cultural life of the school. Music was also seen by teachers as way for students to validate personal experiences and include those who may not excel in other academic subjects. Implementing curricula that included world music and technology were perceived to increase student access to music; however, many teachers admitted that these areas, especially technology, were beyond their expertise. Although the British music education system and class offerings are different than those in the United States, this study highlights how the shortcomings of teacher training discussed in *Part II* may impact actual practice.

Students' views of school music in the Lamont et al. (2003) study differed than those of the administrators and teachers. Students receiving private music lessons had the most positive attitudes about a broader range of styles; students wishing to study music expressed positive attitudes toward teamwork and the social benefits of music; and students who did not express an interest in studying music recognized the skill and ability needed to succeed in music. Despite these primarily positive attitudes toward music in general, student ratings for music class enjoyment declined from fourth to ninth grade. When asked what subjects they would drop, few students mentioned music; however, few students expressed an interest in signing up for school music class. Students in the upper grades commented that music at this level was viewed as being too specialized, only open to those with previous training, and not relevant to their future careers. Students who had elected not to continue instrumental lessons did so for a variety of reasons, ranging from financial to perceived ability. Additionally, many commented that they did not want to



miss out on other class offerings, that the instruments they wanted to study were not available, or that they were not receiving familial support.

Although students and teachers recognize many social and emotional benefits of music, some researchers have suggested that teachers' instructional delivery may hinder the delivery of those benefits (see Rutkowski, 1994). Boal-Palheiros and Hargreaves (2001) argued that:

at school, students listen to music to learn about music history, styles, musical elements, and instruments, and to learn how to play, sing and compose. Learning rather than enjoyment tends to be emphasized: teachers are mainly concerned with conveying information and developing concepts. (p. 116)

In her review of literature, Rutkowski (1994) argued that teachers taught music formally and historically, whereas the musical lives of adolescents are fluid, informal, and follow current musical trends.

#### *Perspectives on Innovative Practice*

Research in American secondary school music programs has focused on traditional large performance ensembles; however, little is known about students' experiences in secondary *general* music classrooms. This is due in large part to the fact that secondary general music programs are rare in the United States. In order to gain this perspective, we must look to research in the United Kingdom. The purpose of Finney's (2003) ethnographic case study was to investigate British students' attitudes, motivations, and perceptions of a secondary general music class. Finney (2003) described the music class as adopting an "integrated approach bringing together performing, creating, appraising, and listening," and the music teacher was described as being a nurturing and engaging educator (p. 3).

Student participants in Finney's (2003) study reported positive views of the music teacher and championed the teacher's role in making classes a learning collaboration between him and his students. They also reported that they learned best by doing, and that they saw arts classes as a way to express themselves. Further, they felt the arts boosted their confidence, helped them establish a sense of self, and fostered their understanding of their own identity. The students as a whole valued their current music class and reported great respect for their teacher. They described him as strict, yet fun; they appreciated his inquisitive nature about music and the ways in which he talked *with* them, not *at* them.

Interviews also revealed students' perceptions of music's power to affect their mental state and emotions. They acquired pride in learning how to understand music for themselves and through teaching others. The students' musical endeavors outside of school included singing, dancing, and listening to music for two or more hours a day. Almost half of the students reported owning an instrument at home and although no students were taking private music lessons, all expressed an interest in doing so.

Finney (2003) also provided a rich description of the unique and varied teaching methods employed by the music teacher and the subsequent responses and activities of the students. The music teacher respected the creative and inquisitive nature of his students and allowed them to explore music in a variety of ways. He adopted an inclusive approach to music education while he himself grew up in a music education atmosphere that fostered exclusivity and elitism.

The students said that it was hard to find good teachers who engaged in and valued students' lives, experiences, and feelings. The music teacher was able to offer this

kind of experience by fostering an environment of creativity, allowing for the awareness of social issues and resolution, and engaging in a dialogical style of teaching. This style of teaching accepts and celebrates what students bring to the learning environment and strives to “make a classroom musical culture that can be adapted and harmonise with [students’] musical learning beyond the school gates” (Finney, 2003, p. 16). At the core of his teaching philosophy, the music teacher expected his students to be “makers of culture” (Finney, 2003, p. 15). This study provides a valuable insight into the relationship between the musical lives adolescents and their teacher and speaks to the power and benefit of developing that relationship in meaningful and authentic ways.

As reported earlier (see p. 35), Green (2008) has also studied non-traditional approaches to music learning in British secondary music classrooms. Green’s investigation of informal popular music learning practices in schools highlights the transformation of students’ and teachers’ views of learning outcomes. When asked what they had learned from the project, adolescent participants overwhelmingly remarked, ‘how to play an instrument.’ Adolescent participants also reported a new-found understanding and respect for musicians and the difficulty of performing music; a significant shift from their previously negative views of music learning in school. Teachers also evidenced a change in perspective. Before the project began, many teachers expressed apprehension at the idea of introducing informal popular music learning into their curricula; however, this soon gave way to more positive perspectives. Teachers commented that students’ performing and critical listening skills had improved and that they were more fully engaged with music learning in general.

The literature presented in this final part of the review captures adolescents' and music teachers' perspectives on school music-learning culture. Simply stated, students and teachers often desire different outcomes from the school music experience and perceive these experiences with varying degrees of importance and meaning. However, the innovative work described by Finney (2003) and Green (2008) appears to circumnavigate this divide by getting at the essence of the musical experience that can be shared by teachers and students. Rooted in musical discovery and music making, this experience appears to transcend boundaries of school and music cultures.

### Summary and Limitations of Relevant Literature

#### *Summary*

The research presented in *Part I* suggests that music permeates many important dimensions of adolescents' lives, including their personal and social identities. Music provides a conduit for adolescents to engage in self-exploration, apparently aiding their efforts to organize developmental confusion and regulate mood. Adolescents also make clear socio-cultural distinctions between groups of people based on music preferences. One of the clearest distinctions is between the popular music styles generally preferred by adolescents and the art music preferred by adults and studied in school. Adolescents who make music informally outside of school express an interest in learning that is flexible, cooperative, and impassioned. Together, these findings imply that the relationships adolescents have with music are meaningful and strong. When young people seek out music participation and learning opportunities, they seek those that align with their tastes and learning needs.

*Part II* details aspects of secondary school music-learning culture, including the impact of the music teacher enculturation process and adolescents' experiences in music classrooms. The process of music teacher enculturation may compel 'content-centered' teachers to maintain traditional performance-based ensembles in which Western art-music values outweigh educational values. This results in music teachers exercising primary authority and decision-making to achieve desired musical outcomes regardless of students' interests and learning needs. While adolescents perceive many benefits from participating in these ensembles, those benefits appear to be primarily extra-musical and largely related to the social experience of belonging to a group. Research also affirms that adolescents enjoy autonomy, exercising choice, and engaging in active and creative learning opportunities. However, many of these opportunities are rarely afforded in performance-based ensembles that dominate secondary schools in the United States. Accordingly, adolescents may drop out of school music programs and/or seek more meaningful and relevant music participation and learning experiences outside of school.

The literature presented in *Part III* describes the divergent perspectives adolescents and music teachers have on school music-learning culture. Most importantly, the various stakeholders involved in school music, namely students and teachers, may disagree on the purpose and function of the enterprise. Although adolescents may develop significant relationships with music outside of school, the research shows those relationships can be nurtured and developed in school by teachers who are cognizant of adolescents' learning needs and music's import in adolescents' lives. This involves placing students at the center of the learning experience and designing curricula more

appropriately aligned with adolescents' personal, social, and authentic relationships with music.

### *Limitations*

The research presented in this chapter is limited in multiple ways. First, most of the current research aimed at understanding the discrepancy between adolescents' almost ubiquitous relationships with music and the apparent lack of their participation in school music programs has been conducted in the United Kingdom and not in the United States. Music programs in the United Kingdom operate quite differently from those in the United States, and the findings reported by British researchers may not transfer to American adolescents and schools. Second, there is a limited amount of research on secondary, and specifically high school, music culture. Moreover, much of the research focused on adolescents' experiences in secondary school music programs approaches advocacy and may gloss over issues of tension experienced by those students who eventually drop out of music classes. Third, little is known about the relationship between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture. Finally, the voices of adolescents who may have deep personal relationships with music, but who are not enrolled in music classes, are exceedingly absent from the literature.

Other limitations include the methodologies employed by researchers. First, much of the research on adolescent music sub-cultures relied on adults' perceptions of and labels for these cultures. Adolescent participants may have felt these labels limited their actual music preferences; furthermore, participants' personal perspectives could not emerge. Second, quantitative studies lack the depth to explain what informs adolescents' appeal for music participation and learning. The qualitative and mixed-method studies

reviewed in this chapter give richer descriptions and allow readers to develop a deeper understanding of these issues, but they are limited in number.

## CHAPTER 3

### DESIGN OF INQUIRY

#### Epistemology and Theoretical Framework

##### *Epistemology: Social Constructionism*

Lather (2006) describes five paradigms for inquiry: predict, understand, emancipate, deconstruct, and “next?” (p. 37). Studies within the *understand* paradigm are often exploratory and seek to add an understanding of the world, an event, a group of people, or a phenomenon through interpretive, naturalistic, and/or constructivist research methods. For purposes of this investigation, I subscribed to a *social constructionist* epistemology situated within Lather’s *understand* paradigm of inquiry. Crotty (1998) defines constructionism as “the view that *all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context*” (italics in original, p. 42).

In addition to its social dimensions, meaning is also influenced by cultural norms and expectations. Crotty (1998) argues that “each of us, when we first see the world in meaningful fashion... are inevitably viewing it through lenses bestowed upon us by culture” (p. 54). Schwandt (2000) argues that “we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understanding, practices, language, and so forth” (p. 197). Thus, culture provides a framework in which individuals and groups operate, guiding behaviors, expectations, and meaning. Cultural establishments include



rich traditions and practices that have been transmitted from generation to generation. Within each culture, there are also sub-cultures that represent smaller populations.

Crotty (1998) warns that “historical and cross-cultural comparisons should make us very aware that, at different times and in different places, there have been and are very divergent interpretations of the same phenomenon” (p. 64). A constructionist perspective allowed me to account for the various cultures I encountered throughout my study. However, I remained cognizant of how my cultural backgrounds influenced my perceptions of the culture I was studying (see ‘Researcher’s Role’ later in this chapter).

What I find liberating about constructionist research is that it:

requires that we not remain straitjacketed by the conventional meanings we have been taught to associate with the object. Instead, such research invites us to approach the object in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. It is an invitation to reinterpretation. (Crotty, 1998, p. 51)

*Theoretical Perspective: Symbolic Interactionism*

The theoretical perspective of *symbolic interactionism* best suited this investigation. Blumer (1969) contends that symbolic interaction rests on three premises: (1) “that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them,” (2) “that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows,” and (3) “that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (p. 2). From these premises, Sandstorm, Martin, and Fine (2001) outline six guiding principles for researchers adopting the symbolic interactionist perspective. I will discuss each principle in turn, as well as its applicability to my study.

*People are unique creatures because of their ability to use symbols.* Unlike other animals, humans are unique in that they do not respond to stimuli in direct or automatic ways. Humans make meaning of stimuli and they act according to the meanings they ascribe to the stimuli. Symbolic interactionists contend that humans come to understand the meanings of stimuli through social interaction and communicate those meanings through symbols such as language. Specifically for this study, I was particularly interested in how adolescents and secondary music teachers used the symbols of language and music to communicate meaning and understanding.

*People become distinctly human through their interaction.* According to Sandstorm et al. (2001), “interactionists do not believe that people are born human. Rather, they assume that people develop into distinctively human beings as they take part in social interaction” (p. 218). I believe this principle is especially important in adolescent development. Adolescents interact with others their age and with adults to test out different identities, shape their choices, and validate their feelings and behaviors. Music may be an especially important medium through which adolescents guide and shape their interactions with others. I explicitly investigated how adolescents’ interactions with music aid their identity formation, thereby shaping their *humanness*.

*People are conscious and self-reflexive beings who actively shape their own behavior.* People do not merely respond to the stimuli they encounter in the world, but exercise an amount of freedom of choice in how they define the world and how they choose to respond to it. Accordingly, prior events, expectations, and biological forces may *influence* people’s behavior, but do not necessarily *determine* those behaviors. This principle was particularly applicable to my study because music may be an important and

enriching aspect of people's lives, but it is not a requirement to live; nor is it a required subject in secondary schools. Thus, choice and elective drive peoples' beliefs and actions about music participation and learning.

*People are purposive creatures who act in and toward situations.* Elaborating on principle one, Sandstorm et al. (2001) contend that people make meaning out of interactions and that those interactions are guided by "anticipated outcomes and desired goals" (p. 219). Again, I found this principle relevant for the participants of my study. Adolescents may not fully anticipate the natural consequences or potential outcomes of their actions. For instance, an adolescent may choose to listen to heavy metal music because it somehow resonates with her or his feelings; however, her or his parents may not think heavy metal music is appropriate listening material and may subsequently exercise punishment. Likewise, music teachers may make choices about the curriculum and music selections in order to shape and preserve professional traditions and standards; however, their students may not embrace those choices and may eventually drop out of music class because of them.

*Human society consists of people engaging in symbolic interaction.* Interactionists reject the psychological view that society is something people construct merely in their minds. Further, they reject the structuralist view that society "exists independently of us as individuals and that it dictates our actions through the rules, statuses, or structures it imposes upon us" (Sandstorm et al. 2001, p. 219). Rather, interactionists view society as a fluid *and* structured process which humans shape by making meaning of their interactions with symbols and influence through their communications with others. Adolescents, schools, teachers, and parents, through their interactions with others and

institutions, help form society. From this perspective, adolescents are valued participants in the society and have an active role to play in its construction and meaning even though their contributions are often not as valued as those of adults.

*To understand people's social acts, we need to use methods that enable us to discern the meanings they attribute to these acts.* This principle guided how I went about collecting and analyzing data throughout my study. Crotty (1998) emphasizes that it is critical for the researcher to put "oneself in the place of the other" (p. 75). This means that in order to understand the perspectives of my participants, I attempted to see the world as *they* did. I accounted for *their* interpretations and not only *my* own. Adopting this approach helped me "gain a deeper appreciation of how these social actors define, construct and act toward the 'realities' that constitute their everyday worlds" (Sandstorm et al., 2001, p. 219).

Crotty (1998) advocates that researchers utilizing symbolic interaction "observe [culture] as closely as possible, attempt to take the place of those within the culture, and search out the insider's perspective" (p. 76). The insider's perspective, especially those of adolescents, is what I feel is missing most from current music education research. The profession has concerned itself to a large degree with research on one dimension of music participation and learning, teaching practice. That is, such research often seems to overlook the basic social interaction of people (young and old) *with, through, and around* music. This interaction occurs on multiple dimensions: teacher with music, teacher with student, student with music, and student with student. By examining how adolescents and adults interact through the symbols of adolescents' musical lives and school music-

learning cultures, I was able to explore previously unaddressed aspects of interaction and meaning.

### *Limitations*

The epistemological and theoretical perspectives I selected do have inherent limitations. First, I accept that my findings are specific and localized to my participants. A constructionist epistemology inherently gives credence to each individual's construction and interpretation of meaning in the world. Therefore, I am unable to generalize my findings to *all* adolescents and/or secondary music teachers. Secondly, I reject the idea that I can discover an absolute *truth* in the data. Crotty (1998) argues that "what constructionism drives home unambiguously is that there is *no* true or valid interpretation" (italics in original, p. 47). Therefore, I found valuable, useful, rewarding, and perhaps even liberating interpretations, but not definitive ones. Third, I accept that meaning is bound by social influence and culture. By meeting and observing my participants in their natural environment, I accepted any influence it had on my research. I did not isolate any specific behavior; therefore, I looked at my study holistically and made accommodations to gather, analyze, and interpret a great variety of data from diverse sources.

My research is also limited by my use of symbolic interactionism. One critique of this perspective is that the researcher cannot see the world through her or his participants' eyes. As I mentioned above, I belong to a particular culture and therefore have my own subjectivities. While I may be able to bracket those subjectivities, I will never be able to completely dismantle them. They influenced which stories I followed, how I examined data, and events I may have overlooked. I also had to acknowledge that my participants

may have ‘told me what I wanted to hear.’ While I hope that my participants were open and honest with me, I had to take them at their word. I also trust that their words accurately described their understanding of reality. Within symbolic interactionism, I cannot interpret the meanings I *assume* my participants are trying to convey. Thus, I strove to report my findings as if my participants reported the findings themselves. This meant I had adhere to rigorous methods to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

## Methods

### *Methodology*

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture from the perspectives of adolescents and secondary music teachers. Merriam (1998) describes ethnography as a “*sociocultural interpretation of the data*,” further, ethnographies are “interpretive descriptions or reconstructions of participants’ symbolic meanings and patterns of social interaction” (italics in original, p. 14). LeCompte, Preissle, and Tesch (1993) advocate that “ethnographies re-create for the reader the shared beliefs, practices, artifacts, folk knowledge, and behaviors of some group of people” (pp. 2-3). In this study, these ‘groups of people’ included adolescents and music teachers as they interacted with, through, and around music.

While many of the techniques and methods utilized in ethnography are shared among many other forms of qualitative inquiry, traditional ethnography is unique in its ties to anthropology and therefore its focus on the study of human society and culture (Patton, 2002). Anthropological studies typically require prolonged experience in the field (at least one year) and rely heavily on observational data. I spent eight months

(October 2008 to May 2009) in the field observing adolescents and teachers inside and outside of school. My work was consistent with Crotty's (1998) description of the relationship between ethnography and symbolic interactionism:

Ethnographic inquiry in the spirit of symbolic interactionism seeks to uncover meanings and perceptions on the part of the people participating in the research, viewing these understandings against the backdrop of the people's overall worldview or 'culture'. In line with this approach, the researcher strives to see things from the perspective of the participants.  
(p. 7)

### *Site and Participants*

*Site.* I conducted my research at College Heights High School (CHHS), which is a pseudonym for a public high school located in a major Southeastern city in the United States. College Heights was founded by a nearby liberal arts university and services a suburban community with a diverse population, both ethnically and socio-economically. At the time of the study, the ethnic breakdown of College Heights's 1,100 student population was approximately 45% African-American, 37% European-American, 10% Asian-American, 4% Hispanic and 4% multiracial. Approximately 16% of CHHS students had limited English proficiency and 44% received free and reduced lunches. Data collected in this setting contributed a different perspective from the research conducted on primarily upper-middle class White adolescents (see Adderley, et al., 2003).

In addition to providing a comprehensive curriculum for students, College Heights has also implemented an International Baccalaureate (IB) program since 2004. Opportunities for music participation and learning at College Heights High School include two concert bands, two orchestras, chorus, guitar, advanced placement (AP) music theory, as well as marching and jazz bands outside the regular school day. The

music programs at CHHS have positive public and professional reputations and are not excessively driven by competition.

*Purposeful sampling and participants.* Given the time and depth required of qualitative research, I chose to retain a small sample size. However, I felt it important to capture multiple perspectives in order to more fully address my research questions. Thus, I utilized a ‘maximum variation purposeful sampling’ strategy (Patton, 2002) to select participants for this study. According to Patton (2002):

This strategy...aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation....Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon.  
(p. 235)

I was fortunate that both music teachers at College Heights High School, Mr. Klippen and Mr. Owns, agreed to participate in my study (see Participation Recruitment Letter in Appendix A). Mr. Klippen, a White middle-aged man, has served as a teacher at CHHS for 24 years and is responsible for teaching orchestra, guitar, and advanced placement (AP) music theory. Mr. Owens, a Black middle-aged man, has served as a teacher at CHHS for seven years and was responsible for teaching band (concert, jazz, and marching), chorus, and percussion. Capturing their perspectives was important because their beliefs and actions shape and preserve the music culture at CHHS. Each music teacher’s unique background and pedagogical focus varied widely from the other’s and thus contributed to the maximum variation needed to satisfy this sampling strategy. These teachers also served as the ‘gatekeepers’ to the site and potential adolescent participants (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).



After considering the populations sampled in prior studies, I made a concerted effort to recruit adolescent participants that reflected the ethnic and socio-economic diversity of the school. I also considered identifying potential participants who were comfortable talking about and sharing their musical lives with me. After conducting multiple field observations and speaking informally with teachers and students at CHHS, I identified potential adolescent participants who were involved in music classes and asked them to complete an information sheet which included basic demographic questions and questions about their music interests (see Appendix B). Potential participant information sheets were screened for indicators of demographic and music interest diversity to achieve part of the maximum variation sample. This strategy yielded four adolescent participants who, along with their parents or guardians, were contacted and asked to complete consent and assent forms. After our initial interviews, I asked these adolescents to help me identify other potential participants who were interested in music, but not involved in the school music program. This “snowballing” technique yielded an additional two participants, one of whom identified the final adolescent participant of the study. Collectively, this sampling strategy yielded a total of seven adolescent participants representing a variety of backgrounds and levels of musical engagement. Figure 2 profiles each adolescent participant and the range of his or her musical activities.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	In-school music activities	Out-of-school music activities
Eric	16	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>played violin in the school orchestra during the fall semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>music listener</li> <li>took private electric guitar lessons</li> <li>played electric guitar in a garage band (including 'covering songs' and creating original music)</li> </ul>
James	17	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>played trombone in sixth grade, but was not currently enrolled in a music class at CHHS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>music listener</li> <li>played <i>Rock Band</i> video game with friends approximately once a month</li> </ul>
Krista	16	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enrolled in the guitar class in the fall semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>music listener</li> <li>played <i>Rock Band</i> with family on occasion</li> </ul>
Marcus	16	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>had recently elected out of playing violin in the school orchestra</li> <li>had taken the guitar class the year before</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avid music listener</li> <li>composed and produced original hip-hop/rock fusion music with friends</li> <li>played acoustic guitar and other instruments when composing on his computer</li> </ul>
Mya	15	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>played trumpet in the school concert, jazz, and marching bands both semesters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avid music listener</li> <li>played drum set, acoustic guitar, and steel pans at home</li> </ul>
Tiffany	15	Black	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sang in the school chorus during the fall semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avid music listener</li> <li>sang in her gospel church choir</li> <li>played piano</li> <li>composed and sang original songs</li> </ul>
William	17	White	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enrolled in the guitar class during the spring semester</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>avid music listener</li> <li>took private electric guitar lessons</li> <li>played in multiple garage bands</li> <li>composed and produced his own original music</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Adolescent Participant Profiles

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

I utilized methods of data collection and analysis consistent with ethnographic qualitative inquiry. Data were collected via observations, interviews, and document review (Merriam, 1998). I also employed an innovative data collection strategy involving participant-generated music mixes and music elicitation interviews.

*Participant observations.* Merriam (1998) maintains “observations take place in the natural field setting...[and] represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the world obtained in an interview” (p. 94). Observations in the field were collected between October 2008 and March 2009. I observed multiple music classes at CHHS as well as extra-curricular music events such as marching band halftime performances, concerts, and competitive music festivals. I also observed the musical activities of adolescent participants outside of school such as garage band and church choir rehearsals. A complete list of field observation locations and dates is provided in Appendix G.

Along DeWalt and DeWalt’s (2002) continuum of observer participation, I engaged in “moderate participation” (p. 20). DeWalt and DeWalt describe moderate participants as identifiable researchers who are present in the action, but who do not actively participate. My participants knew I was present as a researcher, but I did my best not to disrupt the music environments and activities I observed. However, I do acknowledge that my presence may have influenced the people I was studying and therefore the data I collected. Jot notes from the field were written into expanded field notes soon after each observation in an effort to retain as much detail as possible. I also

wrote memos about the observations as I reflected on the data I had gathered (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

*Interviews.* Congruent with a social constructionist epistemology, Collins (1998) describes interviewing as a process of creating and constructing data, not just collecting it. Together with my participants, I generated rich descriptions of their relationships with music and their perspectives on music participation and learning through semistructured conversational interviews between November 2008 and May 2009. Merriam (1998) describes semistructured interviews as being largely “guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time” (p. 74). Adopting this approach allowed me to utilize my interview time efficiently by addressing questions raised by my review of the literature while also providing me the flexibility to “respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas of the topic” (*ibid.*).

The interview techniques offered by Rubin and Rubin (2005) were particularly helpful in the pilot study of adolescent musicians and thus were utilized in this study. Four questions, probes, and follow-ups throughout the interview were used to explore topics for “depth, detail, vividness, richness, and nuance” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). Throughout the study, I refined my interview questions and became more comfortable with the interviewing process (see Appendix C). This was possible by constantly evaluating my interview questions against the data I was receiving from my participants and the background literature on the topic. Eventually, I was able to free myself from the list of questions and focus more on my conversations and interactions with participants. This meant moving away from a sequential list of questions and adopting a more holistic

approach to the interview. Thus, I was able to follow the organic and unexpected paths of my participants' responses while still addressing topics of interest. Interview questions for the music teachers were developed *after* the collection and initial analysis of field observations and interviews with adolescent participants (see Appendix F). All interviews were recorded on an electronic audio device and transcribed as soon as possible after collection. Transcripts were then given to each participant to check for accuracy. A complete list of participant interview dates is provided in Appendix H.

*Document review.* Prior (2003) defines documents as “essentially social products. They are constructed in accordance with rules, they express a structure, they are nestled with a specific discourse, and their presence in the world depends on collective, organized, action” (pp. 12-13). The documents I reviewed included state and county curriculum guides, handbooks and the mission statement of the school music program, concert programs, and course syllabi. Private documents generated by my adolescent participants included their written music mix descriptions.

Prior (2003) posits, “We need to look at how documents are picked up and manipulated *in situ*, and not simply to focus on matters of content” (p. 51). He later contends, “it is the anthropology of use, more than the literary study of content, that should guide the social scientist in matters of research” (Prior, 2003, p. 104). Thus, these documents were analyzed in terms of how participants use them, how they do or do not promote and influence various music cultures, and how they reference action. In addition, I analyzed their content. A complete list of documents reviewed for this study is provided in Appendix I.

*Music mixes and music elicitation interviews.* Exploring adolescents' personal relationships with music through traditional ethnographic data collection techniques and sources has limitations. First, it is difficult to 'observe' the relationships adolescents form with music through solitary listening. Second, most people, adolescents included, find it difficult to describe their appeal for the referential and sonic properties of music with words in interviews. Third, music is a temporal art form and therefore cannot be examined in the same way as a static written document. In an attempt to circumvent these limitations, I used an innovative data collection strategy in which participant-generated music mixes, or playlists, served as non-discursive data sources. This strategy allowed me to investigate adolescents' intimate relationships with music at a depth that observations, interviews, and documents did not necessarily permit. Although this strategy is innovative, sociological and ethnographic research employing non-discursive data sources such as images and photographs is well documented (Harper, 2000). A complete list of each adolescent participant's music mix selections is provided in Appendix H.

Harper (2003) contends that "contemporary visual ethnography uses photography not so much to claim 'this is what is,' but to create a dialogue around the competing and complementary meanings of images" (p. 244). The dialogue to which Harper refers may occur between researchers and their audiences or between researchers and participants through the process of photo elicitation. Harper (2002) describes the potential for photo elicitation as such:

Photo elicitation is based on the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview. The difference between interviews using images and text, and interviews using words alone lies in the ways we respond to these two forms of symbolic representation.... Thus images evoke deeper

elements of human consciousness than do words.... These may be some of the reasons the photo elicitation interview seems like not simply an interview process that elicits more information, but rather one that evokes a different kind of information.... Elicitation interviews connect “core definitions of the self” to society, culture and history. (p. 13)

Harper (2002) argues that “the key element is not the form of the visual representation, but its relationship with the culture under study” (p. 19). Following this logic, I substituted visual images with music selections to study the musical lives of adolescents. After my initial interview with each adolescent participant, I asked him or her to create a music mix of five personally important and/or meaningful music selections (in the form of a compact disc or electronically shared audio file). In addition to these selections, each participant was asked to write a short description of each selection and why he or she included it in the mix (see Appendix D).

Due to technological, financial, and copyright restrictions, most participants were unable to share their musical selections with me directly. This issue arose in the pilot study when a participant remarked that she primarily listens to music online through the free media website YouTube.com. When these situations presented themselves, I asked participants to submit written descriptions only and sought out the musical selections myself. Often this involved referencing my personal music collection or purchasing and downloading music selections through the online music store iTunes.

The music mixes serve two main functions in this study. First, they are a distinct data source. I read and reflected on participants’ written descriptions before listening to their music selections. While listening to each participant’s music mix, I made notes on the referential and sonic properties of each selection and the music mix as a whole. These notes included references to tempo, instrumentation, lyrics, diversity of styles, ordering

of selections, as well as any particular aspects of the music the participant highlighted in his or her description. Next, I coded the written descriptions and referenced the initial interview for emergent issues and topics to explore during subsequent interviews.

Second, the music mixes served as conduits to robust dialogues with my participants. After my initial analysis of the mixes and descriptions, I conducted follow-up music elicitation interviews with my participants (see Appendix E). Similar to the photo elicitation interview process described by Harper (2002), I played each music selection from my laptop computer during the second interview. As we listened, I asked participants to explore and/or clarify emergent issues and topics generated from my analysis of their mixes, descriptions, and previous interview. Through this process, we were able to reference specific and information-rich music events directly and discuss them in real time. These discussions fostered a detailed and potent dialogue about the relationships between participants' musical lives and the school music-learning culture. Harper (2002) concludes that "when two or more people discuss the meaning of photographs they try to figure out something together. This is, I believe, an ideal model for research" (p. 23). I echo Harper's sentiments and feel this innovative strategy allowed me and my participants to move beyond simply 'talking about' music to a more artistic, intimate, and authentic way of addressing my research questions.

Music mixes and music elicitation interviews were pilot tested with three adolescent participants and yielded informative results. I found that this strategy strengthened and contributed to this study in three vital ways. First, as observations enable researchers to get firsthand accounts of a setting or situation, this process enabled me to investigate a facet of adolescent musical life that is primarily experienced through



listening in isolation. Further, when participants were unable to clearly articulate their affinity for music verbally, we could reference the music directly during the music elicitation interview. While the music itself often provided a valuable conduit to understanding adolescents' personal relationships with music, their written descriptions enriched this understanding. Harper (2003) remarks, "the marriage of text and image produces this exceptional intimacy because it invites analysis, imagination and memory" (p. 258).

Second, a significant limitation of previous survey research on adolescent music preference is that adolescent participants had to make distinctions between categories, styles, and genres based on semantic rather than musical differences. Further, these categories were determined and labeled by adult researchers and may not necessarily accommodate for the diversity of music styles young people actually listen to or create for themselves (see LeBlanc, et al., 1996). The music mixes allowed adolescent participants to generate music 'data' that are native, specific, and meaningful to them; that is, honoring their voice in the research process. Harper (2000) advocates that this process enables participants to use music and writing "to investigate their own cultures and, perhaps, to empower themselves" (p. 728).

Third, how I as an adult researcher made meaning of a participant's music mix was not always consistent with the meaning he or she intended. This may be a result of our age differences, musical backgrounds, or other reasons. However, through a music elicitation interview, we were able to use the music selection itself as 'common ground' on which to stand. Thus, similar to images, these music selections built "bridges between worlds that are more culturally distinct" (Harper, 2002, p. 21).

*Data analysis.* I employed a thematic analysis to identify themes that emerged from the data (Grbich, 2007). According to Grbich:

Thematic analysis is particularly idiosyncratic and can involve a focus on repeated words or phrases, case studies or evidence of answers to the research question/s which have been devised.... Themes may come from previous relevant research which you have reviewed, from myths/evidence within the area being studied, or from your gut feelings, as well as from the views of those being observed or interviewed. This approach to qualitative research insists that the data should speak for themselves initially before any predesigned themes are imposed. (p. 32)

As Grbich states, it is vital to this analysis approach that the data “speak for themselves.” Thus, themes emerged from a careful analysis of the data, rather than being imposed on the data. To develop these themes, I utilized the constant comparative method (CCM) according to the guidelines described by Boeije (2002). Boeije (2002) contends that “by comparing, the researcher is able to do what is necessary to develop a theory more or less inductively, namely categorizing, coding, delineating categories and connecting them” (p. 393). Charmaz (2003) recommends that “researchers collect data and analyze it simultaneously from the initial phases of research” (p. 311). Thus, my initial analysis of data began as I wrote expanded field notes from my first observations and transcribed my first interviews. Boeije (2002) aptly describes this process as a cycle:

The cycle of comparison and reflection on ‘old’ and ‘new’ material can be repeated several times. It is only when new cases do not bring any new information to light that categories can be described as saturated. (p. 393)

I adapted Boeije’s (2002) step-wise approach to the CCM to accommodate my research questions and purpose. Boeije speaks specifically about an analysis of each interview; however, I have replaced the word ‘interview’ with the word ‘case’ to encompass all of the data sources related to one individual, classroom, or group. Each step is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *Steps of the Constant Comparative Method*

Steps	Analysis activities	Aims	Results
<i>Step 1.</i> Comparison within a single case	Open coding: summarizing of data sources; finding consensus on interpretation of fragments	Develop categories	Summary of individual data sources; provisional code; memos
<i>Step 2.</i> Comparison between cases within the same group	Axial coding: formulation criteria for comparing cases; searching for patterns and differences	Conceptualization of the topic	Expansion of codes until all relevant themes are covered; descriptions of themes; extended memos
<i>Step 3.</i> Comparison of cases from groups with different perspectives	Convergence of data, comparison between cases and categories, and crystallization of all data	Complete the understanding; enrich and deepen the information	Themes and relationships that answer research questions

*Note.* Adapted from Boeije (2002)

*Step 1* involved comparison within a single case. First, I engaged in open coding of interview transcripts, observations, music mixes, and documents belonging to a single case (i.e., a single individual or classroom). This entailed studying the text line-by-line and assigning codes to material relevant to the research questions. Then, I compared codes within the entire case to “find out what they have in common, how they differ, in what context the interviewee made the remarks and which dimensions...are highlighted” (Boeije, 2002, p. 395). This process of comparison lead to the development of relevant categories for each case and provisional codes for the entire study.

In *Step 2*, I analyzed each case as described in *Step 1*, then compared each new case with data from other participants within the same group. For this study, there were two main groups of interest, adolescents and teachers. Within each of these two groups, I engaged in axial coding by comparing fragments from different cases that pertain to the same codes and categories. I then searched for patterns of similarity and divergence that defined or explained emerging concepts shared among cases within each group as well as how the cases differed with respect to my research questions. This process resulted in an expanded number of codes that covered all data relevant to the research questions. *Step 3* entailed comparing data from different groups “with regard to the experience of a specific phenomenon” (Boeije, 2002, p. 398). In this study, I made comparisons between the music teacher group and the collective adolescent group with regard to the primary research question.

I engaged in memo writing throughout the analysis process. Charmaz (2003) contends that “memos join data with researchers’ original interpretations of those data” and thus lead to analysis and writing the research report (p. 323). According to Boeije (2002), engaging in this purposeful approach to data analysis “will not only systematize [the researcher’s] work, but will also increase traceability when they describe how they used and implemented the approach in their research practice” (p. 392).

Collectively, all data sources contributed to answering my research questions by way of convergence, comparison, and ‘crystallization.’ That is, I corroborated evidence and findings from the multiple dimensions and perspectives gained through the various data sources. Richardson, in Richardson and St. Pierre (2000), describes crystallization as:

The crystal...combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and are altered, but they are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colors, patterns, and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends on our angle of repose – not triangulation but rather crystallization. (p. 963)

Richardson’s description captures the essence of my approach to inquiry in that I aimed to organically form, along with my participants, a “deepened, complex, and thoroughly partial understanding of the topic” (ibid.). Figure 3 provides a holistic perspective on the data analysis process applied to this study.

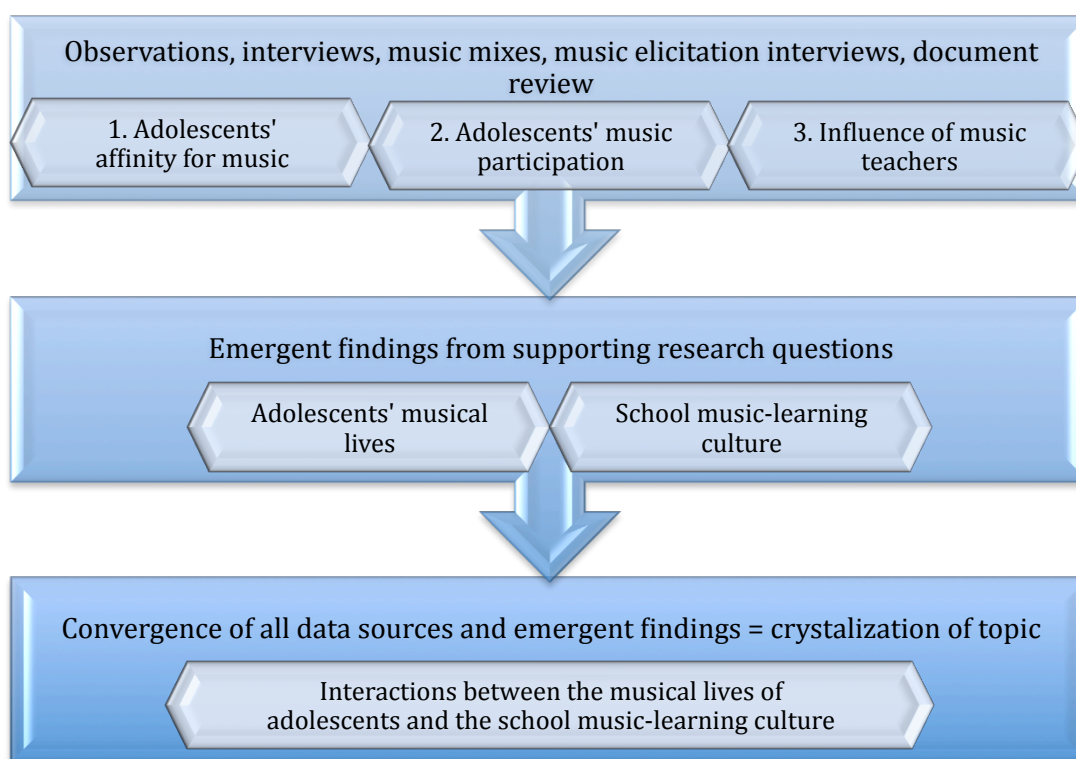


Figure 3. Data Analysis Process

Credibility and Quality, Researcher's Role,  
Ethics, and Representation

*Credibility and Quality*

As is the case with any research, the investigator must ensure that he or she conducts a rigorous and ethical study that does not bring unnecessary harm to the participants. Patton (2002) maintains that different criteria should be used to judge the credibility and quality of different forms of qualitative inquiry. The criteria used by social constructionists include, but are not limited to, trustworthiness, authenticity, enhanced and deepened understanding, and contributions to dialogue.

*Trustworthiness* encompasses many of the procedural aspects of conducting research that are equivalent to the positivistic concepts of internal and external validity and reliability (Denzin, 2004). Creswell (2003) recommends qualitative researchers use these strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of a study:

1. *Triangulate* different data sources of information by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes.
2. Use *member checking* to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants and determining whether these participants feel that they are accurate.
3. Use *rich, thick description* to convey the findings.
4. Use *peer debriefing* to enhance the accuracy of the account. This process involves locating a person (a peer debriefer) who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher. (p. 196)

Although triangulation is considered the traditional way in which researchers can enhance the trustworthiness of their studies (Denzin, 2004), Richardson argues that triangulation assumes “that there is a ‘fixed point’ or an ‘object’ that can be triangulated” and is therefore inconsistent with a constructionist epistemology (Richardson & St.

Pierre, 2000, p. 963). Thus, I engaged in crystallization of my various data sources. I engaged in member checking by having all participants review interview transcripts for accuracy and encouraged them to review my initial categories and final themes.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I consulted other doctoral students and music education professors on emergent findings and drafts of my report to satisfy peer debriefing requirements. My findings are written with rich, thick descriptions in a prose style.

In addition to these recommendations, I heeded Merriam's (1998) precaution of establishing an 'audit trail,' which is accomplished by describing "in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (p. 207). My audit trail included labeling each data source with the day and time it was collected, keeping electronic and hard copies of email transactions, and keeping a research journal throughout the entire research project. A condensed timeline of pertinent research events is provided in Appendix J.

Patton (2002) describes *authenticity* as the "reflexive consciousness about one's own perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others, and fairness in depicting constructions in the values that undergird them" (p. 546). Thus, one important aspect of authenticity is acknowledging my role and biases, or subjectivities, as a researcher. My role and subjectivities will be discussed in greater detail in a separate section of this chapter (see p. 73).

I hope this study *enhances and deepens the understanding* of the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture. First, it enhances our understanding of adolescents' affinity for music beyond extant survey and

correlational research. Second, it deepens our understanding of the evident disparity between adolescents' extensive and autonomous interactions with music and the limited numbers of students who elect to participate in school music programs.

Finally, I anticipate this study will *contribute to the dialogue* concerning the beliefs, traditions, and practices of the music education profession regarding the relevance and import of music learning in school to the musical lives of adolescents. In his paper entitled *Emotion, Functionality and the Everyday Experience of Music: Where does Music Education Fit?* Sloboda (2001) argued that the current music education paradigm cannot be sustained without an agreement among stakeholders (e.g., students and teachers) about the nature and purpose of the enterprise. He provided empirical evidence that young people disengage from formalized music instruction in school. However, little research is directed at understanding this phenomenon, Sloboda (2001) urged music educators to respond by stating, "I hope the readers of the journal will take this as an opening contribution to a debate in which not enough people in music education research appear to be participating" (p. 244). I believe this study provides much-needed voices to this dialogue: those of adolescents and music teachers.

#### *Researcher's Role*

Because I elected to engage in a qualitative study that sought to understand the perspectives of other people and not my own, an *emic* approach was most appropriate to adopt. Willis (2007) defines the emic approach as looking "at things through the eyes of members of the culture being studied. What is valid or true is what members of the culture agree on" (p. 100). An emic approach allowed me to explore the meanings my



participants made of music and music participation and learning in their daily lives rather than the meaning I made of the phenomenon.

*Positionality.* My musical journey took me through middle school, high school, and college playing the trombone in various bands. Along the way, I developed into a budding young Texas high school band director who was inevitably swept up in an intense competitive culture that was so closely associated with the state music programs. Still in the early stages of my teaching career, my course shifted and I was afforded the opportunity to tour the country as a professional performer. I eventually went back to school to learn more about music education and broaden my teaching horizons. While completing my masters, I worked as a teaching artist in inner-city elementary schools and with at-risks high school students. My experiences in graduate school caused me to re-evaluate my traditional concepts of music teaching and learning and forced me to consider the multiple ways in which students, teachers, and professional musicians interact with and through music.

Further investigation into these topics led me to pursue a Ph.D. in music education. I continued my work with inner-city populations during my doctoral studies and further investigated alternatives to the traditional school music program. In contrast the teacher-centered performance ensemble model I experienced as a student and teacher in public school, the alternative programs with which I worked adopted a student-centered approach focused on musical creativity. Again, these experiences caused me to call into question the established practices of the music education paradigm in the United States and thus formed the basis of this research project. I am currently an assistant

professor of instrumental music education at a large land-grant university whose responsibilities include training future music educators.

In my research, I am both an insider and an outsider. Participating in my high school band, teaching music in the public schools, and now training future music educators in college provides me with an insider perspective on school music-learning culture and the expectations placed on both teachers and students. However, I am also an outsider in many ways. First, I am no longer an adolescent and cannot fully understand what it means to be an adolescent in contemporary society. Second, the adolescent experience may be quite different for Non-White students and females; both of which I am not. Third, I have limited experience with informal music ensembles such as garage bands. While I have engaged in informal music activities, they were rarely organized, recurring events. Finally, I was relatively new to the Southeast at the time of data collection and had a limited sense of the objectives, expectations, and culture of students and teachers there.

*Subjectivities.* Though I sought my participants' perspectives, I must acknowledge that my subjectivities as a researcher influenced my work (Patton, 2002). I believe music is an integral part of the cultural fabric of the United States. I believe that music is powerful in that it can transform, transport, and affect peoples' emotions and lives. I accept that human interaction with music is not bounded by school walls and that many people interact with music in a variety of ways beyond their time in school (Hargreaves & North, 1997). Human interaction with music is fluid and dynamic and cannot be defined solely by the labels we ascribe to aspiring musicians in schools, such as performer, teacher, composer, historian, and theorist. Therefore, I believe university and

community schools of music should accommodate their constituents by offering training and curriculum that reflect the multiple dimensions in which people come to know and interact with music (Reimer, 2003). As a teacher, I value what the learner brings to the learning experience and feel that the richest learning experiences result from a mutual collaboration between teacher and learner (Rogoff, 1990; Vygotsky, 1978).

At my core, I am still that high school ‘band geek’ who stands in front of the mirror conducting an imaginary marching band and gives motivational speeches to imaginary students. In this respect, I cling tightly to the long-established traditions of the school music-learning culture in which I participated and taught. However, my graduate studies and subsequent diverse teaching experiences have encouraged me to examine the nature and value of what music educators do and how music relates to the lives of youth and adults. My positionality and subjectivities are both unique and common, but they are pertinent to this investigation because they temper my perspective on music participation and learning and influenced the paths of inquiry I decided to follow. My beliefs and experiences were also ever present in my mind as I listened to and made meaning of the stories of others. However, I accounted for my perspective and was willing to consider and accept the alternative perspectives of my participants knowing that I gained a deeper understanding of the place and function of music in their lives. I also shared my preliminary findings with other music educators to screen for overt bias in my analysis and writing.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Merriam (1998) cautions, “ethical dilemmas are likely to emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings” (p. 213). While it was

impossible to anticipate all of the ethical dilemmas I encountered in my work, I took precautionary measures to ensure that my study was ethically sound. Foremost, I sought approval for my study from the Institutional Review Board of Georgia State University and the school district in which I conducted my investigation.

I informed my participants of the purpose, methods, benefits, and risks of this study and received their written consent, and/or assent, to participate. Working with minors required that I acquired signed consent forms from their parents or guardians. Participants were also informed of their rights as participants, which included the right to edit their responses and/or discontinue their participation. Considering the sensitive nature of some musical material, particularly messages and lyrics about sex, drugs, or violence occasionally found in contemporary popular music, I took the school district's recommendation not to pursue these topics if my participants felt uncomfortable.

To ensure confidentiality, all personal and school names were replaced with pseudonyms during data collection and in this report. These pseudonyms were used in all interview transcriptions and observation reports and saved as such in electronic files. A *pseudonym key* that correlates all participants' actual names with their pseudonym was kept in my home office in a locked cabinet. All other documents or records in which actual names appeared were also kept in my home office. I did not intend for my observations and interviews to disrupt the normal activities or cultures of my participants. My observations were minimally invasive and, with the consent of the teachers and students, I was able to schedule many of my interviews with adolescents and teachers at times when instruction was not impaired.

A researcher must also consider ethical implications of data analysis and dissemination of findings. Merriam (1998) cautions:

Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases. Deciding what is important – what should or should not be attended to when collecting and analyzing data – is almost always up to the investigator. (p. 216)

Therefore, I strove to be as accurate, honest, and unbiased as possible throughout this study. Crystallization, member-checking, and peer debriefing helped to ensure the trustworthiness of this research process and, subsequently, my report.

I was extremely concerned with disseminating my findings knowing that this study addresses some sensitive issues in the field of music education and to the teachers involved in this study. While I hope my investigation provides valuable insight for researchers and practitioners, there is a possibility the findings might offend some of my participants (Merriam, 1998). I tried to mitigate this tension by sharing my findings with participants before the final report was written. None of my participants expressed frustration or reported being offended by my findings during the member checking process.

### *Representation*

Denzin (2004) argues that “fieldworkers can neither make sense of nor understand what has been learned until they sit down and write the interpretive text, telling the story first to themselves and then to their significant others, and then to the public” (p. 450). Thus, writing and disseminating my findings are integral parts of my inquiry. Further, because of my constructionist epistemology, the text stresses emergent designs and emergent meaning making.

How I represent these emergent designs and meanings is largely influenced by the audience who will read them (Merriam, 1998). Given that this project was undertaken to complete a doctoral degree, my immediate audience was the professors of my committee; however, I intend to share my research with other students and practitioners of music teaching and learning. Therefore, it was important for me to make my research rigorous yet accessible. To satisfy my degree requirements, this report is written in a traditional dissertation format, but I may elect to share my findings with the field through articles, presentations, or multimedia.

## CHAPTER 4

### MUSIC AT COLLEGE HEIGHTS HIGH SCHOOL

College Heights High School (CHHS) resides on a small hill near a university in a quaint, suburban neighborhood. The landscape and architecture of the neighborhood evoke the affluent and comfortable scene of a small college borough. It is easy to imagine prestigious and sage professors dwelling in the beautiful old homes, where expansive, immaculately manicured lawns hug the small road that winds through the area. On this October morning, the fall foliage is stunning. Nature has painted her canvas with the most vibrant yellows, oranges, and reds in a way that seems almost surreal.

Passing through an oddly placed roundabout, I find myself on a street leading by the main entrance to the university. Patrons enter and exit quaint coffee shops and boutiques across from marble columns. Students and professors make their way across campus as I wait for the light to change. I continue on, the university buildings now tucked away behind gentle rolling hills to my left, with small cottages and houses recessed off to my right. As the campus fades from my rearview mirror, I know I am getting close to CHHS. I spot the small Presbyterian church, where I recently attended the wedding of a dear friend. I look back and to the left, around a hairpin turn, for the school's entrance.

A few college students with backpacks shuffle across the front lawn of the school as they head toward early morning classes, kicking up newly fallen leaves in their path. The small driveway between the high school and the road is congested with cars, busses,

and students. Most students are wearing jeans and sweatshirts, but a few brave ones get by with light jackets or long-sleeve shirts. Duets and trios of students penetrate the high school's perimeter as they share stories and laugh about the weekend's events. The students appear to be surprisingly diverse, given the surrounding White, middle class neighborhood. I later discover that White teachers refer to CHHS as an 'urban' school, but Black teachers comment that it is more of a 'suburban' school. After inquiring about the diverse population, I learned many of the school's minority students are bussed in from neighborhoods just east of the city limits.

I park my car and survey the school building and its surroundings. CHHS is the prototypical American schoolhouse of the 1920s. It is a regal, three-story red brick colonial accented by white concrete arch entrances and large vertical windows. Additions to the main building have been added over the years and are now all connected with covered walkways. I must ascend a curving, white granite staircase to the main entrance located in the center of the original building.

I enter through the double doors at the top of a staircase and immediately turn left into the main office, where I sign in as a visitor and pick up my pass. The wide entrance hallway through which I entered leads directly to the auditorium. Display cases line the walls on either side of the auditorium's doorway. They contain student artwork – drawings, paintings, and sculptures. One case holds architects' sketches for the upcoming school renovation project. There are photographs from students' recent trip to Europe, a collection of school spirit attire and pom-poms, a case devoted to celebrating the teacher of the year, Beta club awards, and the "defining principles" of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. Above the cases are photographs of recent IB candidates.



There are about 30 candidates in each class, and most of them are White. Although I just arrived, I sense an implicit feeling of segregation in this school.

Students travel the hallways in small groups of like genders and races. The boys wear loosely draped shirts and jeans. White boys cruise the hallways with mops of shaggy hair billowing from their heads, while Black males sport either a closely kept, razor-trimmed look or teased-out Afro. Their female counterparts have a more keen sense of style. Many of the Black girls are wearing tight jeans adorned with silver and gold florid patterns and their hairstyles are as exotic as I have ever seen. The White females look more like their male counterparts – plain shirts and jeans that, at first glance, seem to say, “Yeah, I just don’t care about fashion that much.” As I swim through the myriad of students making their way to class, I notice a few Latinos and Latinas, Muslims, Asians and other students of differing cultural backgrounds – the school is teeming with diversity.

I make my way through the traffic to the large stairwell that frames the left side of the auditorium and take the stairs down to the first level. Like the main hallway, the walls of the stairwell are painted dark grey and white, with worn and chipped crimson iron handrails. Students whiz past me like cars on the expressway while they listen to mp3 players, send and receive text messages, and make casual conversation with their friends. The crowded and hectic pace reminds me of being in a subway terminal, as people rush to catch their connecting trains. I pass a billboard with information about various upcoming club meetings and exit out the back of the main building.

I take one of the short covered walkways to the annex that houses the music department, located behind the school’s auditorium and on the lower level. Energetic

young boys burst from the annex doors as I make my way inside. There are no windows or decorations in the short hallway, only abandoned lockers and dirty, cream-colored walls. Despite the classic and majestic presence of the school's main building, it is hard not to feel like I am in a dungeon while in the music department annex. A set of double doors on my left are painted deep crimson and have a small plaque affixed over the cross bar that reads "MUSIC."

As I pass through the music department doorway, I notice a short hallway on my right that houses two small practice rooms, two storage closets for band uniforms, and the entrance to the office of Mr. Owens, the chorus and band teacher. A large window allows him to look into the hallway and across to the instrument storage room on my left. Taped to this door is the CHHS music department philosophy:

*Music is a basic human need. It nourishes the intellect, the body, and the spirit. It can be enjoyed actively or passively. All students should be given the opportunity to study music.*

Next to the instrument storage room is the much smaller office of the strings teacher, Mr. Klippen. I continue down the hall. A handful of students are unpacking their violins in the orchestra rehearsal room, and girls are touching up their hair and make-up at the end of the hall in the rehearsal room that houses both the chorus and band. A large colorful 'music' mural painted by a previous orchestra student is on one wall, and dated posters of two famous minority artists, Langston Hughes and Rita Moreno, hang on the other. Students continue to enter the hall carrying books and bags as their feet pound the faded teal tiles that cover the floor.

CHHS is on a traditional block schedule, which means there are four periods a day, 90 minutes each – with an extended third period to accommodate lunch. The block

schedule allows students to take eight classes over the course of the year, four in the fall semester and four in the spring. For example, a student may take English, Orchestra, Science, and Physical Education in the fall, then Math, History, Computers, and IB Philosophy in the spring. Within this framework, the two music teachers offer a total of six music classes each year. Mr. Klippen teaches advanced orchestra, intermediate orchestra, and guitar in the fall, and orchestra, advanced placement (AP) music theory, and guitar in the spring. Mr. Owens teaches chorus, percussion, and concert band in the fall, and chorus, beginning band, and concert band in the spring. Although band, orchestra, and chorus are offered each semester, the teachers believe the numbers of students involved in these classes declines in the spring due to the number of electives offered at CHHS. Another scheduling conflict for some students is their enrollment in IB classes, which meet primarily in the spring. Regardless of these frustrations, the music teachers continue to do what they can to provide students many opportunities to learn music.

#### Music with Mr. Owens

##### *First Period: Chorus*

Intrigued by a lively conversation I hear echoing into the hallway, I proceed past the orchestra room and continue down the hall toward the chorus/band room. The room is large and rectangular, and given its size, I assume it was the original music room designed for the school. Built-in risers emerge from the floor and form concentric half-circles centered on Mr. Owens's podium. Faded teal-colored, cloth sound panels are randomly placed on the walls, and newly installed instrument lockers line the room. Approximately half of the lockers contain band instruments, and the other half store

folders of seemingly unorganized sheet music. Behind the podium at the front of the room are a desk and a Clavinova electric piano. Although there are no windows, the space is well lit, and there is little clutter on the floor.

I find a seat near the door, away from the center of the action as not to disturb the lively conversations of the students. These field notes describe my first encounter with the CHHS chorus:

*Three Black girls stand at the front of the room – one begins to sing a gospel tune. Her friend says, “This is Monday – leave the church music in church!” They continue to joke and tease each other about church music and their lack of Sunday morning attendance. They are boisterous and not afraid for others to hear their jokes. Two Black boys sit on the front row listening to music on their headphones while two Latinas sit on the opposite side of the room telling stories about the weekend’s events. Two other Black girls talk about the current presidential candidates, and the remaining students race to finish their weekend homework.*

*The bell rings at 8:04. One of the ‘church girls’ starts to sing a popular R&B song and her friend comments, “Beyoncé needs to come out with something new – it all sounds the same as her old stuff.” One girl grabs a marker and begins to write an objective on the board – something about reviewing the fall concert music. The others tease her that she can’t write objectives. Another bell rings at 8:10 and the announcements blare over the speakers. The Pledge of Allegiance is being recited, but no one stands up or pays attention. Instead, they continue to carry on small group discussions. The voice over the intercom asks for a moment of silence and again they ignore it.*

*Mr. Owens arrives at 8:12 and the talking begins to die down immediately without his saying a word. His presence alone seems to calm and quiet the room. “Good morning!” he says with a smile, and the class responds accordingly. The talking has now completely stopped as he takes roll. There are 36 students present today; most of them Black girls, five Black boys, four Latinas, two White girls, one Indian and one Asian girl.*

Mr. Owens sits down at the Clavinova and asks the students to stand for the warm-up. He is a large, Black man whose skin and hair are very dark and his stature is intimidating. However, his youthful face and warm smile are inviting and calm. He begins to play a simple introduction on the piano and the class follows by singing their

warm ups from memory. Most of the exercises have lyrics that instruct the students how to focus their attention as they sing. For example, as they move up and down a three-note motive, the lyrics are “*s-i-ng so-ft-ly, s-i-ng sm-ooth-ly, mo-ving from no-te to no-te.*” They sing through multiple exercises that are similarly composed, receiving little to no feedback from Mr. Owens. He often adds gospel, blues, and jazz chord progressions to the melodic warm up and takes multiple opportunities to ornament breaks and transitions with stylistic ‘licks.’ His piano playing is accomplished yet effortless, and I think to myself how great it would be to hear him play blues at a smoky nightclub. Speaking with him later, I learn that Mr. Owens grew up playing keyboards in his childhood gospel church. Largely self-taught, he learned to “trust his ears” and approaches his performance at the keyboard with soulful feel rather than technical precision.

The warm up exercises continue in rapid succession. Mr. Owens gives minimal attention to how the students are performing; rather, he sits, plays the keyboard, and lets them sing. The warm up feels like a formality – something the class does everyday in exactly the same way. Even with his soulful accompaniment, I sense from the students, as well as Mr. Owens, that everyone is simply ‘going through the motions.’ The students begin to look around and fidget after ten minutes. Three girls in the soprano section primp their hair and share hand lotion while another girl sends a text message on her phone. Only a few girls in the section remain focused, their voices providing the core of the sound for the group. There is a leader in the alto section who is always attentive, sings out, and appears to give her best all the time. She carries the section, and any positive comments the section receives from Mr. Owens appear to be a result of her contribution. An equally strong voice emanates from the smallest, and only, girl in the tenor section.

The only girl in the tenor section, she stands about five feet tall, and her wide, bright smile enhances her presence. She seems happy to be singing. Throughout the remainder of the rehearsal, Mr. Owens often tailors his instruction to these students I call the “interested few,” and pays less attention to those students who are disengaged from the musical activity at hand.

The next exercise (*He is Him*) sounds more like a gospel song than a warm up and the southern harmonies light a spark in Mr. Owens. He leans forward over the Clavinova, sinks his fingers into the keys, and sways with the feel of the music. The students stop fidgeting and focus their attention on his playing and their singing, which results in a fuller and richer sound. He improvises a brief gospel/blues tag at the end of the piece, and the students smile and applaud his performance. For the first time, a majority of the class is engaged in making music *with* Mr. Owens. The moment is intimate and endearing, but quickly fades as he transitions from the warm up to rehearsal of the concert music.

Mr. Owens says, “You can sit. Let’s look at *The Christmas Song*.” A student helper passes out music as Mr. Owens plays the introduction to the song on the piano. Once everyone has music, he asks the students to start singing at the beginning. He quickly realizes the sopranos are singing an incorrect rhythm, stops the group and says, “listen.” He then proceeds to play the soprano part on the piano. Mr. Owens uses this type of rote teaching often throughout the rest of rehearsal, only rarely asking students to consult their printed music. He continues to work with the sopranos while the other students rest their elbows on their knees, hang their heads low, and quietly wait for their turn to sing. After spending three minutes with the sopranos, Mr. Owens engages the rest of the class and they begin singing again. His comments are concise and concerned

primarily with correcting notes, rhythms, and dynamic markings. Rarely does he discuss expression or musical feel and rarely do the students look as interested or engaged as they did while singing *He is Him*. Mr. Owens uses most of what remains of the 90-minute period to slowly work his way through *The Christmas Song*.

In the final five minutes of class, Mr. Owens asks a quintet of singers to come to the keyboard. I immediately note this group comprises the “interested few” I observed earlier in rehearsal. Among the group are the strong alto and the small, yet powerful, girl in the tenor section. The group gathers around the Clavinova and begins to sing a contemporary R&B arrangement of the *Star-Spangled Banner*. Mr. Owens plays and sings bass along with them. As they sing, the rest of the chorus talks and gathers their things. Mr. Owens says “shhh” as he works intensely with the select vocal ensemble. His role has shifted slightly and now he functions more like a coach or collaborator than a teacher. By the smile on his face, I assume he enjoys this music making process – maybe even more than rehearsing the larger group. The bell rings and students begin to leave as he and the small group continue to sing well into the passing period. They eventually stop and he tells them to practice for the concert as they race out the door.

After class, I ask Mr. Owens about the girl who sings with the tenor section. He tells me she is active in her gospel church choir and that “she can really sing – I mean, *really* sing!” Mr. Owens recommends I tell her about my study and suggests she would be a good participant. The next time I visit the chorus, I introduce myself to her and inquire about her participation in my study. She tells me her name is Tiffany and seems enthusiastic about the project. I caught up with her later to ask what she enjoys most about the chorus at CHHS.

I love being around people who just have a love for music. Um, so actually this class, I find myself saying my second period is my first period. Whereas this is my first period, but I'll be thinking of my second period – which is computer – as my first period because music is not a, that's not a job for me. That's not a class for me, it's, that's pleasure for me. I love coming in and being able to sing or close my eyes and sing or think about a song, or be able to listen to the teacher play the keyboard and just listen.

Even though I observed her strong presence in the chorus, I didn't realize how talented

Tiffany was until I heard her sing at the winter concert.

*Tiffany is introduced to sing a solo version of Oh Come All Ye Faithful. Mr. Owens accompanies her on piano, along with another teacher on drum set. It is a gospel/R & B influenced arrangement and she commands attention the moment she starts singing. Despite her small frame, she owns the stage and confidently navigates intricate vocal runs and belts high notes with style and grace. Her voice is strong and passionate – as if she is pouring her entire soul into this performance. Nearing the end of the piece, the students on stage and audience erupt into applause as she hangs onto the last note for well over 12 counts with hearty power and strength. I too am captivated and impressed – what a performance!*

This is only Mr. Owens's second year teaching chorus. He specializes in instrumental music, specifically concert, jazz, and marching band. Regardless, he does what he can to make the class enjoyable by selecting familiar and uncomplicated music, and he tries to make the experience light-hearted and fun when possible. Mr. Owens's fun approach to the chorus was made evident at the winter concert where the bored, dull faces

I observed in class gave way to the energy and enthusiasm of performance:

*Mr. Owens introduces the final song of the concert, the R&B classic This Christmas, and tells the audience he did the arrangement and says, "This is a fun piece – we want you to participate!" As he speaks, the chorus moves into position flanking the audience in the side stairwells. They are all smiling and seem eager to sing and perform. A senior soprano takes her place in the middle aisle of the audience chamber to lead the audience in a sing along. The piece begins and the chorus begins to clap on beats two and four. Our fearless leader turns to the audience and encourages us to clap along with the chorus. Next, we are encouraged to sing along with the chorus and stand up while we clap. In a matter of seconds, we are*



*transformed into a jubilant musical community! At the conclusion, the crowd cheers wildly as Mr. Owens and the chorus takes a bow.*

*Third Period: Percussion or Beginner Band*

Though the majority of my observations and interviews occurred in the large ensemble classes at CHHS, I had the opportunity to observe the percussion class Mr. Owens teaches in the fall and the beginning band class he teaches in the spring. Both classes are relatively small, with no more than ten students enrolled at a time. They include students with varying ability levels – from first time beginners to advanced seniors. The class population influences Mr. Owens to adopt an individualized approach, and he emphasizes the development of individuals’ performance skills over ensemble performance.

Students in the percussion class work from a snare drum rudiments book. Although all had drumsticks, only a few had practice pads. Those without practice pads used thick textbooks or tapped lightly on their legs to simulate the head of the drum. Ideally, Mr. Owens wants them to learn snare, keyboards, and timpani, and to function more like a percussion ensemble. He tells me that he has shown videos of percussion ensembles and tried to describe to them how the keyboards perform melodic parts. However, since so many students cannot read music, he finds it challenging to advance to those instruments. Thus, he keeps them playing snare drum rudiments on practice pads and textbooks. The intimate atmosphere of the class affords Mr. Owens the opportunity to be more relaxed in his approach:

*“Good Morning – Let’s warm up.” There are nine students in the class – all Black and male except two females. They are all standing in the first row – crowded around Mr. Owens’s podium. They start their warm up on paradiddles then advance to double paradiddles. Some of the students are playing matched grip and about half are playing traditional grip. Mr.*

*Owens plays along with them on the plastic conductor's stand. The warm up advances to 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 15-stroke rudiments. When they finish, they all click their sticks together and slide them under their arms in a carry position – like in a marching band. Next, he has them play flams and flam accents. The students are all quiet and intensely focusing on their playing. Mr. Owens continues to play along with them and models the proper sound and/or technique when questions arise. The next exercises are flams in a triple feel that gradually speed up. He asks one of the advanced students to demonstrate what it sounds like when played really fast. It is like a 'show and tell' and many (including Mr. Owens) smile at her display of talent.*

The beginning band class that meets in the spring is also small and more relaxed.

Although the class is designated for beginners, there are a few older and advanced students who take advantage of the extra practice time enrollment in the class affords them. Every time I observed the class, Mr. Owens was assisting individuals in his office and I never saw an organized class structure.

#### *Fourth Period: Concert Band*

Mr. Owens's fourth and final class of the day is concert band. Although this class meets in the same room as the chorus, the climates of the classes are drastically different. As students trickle in after the bell, they immediately take a stand from the stand cart and pull their instruments out of their lockers. Casual conversations fill the room as students move around, setting up equipment and retrieving black leather music folders from an old milk crate on top of the Clavinova. One girl, Mya, seems to be the unofficial guardian of the band. She is easily six feet tall and her large frame and dark black hands make her golden brass trumpet look like a toy. She says "hello," smiles, and laughs as her friends make jokes and continue to prepare for class. She dishes out hugs to her friends and encourages energetic underclassmen to get out their instruments before the bell rings. Mr. Owens eventually enters the room and rehearsal begins.

*Mr. Owens ascends the podium at 1:34, settles comfortably into his conductor's stool, greets the bustling students with a "Good afternoon," and proceeds with a few short announcements. After the final announcement he raises his baton (i.e., an abandoned drumstick) and calls out, "Concert B-flat!" He surveys the band, quickly changes his mind, and says, "Concert A-sharp." A mischievous grin creeps across Mr. Owens's face. A few students laugh as they ascertain that B-flat and A-sharp represent the same pitch – he was trying to trick them.*

*Mr. Owens counts off the band and they begin the first warm up exercise. He keeps time by hitting the stick on the large plastic conductor's stand. A student approaches him soon after the warm up begins and informs him there are two students about to fight in the hallway. His smile vanishes; he jumps up from the stool, informs me he is going to investigate the fight, and assures me that he will be right back. The band continues to play the warm up without him. There are 42 students in the band; equally balanced in terms of gender, but a majority of them are Black. There are only five White students. Six percussionists stand at the back of the room playing marching snare, bass drum, crash cymbals, and a dilapidated xylophone.*

*Once they complete the warm up exercise, students talk or practice while they wait for Mr. Owens. They are lively and talkative, but not as boisterous as the girls in the chorus. Mr. Owens returns and immediately brings intensity and silence to the room. They continue to play through three more exercises in B-flat – all played with short articulations and in a somewhat mechanical style. As was with the chorus, the students have the warm ups memorized. Mr. Owens announces, "Concert D-sharp warm up" and the band's performance shifts from the mechanical recitation I was hearing, to a legato chorale played with a warmer tone and broader dynamic expression.*

Once the warm up is over, Mr. Owens asks his students to get out *First Noel*. The students shuffle their music and a girl approaches the podium to discuss something with Mr. Owens. Once they finish their discussion, he shouts, "From the top!" raises his hands, and the students begin to play. Immediately he exclaims, "Shhh! It's piano!" and the students make the necessary dynamic correction. He stops them at measure 33 to work exclusively with the clarinets on a difficult passage – the rest of the band sits idly waiting for a chance to play again. Another student approaches the podium and he stops rehearsal to speak with her. On this break, I notice a girl doing push-ups in the back of

the room. She returns to her seat and a trombone player takes her place to do his set of push-ups. I later find out from Mr. Owens that the students have the option of doing push-ups instead of being written up for tardiness, forgetting their instruments, or disruptive behavior. This practice was adopted from the marching band and has firmly found it's way into the culture of the concert band.

After working with the clarinets for five minutes, Mr. Owens asks everyone in the band to play. Quick comments about dynamics and note lengths are made 'on the fly' while students continue to play. The trombones appear to be having trouble playing their parts accurately, so Mr. Owens walks over to them to investigate. He stands behind them and sings their part so they know "how it goes." On his way back to the podium, he checks in with the girl playing mellophone (i.e., the French Horn's marching band relative) and asks if she needs help hearing her part. She shakes her head 'no,' and Mr. Owens eventually makes his way back to the podium. By this point the rest of the class appears to be nearly asleep – resting their heavy heads on their instruments. He asks everyone to begin playing at measure 17. A male teacher enters the room and approaches Mr. Owens at the podium. They hold a private conversation as Mr. Owens's right hand conducts the band. Constant interruption is just as much a part of this class atmosphere as the music.

They finish playing *First Noel* and he asks the students which piece they want to play next – *In All Its Glory* is the clear favorite. They begin at the top of the piece and perform well, again carefully minding the dynamic markings throughout the music. This piece is faster and more rhythmically challenging than the first and seems to engage the students at a higher level. Even students without music lean over to read off of their

neighbors' stands. Another girl approaches the podium and the band continues to play while they talk. He stops to rehearse the trumpets, and the rest of the band takes the opportunity to catch a quick yawn or check incoming text messages on their phones. Eventually he invites the entire band to play at measure 176 and they oblige.

As the piece winds to its spirited conclusion, Mr. Owens stands up and begins to conduct with larger and more animated gestures. His face gathers a stronger intensity and he begins to sing along with the music. This is the same intensity I witnessed during *He is Him* and soon I notice that the students gain a sense of energy that has been missing throughout much of the class period. Near the end of the piece, individual sections have staggered rhythmic entrances that require them to be much more independent musicians. Predictably, the band falls apart as students enter too early or too late in the sequence. Like a train derailed from its tracks, the momentum of rehearsal comes to a screeching halt. Mr. Owens slows down the tempo, claps his hands, and counts aloud to help them play at the appropriate time. The announcements blare over the speaker before the end of class and Mr. Owens dismantles the band by asking the members of each section to put away their things.

The final bell of the day rings at 3:10 and most students leave the band room with urgency as they race to catch their buses or rides home. Mya and a few other students stay behind and take the break from the school day to catch up on stories or laugh about funny events from the rehearsal. Mya moves about the room, visiting with various groups of people, swats away a bothersome freshman boy and keeps watch over the band room with her friend Melissa – a White senior baritone player. Mya told me during a conversation that the band room is her “second home” and that she “feels better in the

band room” than almost anywhere else. From the look of the smile on her face, I believe her. As the room clears, I follow Mr. Owens to his office to learn more about the marching band program.

*The CHHS Marching Band*

Participation in marching band at CHHS is voluntary, but a substantial commitment. The band’s student handbook opens with a letter from Mr. Owens that says the CHHS band “is developing a long-standing tradition of excellence... due to the hard work and dedication of its students.” This work and dedication begins with a demanding rehearsal schedule that has the ensemble meeting everyday, 3:20 to 6:45 p.m., from mid-August to early-November, with football games on Friday nights. According to the handbook:

*Everyone must be in the band room for MANTARORY study table before band practice begins. Study table will last for 40 minutes and.... is a time to take care of some schoolwork and a chance to get/give help from/to others in the band.*

Students are also required to pay \$140 to cover the cost of uniform needs and meals for the season. Despite the extracurricular requirements, approximately 35 students commit their time to the marching band.

The marching band is made up of mostly Black students and is somewhat smaller than the symphonic band. There are considerably fewer woodwinds, members of the percussion section carry drums and cymbals and two young men stand in the back of the room with fiberglass sousaphones saddled to their bodies. Everyone is wearing white t-shirts with black track pants except the drum majors, who are dressed in all black, combat boots, red and black ball caps, and shiny, silver whistles around their necks.

*A loud whistle screams through the air and one of the drum majors steps onto the podium. As with Mr. Owens, the band immediately gets quiet, but this time all the students stand at attention with chins lifted and their horns at a carry position under their right arms. He decides to have the band play a song “before Mr. Owens hears it.” The drum major gives a short cue and the entire band yells, “READY!,” then their horns flip up to playing position simultaneously. They play through a contemporary popular song that is simple and repetitive with heavy syncopation. Although many students have stands, most are playing from memory. Unlike the concert band, the students over-blow their instruments to achieve a much harsher tone. The sousaphones are even ‘splatted’ each note of the bass line.*

*The drum major taps a drumstick on the stand to keep time. He looks down at the stand and appears to be drowsy or bored. Realizing the band will need him at the end of the piece, he looks up at the latest possible moment and conducts the last few notes of the song. The band chants, “AND DOWN!,” and return their instruments and faces to their sentinel positions. A drummer accidentally drops his sticks and immediately falls to the ground to do push-ups. At the end of the song, the drum major says, “Y’all need to work on that some more...that didn’t sound good.” He hangs his head in shame and shakes it as he steps off the podium.*

*After they stop playing, Melissa requests, “Please let us go into sectionals.” The drum major concedes and the tension in the room immediately dissipates. Members of each section turn slightly to face each other and begin to talk or play through songs.*

Mr. Owens arrives at 5:30 carrying a euphonium. He asks the students to prepare to play *Off the Wall* and proceeds to warm up on the euphonium. This song is also contemporary, and Mr. Owens sways his body while they play – he appears to be having a lot more fun than in concert band. He alternates between playing along with the students and beating time on the conductor’s stand. He stops them to work on articulation to achieve a “bell tone” effect. He tells them this will add some style to the music. He is correct – they play again and the music is much more interesting.

A new tune is called out and everyone except the sousaphones and drums begins to chant “HEY!” and pump their instruments and hands into the air. At the chorus, the band begins to play and rock back and forth. When they return to the verse, they act like

they are running in place. Mr. Owens smiles at me as the band continues with their integrated performance. They finish the song and he asks how many of them need help memorizing music for the show. A few hands go up and he reminds them what they did the last time they had to memorize music: “Break it down into four measure chunks and add the chunks together.” The students slowly nod their heads in agreement and he continues with rehearsal.

Mr. Owens tells them to go outside for drill rehearsal at 5:50. I follow the students as they walk to the field directly behind the school. The field is surrounded by tall trees on three sides that hide the remaining sliver of sun about to drop below the horizon. Screams of pain and excitement fill the air as the cold wind cuts at our faces and permeates our thin fall jackets. No one is in a rush, but they don’t waste time to set up on yard lines for the beginning of the show. They stand at attention and await instruction, but some continue to talk. I hear a couple of “Shhs!” and “Shut ups!” as some of the older students police the rest of the band.

The drum major whistles for them to come to attention and begin marching. They know exactly what to do without any vocal command. Melissa no longer has an instrument and functions more as a student teacher – setting the lines of students, answering questions about drill and music, and keeping order on the field. The drum major arrives at the field and begins adjusting the spacing of the members with a flamboyant high step. Mr. Owens is nowhere to be found.

*They begin to play the opening fanfare, but one trumpet player doesn’t. The drum major asks why he didn’t play. Upon realizing he doesn’t have a good excuse, the drum major punishes him with push-ups. There is a new whistle signal and the band begins to play Closer by Ne-Yo (a popular song at the time) and marches down the field. They step off like a military band – at individual times in the drill to make a chevron that travels down*



*the field. There is a lot of high stepping and swinging back and forth as they march and play. They often miss the yard line and the drum major yells, "This is the yard line – take it back!" Melissa reminds some of the younger players when to step off. She warns them, "If you don't fix it, you will be out of the show!"*

I stay for a few more minutes of rehearsal, then decide to pack up my things and head home.

### Music with Mr. Klippen

#### *First Period: Advanced Orchestra*

Fall has taken its toll on the city. Most of the leaves have fallen and the once vibrant and warm landscape is drab and cool. The students at CHHS have replaced their sweatshirts with thick jackets and scarves to protect them from the elements.

Unfortunately, the heater is broken in the music department – leaving the orchestra room a chilly 59 degrees. The students do their best to keep warm by leaving on their coats and rubbing their hands vigorously before getting out their instruments. A few girls are sipping from thermoses when I arrive.

The orchestra room is almost half the size of the band room and can only comfortably accommodate about 50 people. There are no windows, and the ceilings are easily 20 feet tall. Instrument storage lockers flank the sides of the room and any remaining space is packed with wooden instrument racks holding violins, violas, cellos, basses, and guitars. Faded teal acoustic panels hang above the storage lockers. I find what I hope will be an available seat at the back of the room and wait for class to start.

School has not officially begun, yet there are 12 students sitting in chairs looking over books and homework and discussing recent social events. Only one student has his instrument out, but he is not playing. The girls closest to me (I assume they are wind

players given their location in the orchestra seating arrangement) discuss their AP class assignments and advantages of four-year universities over community colleges. White females make up the majority of the population, although more males continue to arrive, as students continue to sip coffee and mumble in conversation. The scene is ‘low key’ at best.

*The bell rings at 8:11 and is quickly followed by a voice asking us to stand to say the Pledge of Allegiance. The announcements continue, but no one seems to be listening. I count 36 students in the room – mostly White females, six Black students, one Asian, one Indian, and a total of 13 boys. Mr. Klippen finally arrives and yells for the students to listen to the announcements.*

At first glance, Mr. Klippen’s presence is that of an eccentric old man. A sprawling nest of white hair encompasses his small, bald head and his dark eyes sink deep into his aged face. A stark white beard spreads long and wide from his chin. On any given day, Mr. Klippen will be wearing a brightly colored necktie with his shirt and khaki pants. Completing his ensemble is a carabineer laden with dull yellow keys hanging from a belt loop at his waist.

*As soon as the announcements are finished, Mr. Klippen begins playing a recording of The Chicken Man radio show on the stereo. Like most radio dramas, this show is overacted and describes the adventures and mishaps of the heroic Chicken Man. As the show plays, the room falls silent and most students begin to take out their instruments. They smile when something funny happens in the show, but don’t appear to be wildly entertained. However, I imagine that if Mr. Klippen did not play the show, the students would revolt! The show concludes and Mr. Klippen says, “Let’s tune.”*

*A student reaches behind me and turns on an electric tuner set to A440. The loud, stinging pitch fills the room as Mr. Klippen tunes a few of the students’ instruments. Other students begin to warm-up and practice music passages, but there is no formal tuning process. Other students continue to look at their books and review or finish homework. After helping a few students, Mr. Klippen proceeds to hand out music to those who do not have it. He asks for someone to turn off the tuner, and I oblige. The room seems to settle for the first time since the Chicken Man Show*

*and Mr. Klippen tells the students, “Get up the Moldau.” He raises his baton from a seated position at the front of the room, counts off the orchestra, and the music begins. Some students begin to play, but not all. A couple woodwind players weren’t ready, so Mr. Klippen must start over a few times.*

When forced to speak over swelling sounds and chattering students, Mr. Klippen’s soft, high voice cracks under the performance pressure. His instructions are curt and straightforward, “Softer... watch the dynamics... shorter... F-sharps!” The results are not instant, but his students eventually respond and adjust their performance accordingly. Occasionally he rises to his feet from the conductor’s stool as his body becomes enchanted by the music. Almost as soon as it happens, he quickly returns to his perch – staring deeply into the score, seemingly searching for what to do next.

Every time he stops the orchestra, he maintains a casual and relaxed demeanor. A joke or funny comment is made and light conversation ensues, but the students are attentive and usually ready to play when Mr. Klippen resumes rehearsal. The section he is currently addressing seems too difficult for a majority of the orchestra – only a few students are playing and it is difficult to make out the individual parts or tonality of the piece.

*The orchestra is forced to stop at letter E because there are too many people lost in the music. On this break, Mr. Klippen makes a joke about the music and many students smile, but few laugh. The laughter dies down and he casually resumes rehearsal. The music sounds difficult and challenging. The students at the front of each section are poised and playing with interest and intent. However, the students at the back of each section sit with poor posture and some barely play. As rehearsal continues, about half of the students are no longer playing – they simply sit there, staring longingly into the music. These students look frustrated and defeated. Regardless, Mr. Klippen continues to rehearse and ‘pushes through’ the music with only the most skilled players keeping pace with him. Unfortunately, very few students are left playing at the conclusion of the piece. Mr. Klippen lowers his baton and many students laugh. The horn player gasps, “Wow, that sucked!”*

The music Mr. Klippen selected for the upcoming winter concert includes some of the most recognized works of the Western European symphonic music canon: *The Moldau* by Smetana, a movement from the Brahms *German Requiem*, and a movement from the Telemann *Viola Concerto in G-major*. Mr. Klippen has also programmed a contemporary arrangement of *Greensleeves* by the popular Christmas music group Mannheim Steamroller. It takes skilled musicians to perform this caliber of music and perform it well. This may explain why Mr. Klippen monitors access to the advanced orchestra. According to the course description found on the school's website, students "need permission of the director to enroll" in the class. Requirements for the class include three to eight years experience on violin, viola, cello, or string bass and an audition with Mr. Klippen. It seems he does what he can to ensure that only the best musicians make it into the advanced orchestra.

Regardless, the number of students who are skilled enough to perform this repertoire is relatively small, and in my observations I sense that a majority of the class struggles to play music that is well beyond their capabilities. One of these lesser skilled violin players is Eric. Eric is a small and quiet sophomore who sits at the back of the second violin section. His sandy blond mop of hair covers his pale and pimpled face as he loosely holds his violin and bow. His faded Jimi Hendrix tee shirt and ripped jeans belie his age. Mr. Klippen informs me he plays guitar in a band as well, which possibly explains the Hendrix shirt. Regardless of his talents outside of school, I often notice Eric is 'left in the dust' when the technical demands of the orchestral literature are beyond his capabilities on the violin. I later find out, to my surprise, he actually enjoys the challenge the music presents.

It usually takes about a month or so before I start really getting most of the pieces that we are doing.... I think it's a lot more interesting when you're being challenged by a music piece than being able to play something that is just easy to play – both for guitar and violin.

Even though he enjoys the challenge, Eric also realizes it is the talents of the few who make the experience possible. “I think more of the people who continue to play in high school are the more advanced people, so we're able to play more of that [complicated] stuff without losing people with the difficulty of the music.”

Amidst the aftermath of joking students and bewildered players, Mr. Klippen asks the orchestra to get out a movement from *A German Requiem* by Brahms. While the majority of the class locates the sheet music, a few older students put down their instruments and begin to move about the room. The French horn player moves over to the bass section and begins to play, the trombone player gets out a French horn, and a few other students exchange instruments. One of the violists puts down her instrument and pulls out a vocal score then moves to the front of the room. Throughout my observations I realize this happens quite often. In a conversation with Mr. Klippen, I learn that he encourages his “more advanced” students to learn other instruments to relieve boredom or make them more marketable when applying for music scholarships in college. In this case, the French horn player is actually an All-State bass player, the trombone player is actually a guitarist and the violist is an accomplished singer whom Mr. Klippen is featuring on this piece.

In every class I observed, I saw at least two pairs of students working with each other on learning a new instrument or experimenting with how their instruments make sound. I once witnessed a cellist and a violist exchanging music to hear what it sounded like when they read each other's music. The All-State bass player was always up to

something new – usually holding a different instrument every time I observed. This behavior was particularly prominent during “independent study” classes on Thursdays. Mr. Klippen uses this time to hear individual students play scales for a grade as the rest of the class uses the time however they wish.

*He asks the multi-talented trombone player to play a scale and the boy says, “On what?” to which Mr. Klippen responds, “I don’t care, just play for me.” The rest of the class cycles through phases of practicing, talking, and studying as the desire hits them. A few students share iPod headphones and listen to music while they study.*

Rehearsal continues in a similar manner as before, but this time the orchestra enjoys more success in performance. This movement, *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place*, is slow and sweet and everyone is playing and focused on their music. Unfortunately, many of the students are having a difficult time tuning the exact intervals in the music and the result is a strain on my ears. Mr. Klippen chirps from the podium, “Listen!” but it does not seem to help. The music continues and the small vocal group that has squeezed in at the front of the orchestra attempts to sing their parts. The music is not exactly difficult, but they are singing one on a part and not confident in their entrances – Mr. Klippen continues regardless. He tries to help by singing along with them when possible, but their faces telegraph a deep sense of embarrassment and mortification. The orchestra continues to play into the instrumental development section and, as with *The Moldau*, the weaker players cannot keep up. Mr. Klippen stops them and regroups at the nearest rehearsal letter. They begin again, and he calls out, “Softer, softer... watch the tuning... make this smoother!” The rehearsal of the *Requiem* concludes and Mr. Klippen allows ample time for the orchestra to transition to the next piece.

The final piece the orchestra plays is the Telemann *Viola Concerto*. Unlike the previous pieces, this work seems to be well rehearsed and there is just enough time left in the period to play through the movement with the soloist. She does a great job and the orchestra claps for her when the piece concludes. Students begin to pack up their instruments and gather their belongings. Periodically, someone approaches Mr. Klippen with exciting news about an upcoming concert or a personal accomplishment. Mr. Klippen always smiles and reciprocates interest until another student arrives. The bell rings and students begin to make their way into the hall. Many of them say “goodbye” or “Have a nice day!” to Mr. Klippen as he and I talk by the door.

*Second Period: Intermediate Orchestra or AP Music Theory*

I stay to observe the much smaller intermediate orchestra that meets during second period. This class includes only eight students whose skills are not as developed as their first-period counterparts. They are playing the same music and will be integrated into the full orchestra at the concert, but their parts have been edited and Mr. Klippen takes more time for remedial instruction to help them be as successful as possible during the performance. He also believes they deserve additional opportunities to perform as a separate ensemble. This semester he has arranged for the group to perform at the neighboring elementary school. Instead of playing a traditional concert, he has decided to have them add sound effects and incidental music to a children’s story. Although the logistics for the performance never were finalized, I thoroughly enjoyed watching Mr. Klippen work with the group to integrate music into the story.

*Mr. Klippen reads through the story again. As the story progresses, they play an excerpt of Beethoven’s first symphony. The violins sound prepared, but the cellos seem lost. Music from the Telemann Viola Concerto is used for the next section and features the only violist in the*

*class. I later realize the viola represents the main character. Mr. Klippen stops rehearsal and says, “Now we have come to a point in the story that needs sound effects.” Mr. Klippen dictates some of the effects, but also asks for input from the students. “What would a hole in the sky sound like? What could we do for falling water?” At one point, he demonstrates the sounds he wants on a student’s bass. The class seems very focused and interested in putting this piece together. They sit at the edge of their chairs, look and listen intensely, and are smiling and contributing to the conversation about the music. He gets to a stopping point and asks the students how much longer they want to keep playing and they decide to keep working on the music. So, he continues with the story and asks them to find a sound to represent a crash of thunder.*

Because enrollment in the orchestra program declines significantly in the spring, there is only one orchestra class in the second semester. Thus, Mr. Klippen fulfills his spring teaching load by offering the advanced placement music theory class. It, too, is a small class of only eight students and, according to the course description online, is reserved for “Juniors and Seniors.... Students with 6+ years of music.” I recognized most of the AP music theory students from the other music classes on campus and they were definitely some of the most advanced musicians in the school’s music program.

*After reading a student’s arrangement of Ode to Joy, they get out their books while Mr. Klippen reminds those who weren’t in class last time to read chapter seven to get caught up. He also reminds them they need to pay thirty dollars for the computer-aided ear training program. Mr. Klippen makes a quick comment about chord progressions and plays a couple of examples from a CD. The students scramble to find the examples in their books. All the examples are classical except one – a Lionel Richie song from the 80s that I recognize, but can’t remember the name. Mr. Klippen begins to read from the book and professes that the I-V-I chord progression is the strongest in Western tonal music. He plays a few examples on the keyboard then asks for student volunteers to read aloud from the text. They move on to discuss the ii chord and its function. He plays an example of I – ii – V – I on the keyboard and then has the class listen to an example from a Beethoven sonata. He plays it multiple times and then questions them whether they hear the ii chord functioning as ii or as IV. “OK? Got it?”*



The course is designed to prepare those students who wish to study music in college to take the advanced placement test in music theory. As this excerpt demonstrates, the AP music theory class is focused on the academic study, rather than the performance, of Western tonal music. Mr. Klippen remarked that the class has to move at a quick pace because of the limited time he has to prepare his students for the AP test. However, these are some of the best and brightest student musicians in the school and I am told they always seem to make it through.

*Fourth Period: Guitar Class at the End of the Day*

Mr. Klippen has lunch duty during third period then teaches guitar fourth period. The guitar class meets in the same room as the orchestra and while the physical properties of the room have not changed, the learning environment is completely different. Students enter casually and immediately form small social groups and enjoy each other's company. Some students sit alone, some are in pairs, but most of the class is clumped into groups of three or more.

The tardy bell rings and a girl enters the room late, but Mr. Klippen excuses her. She is followed by a lanky and energetic boy and Mr. Klippen asks why he is late. He says, "I had to go to my locker all the way across school." Mr. Klippen looks suspiciously at me, then says, "Get out your guitar." The room is a constant buzz of activity as students talk, get out their guitars, race across the room to listen to each other's iPods, pass notes from previous classes, or finish up dramatic stories. Shortly after class begins, a boy comes up and writes himself a bathroom pass at the desk, gets Mr. Klippen to sign it, then leaves the room. Mr. Klippen tells me that many students want to play in the hall or outside, but that "they always seem to disappear when I do that." So, he tries

to keep them in the room; however, there is a constant parade of students who need to go to the bathroom or their lockers, speak with an administrator, get an assignment to a teacher, or leave school early for a doctor's appointment. The afternoon guitar class is the quintessential American high school experience one would see portrayed in movies – where students find any way they can to skip class.

The traffic seems to slow for a brief moment and Mr. Klippen squawks, “Work on finger picking – recital Friday!” Upon the immediate conclusion of his request, the class erupts into a chaotic mix of discussion, laughter, and guitar sound. Mr. Klippen describes the class as mostly “self-directed.” Formalized lessons are rare. In fact, I only observed one lesson during my time at CHHS. The lesson was on tablature (tab) and lasted approximately five minutes:

*Mr. Klippen calls for the attention of the class. “Ok, quiet please. Tablature is another way of notating music. We haven't spent a whole lot of time discussing regular Western notation, but this is another common way to see guitar music.” He continues his lesson and asks the students to look at the pages in the book devoted to tab – only a few students look at their books and no one is taking notes.*

*His explanation is very brief and to the point. He tells them which lines represent the different strings of the guitar and that the numbers represent which fret to press. He continues by explaining there are different types of tabs they may find on the internet. “Some tabs won't make sense unless you know the song already.” He concludes by telling them that they will need to play one of the songs from the book by Friday. One is Arkansas Traveler, “In case you don't know it, it is the one that goes...” He begins to sing the song that I recognize as the theme song for the proud Southern cartoon rooster Foghorn Leghorn from Looney Tunes. He then asks a male student to play something from tab in the book. The boy isn't very successful so Mr. Klippen asks him to play it again without looking at the tab. This time it is much better and more fluid. “That's how tab works. If you don't understand it, come to me for help. Now go practice!”*

After this brief ‘lesson,’ Mr. Klippen finds his stool at the back of the class, crosses his legs, huddles over his guitar, and begins to play a slow and somber melody.

He appears to be drifting away from the sea of chaos in the classroom toward a calmer introspective oasis. He could have just as easily been an old man sitting on his porch at the end of long summer day – softly playing his guitar as neighbors pass on the street. Mr. Klippen’s self-imposed serenity is shattered when a student comes up to get help on her finger picking technique.

*He takes her guitar and plays and sings while she watches his hands. She whines, “I don’t know when to switch.” He tells her to either listen to the words or count the beats of the phrase to help clue her in. The private lesson continues as I turn my attention to the other students in the class. Many of them are strumming and talking at the same time, some are just talking, some are playing, and some are not doing much of anything. The girl leaves and a boy arrives needing his guitar tuned. This happens many times over the course of the class. A Hispanic girl asks what is required for the recital on Friday – Mr. Klippen explains that she will need to play a song using all fingers for picking and then helps her with the technique. By now, most of the class is talking – some about music, but many about other social or school-related issues. Another student approaches Mr. Klippen because his guitar needs tuning.*

*A few students are looking at tablature printed off from the internet and a few are looking in the textbook at music notation. However, most students are not looking at music, but talking and playing occasionally. One student who I recognize from the bass section of the orchestra listens to his iPod. He floats around the room sharing what he is listening to with various classmates. I count 26 students, 11 girls, 15 boys, 11 White, nine Black, two Latinos, two Indians, and two Asians – it is the most diverse music class I have observed here at CHHS.*

Although the atmosphere of the class is relaxed and social, a closer look reveals the independent and individualized experience each student is having. Beginners struggle to keep their fingers on the proper fret while advanced students effortlessly jump from lick to lick, infusing each phrase with style and panache. A couple of ‘lone learners’ sit and look at their books or tablatures, trying to decipher the musical codes contained within, and a group of minority boys share chord progressions by listening and watching each other’s hands. The most talkative, and arguably most ‘off task,’ group of students

across the room suddenly falls silent as one girl begins to strum a repetitive chord progression. The skinny bass player pulls the ear buds from his ears and begins to play along. Soon, a loquacious brunette joins in with a chorus of lyrics as the other two members of the group look on in awe. Like a brushfire, this spontaneous musical moment has flared up amidst their conversation and captivated a small audience. They sing the chorus once more then stop and laugh – they had written the song together a couple of weeks ago and are proud of how it is coming along.

To my left, a group of four Black girls sit silently holding their guitars. One is listening to her iPod and soon begins to play along in a brief moment of musical engagement. She strums a few chords then gives up and settles back into her chair. I introduce myself and she tells me her name is Krista. I learn that this is her first semester in guitar class. Krista always wanted to play the guitar and was fortunate enough to fit it into her schedule this semester. Although the self-directed nature of the guitar class allows students to work, or not work, at their own pace, it was difficult for me to recognize any kind of basic structure or purpose beyond the short lessons Mr. Klippen provided. Krista found the lack of structure in class somewhat frustrating:

I don't like how we sit there and have to play by ourselves. And I guess you just try to make it, you know, take the initiative and start playing. That is the worst part about guitar. It's just like, "PLEASE teach me! Go up there and guide me for the hour and a half. Don't let me sit here and try to do this myself." Cause I won't sit there for the whole hour and a half and like, do it. I get really sidetracked.

Even though she was exasperated, Krista still appreciates Mr. Klippen's help and expertise. "Mr. Klippen is like really good, like if you go to him and ask him, he will help you do it. Like, he's not like mean or anything." She has also gained some skills in the class and is proud of her accomplishments. "I have learned a lot more than I did before.

Like the different types of techniques.... Like the song *Hey There Delilah* – like, I didn’t know how he was playing.... Now I know that he’s not strumming, he’s picking.”

Every few weeks, students have the opportunity to perform whatever material they have been working on for the class – no matter what genre, ability level, or amount of material they have learned. I observed one of these ‘recital days’ and heard everything from *Blackbird* by the Beatles to a three-chord progression played painfully slow two-and-a-half times through. Mr. Klippen calls the first of these recitals the “guts recital” because the students have to have “guts” to play for the first time in front of their peers. Although Krista found it intimidating at first, she now enjoys showing off her hard work to the class.

Mr. Klippen’s guitar class is seemingly the most popular class in the music department. The subject matter alone is enough to attract a diverse population of students. The guitar is a staple in much of the music young people encounter outside of school. Unlike the large performance ensemble classes, this class is open to anyone who has an interest in the instrument – regardless of previous experience or ability. Students are allowed to choose the music they want to study; and accordingly, they choose music they value. Mr. Klippen also maintains a relaxed and social class atmosphere. Many students spend most of their time socializing and do not feel pressured by Mr. Klippen to practice the entire 90 minutes. As one student put it, “It’s cool to just come to class and chill while I play my guitar at the end of the day.” Together, it is easy to see why these attributes may make the guitar class so appealing to such a wide array of students.

*The Music Program at Large*

The music program at CHHS is similar to many high school music programs across the city, county, state, and country. The inclusive philosophy the music teachers promote helps guide and structure the music program in a way that allows them to accommodate the musical needs of as many students as they can. Like others in the profession, the music teachers at CHHS place large group performance ensembles (i.e., band, orchestra, and chorus) at the core of the program. These are the groups that the parents, administrators, and general public hear and ultimately use to judge the overall quality of the school's music program. Inclusion of an AP music theory class is also somewhat typical in high school music programs in the United States. This class allows those students who wish to study music in college a way to develop an advanced understanding of Western music and its theoretical underpinnings. In addition to these traditional classes, CHHS is also following a growing trend in the United States to include guitar classes. Guitar is widely popular and seems to attract a diverse cross-section of students at CHHS.

One of the most interesting dynamics in the music program is how different each class is from the others. These differences are evident in the student population found in each class as well as the ways in which each teacher conceptualizes each class. The band, chorus, and percussion classes comprise mostly Black students while the orchestra and AP music theory classes comprise mostly White students. However, the guitar class is extremely more diverse. This musical segregation appears to mirror the racial segregation of the school at large and the 'middle ground' is found in the guitar class. Another interesting component of the music program is the different ways in which the music

teachers approach each class. Mr. Owens is more relaxed with the chorus, yet more demanding with the band and plays along with his students in the percussion class. Mr. Klippen rehearses the advanced orchestra like a professional ensemble, leads the intermediate orchestra like a small chamber group, teaches the AP music theory class like a college professor, and supervises the guitar class like an independent study hall. Inherent in the climate of these classes are the beliefs these teachers have about music, students, and the learning process that manifest themselves in the pedagogical choices they make on a daily basis.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE INFLUENCE OF MUSIC TEACHERS

I like for kids to be included. I think everybody should have music in their lives and that's part of our philosophy here – is that every child deserves to have music. (Mr. Klippen)

The music classes at CHHS were shaped by the musical backgrounds, assumptions, and practices of music teachers. In most instances, the music teacher directed the musical activities of the class and decided what musical opportunities were to be offered to students across the curriculum. Thus, it is important to examine who these participants are as musicians, who they are as teachers, and what attitudes, beliefs, and experiences influence their actions as music educators in the classroom. The process of understanding these music teachers began with exploring their personal music backgrounds.

#### *Mr. Owens: A Rich Musical Background*

Mr. Owens told me he was immersed in the rich musical heritage of the Black Southern Gospel Church as a child. His entire family sang together as a group at church – an experience that honed his musical talents and instilled within him a dedication to practicing and performing.

My family sings gospel, and my dad could really sing – he's deceased now. Both my sisters sing and we, I sang background and then I played [piano].... So, as far as practice, my dad would have us up 1:00, 2:00 in the morning practicing singing.... But, I was really blessed. One of my instructors told me that music, he said, "You don't understand - music is easy to you.... This is our first practice and we can go out and perform tomorrow.... That's really a gift." And that always stuck with me. He said,



“So don’t lose that and always remember that.” And I do. So I’m very thankful and I’m humble.

In addition to singing, an interest in playing piano began to emerge at church. Mr. Owens never admitted to taking formal piano lessons; rather, his keyboard skills developed informally – guided by his ear and the help of more knowledgeable others in his congregation.

I started just playing with a couple of chords (his hands hit the desk imitating the key strokes) and like I said, I have a really good ear for hearing chords and harmony, and I started playing. So, I started playing, just poking with my left hand and just one finger, and three chords for the right hand and started forming it from there. And I started listening to a song and then I started trying to add other chords in there. And then they had this one gentleman named Bernard – and he was experienced. He had the DX-7 – that was like a new instrument at the time (a smile breaks across his face as he reminisces) – and he came and “Wow!” So, I wanted to play like Bernard.

When he was old enough, Mr. Owens got interested in playing in the school band. He told me he wanted to play the biggest instrument he could. Another boy beat him to the tuba, so he got the next best thing – the euphonium, or “baritone horn.” Already being a devoted disciple of music, Mr. Owens practiced his instrument religiously.

I was still focused on my instrument and band. I practiced everyday, all-day. Everyday in our projects I grew up in, I would practice non-stop outside. I’d take the instrument home everyday and I would practice, and practice, and practice – I loved it. I was ahead of everybody else when it came to playing. ‘Cause it was fun, it was challenging, but it was fun.

Given his talents and passion for music, Mr. Owens was offered many scholarships to study music at colleges across the country. However, his father passed away before he finished high school and Owens decided to attend a historically Black college close to home in order to help his mother and sisters around the house. Similar to his experiences in high school, Mr. Owens was honored to be among the ranks of so

many fine musicians and teachers in college. In particular, the jazz band made a lasting impression on him.

They had a really outstanding jazz band – one of the best. So that’s what really kept me there.... I thought I could really play until I heard the jazz band. I heard those guys, and...those guys *could play!* They could *really* play. So, it humbled me.

Jazz definitely found a place in Mr. Owens’s heart. When I asked him who he thought of as an ideal musician, a stream of jazz greats quickly poured from his mouth: Sarah Vaughn, Dexter Gordon, Dizzie Gillespie, and Wynton Marsalis. Mr. Owens holds tight to his love for jazz and finds many opportunities to share that love with his students and community. In addition to infusing his choral warm-ups with jazz, blues, and gospel harmonies, he and a few other music teachers in the area perform together in a jazz combo and give free concerts at the high school from time to time. The group made a special appearance at the winter concert in December, and I was fortunate enough to have attended the concert and captured the intimate musical moment in my field notes.

*Mr. Owens informs the audience that the next selection will feature the band staff members and a parent who plays soprano saxophone. He mentions that he always likes to showcase the staff at concerts when he can. The quartet on stage comprises Mr. Owens on piano, the marching band percussion teacher on drum set, the marching band drill instructor on flugelhorn, and the parent on soprano saxophone. Mr. Owens makes his way back to the piano and the audience settles in. They begin to play a soothing jazz arrangement of Silent Night that features the golden tone of the flugelhorn soloist. The music is subdued and warm and transports me out of the auditorium to a cozy living room with a fire crackling in the background.*

*Each of them is an accomplished musician who showcases his keen sense of style and grace as solos are traded around the quartet. Together they are a sensitive ensemble; knowing when to take the lead or provide support for each other. I catch Mr. Owens grinning wide and bright as he plays, listens, and communicates with his fellow musicians on stage. I find myself captivated by this performance and as I look around the room, I notice the students and audience are as well. The piece slows to a conclusion as the quartet tenderly places each note in precise time. They*

*strike the last chord and I smile. The crowd loves it and begins to applaud wildly. The quartet, the students, and the audience are all smiling in appreciation.*

Although Mr. Owens enjoyed teaching, observations like the one above, and data from his interviews indicate that his first love was performing. Whether on euphonium or piano, Mr. Owens was adamant about performing in college and wanted to make a career out of it. He auditioned for a position with an Air Force band, but was wary of joining the armed forces with the possible threat of war on the horizon. He never intended to teach and like many college music students, he saw teaching as a “back-up plan.” Attempting to avoid the teaching profession, he worked at a drug store, then as a salesman for a construction company in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was not until he resigned from the sales position that he received what he claimed as his “calling for the kids.”

Through a connection at his church, Mr. Owens began teaching general music at an elementary school. This led to a series of other jobs at elementary schools, then an appointment as an assistant band director at a fine arts high school in Little Rock. Much like his memories of high school and college, Mr. Owens treasures his time teaching at the high school in Little Rock as some of the best days of his life.

I had a stellar group there at the high school.... about 125-130 kids in the band and um, they were great, it was great. I mean, kids went to All-State [and] regional. The first alto, he could circular breathe, he could play very, very well. I mean I had really good musicians.... Oh God, that was awesome (said with a big smile)! I was nominated for teacher of the year as well, it was great, and not only did I do that, I taught theory.... It's one of those things where, most directors want to have, dream to have.

Mr. Owens spoke fondly of his days in Little Rock and the enthusiasm in his voice and large grin across his face telegraphed his desire to have that kind of program again. Mr.

Owens eventually made it back “home” and found a teaching job at an area high school, and then was offered the position at CHHS in 2001.

*Mr. Klippen: An Eccentric Background*

Mr. Klippen entered music as a trombone player in the elementary school band. His mother, not being satisfied with this musical outlet, suggested he learn a string instrument so he could play in the town’s orchestra. He describes this musical transformation humorously:

I got a cello and I was so bad at cello that they kept giving me bass parts. So in ninth grade, I thought, “Well this is just stupid, why don’t I just buy a bass?” you know. So, I bought my first bass for 50 bucks.

Mr. Klippen continued playing trombone and bass throughout his secondary school career and eventually received a scholarship to study music at a local junior college. Knowing that making a living as a musician would be difficult, Klippen took courses in music education as a “back-up plan.” He never intended to teach music and was unfortunately drafted to serve in the Vietnam War.

Mr. Klippen returned from the war to finish his music education degree at a major university; however, he still did not want to teach. So, he graduated, made a list of occupations, and eventually ended up driving taxis and 18-wheelers for a while. Although he was never quite satisfied with these jobs, he kept working down the list.

I had this list in my head of things that I never wanted to do, and I kept crossing off things that I never wanted to do and at the bottom of the list was ‘be a music teacher.’ And if I crossed that off, I didn’t know what I would do! So, that’s why I’m here – ‘cause I didn’t want to know what else to do! And that’s really pitiful, but that’s how I did it. But, yeah, so I got this job in 1984 and I’ve been here... since then – so it’s been 25 years.

At first, the experiment did not go over well – he described frequent unsettling drives to work, his stomach in knots, and a general disdain for students and the profession.

Fortunately, after a few years, the stress of being a new teacher dissipated and his attitude toward teaching improved. In fact, he began to enjoy it and has been employed at CHHS ever since.

Mr. Klippen’s eccentric musical past mirrors his eccentric character and randomly curious mind. Taking advice from comedian Robin Williams, he admitted, “You only get a little spark of crazy when you’re born and if you let it die, then you’re lost.... I try to live like that, you know? Sort of cultivate the, uh, strange and offbeat.” Mr. Klippen is the kind of person who wants to know the exact name of each bird and tree he encounters, how to spell words like ‘yamaka,’ and still enjoys turning off the lights in his house to watch small arcs of static electricity jump from his fingertips on a cold, dry day.

Mr. Klippen understands he is unique and admires similar qualities in the music he prefers. I asked him to make a music mix, and on it I found the classical masters Mozart and Beethoven as well as *Bohemian Rhapsody* (1975) by the 70s rock band Queen, *God Shuffled His Feet* (1993) by the briefly popular 90s band The Crash Test Dummies, and *On the Cover of the Rollin’ Stone* (1973) by Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show. Mr. Klippen is also a fan of old radio shows and tries to play an episode at the beginning of each advanced orchestra rehearsal.

It is also appropriate to describe Mr. Klippen as ‘relaxed.’ He never seemed frantic, never talked or moved excessively fast, and maintained a relaxed atmosphere in his classroom. Although he insisted on students playing in his class, he never demanded too much of them in terms of their individual effort or outside practice time. This may be

a direct result of Mr. Klippen's personal practice habits when he was younger. In college, Mr. Klippen was a less-than-motivated double bass performance major.

All through college, I didn't practice. The practice room was some place I would go for maybe a half hour a day.... I was interested in so many different things, I couldn't focus on "I need to fix this"... So, (sighs) I think that influences me more than you know, and I see that, I know the kids have limited time to practice. And it wasn't that I was so busy doing everything else, it's just that I chose not to. Um, beer and Pac Man was way more fun than a practice room (we laugh).... And so, even in high school, when there was none of that, there was outside, you know. And outside was way more fun than tuning my cello.

Students were quick to recognize Mr. Klippen's relaxed demeanor in class. Eric said, "Mr. Klippen just, he's a lot more laid back, which also helps, which allows kids to do more of what they want to do. But he's also, he helps to get people to actually do stuff rather than just sit around. But uh, I mean, he just...he makes it fun."

The rich histories of the teachers in this study provided a lens in which to view how their identities, beliefs, and actions as music educators influenced the school music-learning culture. Their backgrounds, personalities, and experiences in music were the foundation for their approaches to teaching music in school; thus, they were the foundation on which the CHHS music program was based. Two themes emerged from the data in regard to the ways in which these teachers influenced the school music-learning culture. First, the music teachers engaged in a process of *negotiating musical values* when making musical and pedagogical choices in their classrooms. Second, these teachers had an affinity for *investing in the interested few* students who most reflected their values as musicians and educators.

### Negotiating Musical Values

I know that if *I* don't value a piece of music, then I can't give that to the kids [in the orchestra]. I can't choose music that is bad and teach it and

teach it well. . . . [At the same time,] I want [students in the guitar class] to succeed and if I'm requiring [them to read music] that they don't value, they're not going to work at it – I *know* they're not going to work at it. But they will work at something that they *do* value. You know, so it's a two-fold thing. (Mr. Klippen)

This quote from Mr. Klippen speaks to the heart of this theme in that the culture of his classroom was a direct result of the negotiations between his musical values and those of his students. In addition, the CHHS music program as a whole was influenced by the negotiations between these teachers' school music values and their musical values outside of school.

### *Negotiating Values within the Formal Performance Culture*

The music teachers valued and promoted many of the long-established traditions that have become commonly associated with high school music programs in the United States. Specifically, they emphasized the study of standard Western art music repertoire through large-group performance ensembles (LGPEs) such as orchestra, concert and marching band, and chorus. These ensembles are based on a 'formal performance culture' in which the music teacher serves as the conductor, and primary musical decision maker, of the group. Structuring music classes in this way promotes a musical score-centered and teacher-centered learning environment. LGPEs also give primary attention to developing students' technical proficiency on instruments through various exercises and by focusing on the performance issues required of the selected music. It was my impression that the music teachers valued these long-established school music traditions in part because these traditions reflected their personal music backgrounds and because they felt the pressure (implicitly and explicitly) to conform to the school music-learning culture norms in which they operated.

*Selecting repertoire.* The music teachers selected repertoire, or music, for their LGPEs from the established, school music canon. Although not always hailing from the classical era of music history, many of these pieces are considered ‘classics’ that have ‘stood the test of time’ and thus, constitute the core of school music ensemble traditions. As was true in the advanced orchestra class, many of these pieces were the types of masterworks one might hear at a professional symphony orchestra concert and were considered to be some of the most difficult for school music ensembles to perform. Masterworks of this sort are classified as “grade six” on the state music performance list. Less difficult “grades” of music do not include as many recognizable masterworks; yet, they reflect the common structure and style of the school music ensemble repertoire traditions. This music provided the foundation for the music teachers’ ensemble instruction.

Given Mr. Klippen’s eccentric background and eclectic music tastes, I expected the orchestra to play a variety of music styles and genres. In fact, the course description advertised that the orchestra “performs music of various styles and eras.” However, the repertoire I heard performed by the orchestra reflected Mr. Klippen’s value of Western art music. Music for the winter concert included: *The Moldau* (1874) by Smetana, a movement from Brahms’s *German Requiem* (1868), and a movement from Telemann’s *Viola Concert in G-major* (1681 – 1767), and an arrangement of the English folk song *Greensleeves* (trad.) by Mannheim Steamroller. In the spring, the orchestra performed the music of Mozart and Brahms. Mr. Klippen did program “popular” and “unique” pieces occasionally, but they were usually reserved for the end-of-the-year concert.



Mr. Owens also highly valued school music ensemble traditions and accordingly placed repertoire indicative of those traditions at the center of his instruction in school. These values were more than likely instilled in Mr. Owens through his rich musical experience in the high school band. Mr. Owens was fortunate enough to attend a high school with an excellent band program and it would be an understatement to say he has fond memories of his experience there. “Our high school band was level six every year for festival (said with wide eyes) and our marching band was known around the city and everywhere – we had a really good big band, good marching band.” Mr. Owens’s high school band director wanted to provide his students a taste of the musically elite and challenged his students by selecting literature at the top of the grade six list. These pieces included a transcription of *Sherezade* (1888) by Rimsky-Korsakov, movements from Verdi’s *Requiem* (1873), and the *Free Lance March* (1906) by Sousa. Although Mr. Owens was unable to replicate these high musical standards with the band at CHHS, he still selected music that reflected those traditions and standards.

When these teachers based repertoire choices on *their* musical values instead of their *students’*, a clear distinction was made between the music that was studied in school and the music that resonated with the musical lives of adolescents. Mr. Klippen realized the significance of this negotiation and accepted the due consequences.

Mr. Klippen: I think I do lose some kids because I don’t program enough pop music.

Todd: In the orchestra?

Mr. Klippen: In the orchestra, right. And I do program pop music; it’s usually on my spring concert. So, and there’s good pop music out there, you know.... Um, *Skylife* – really funky type of music. Kids absolutely love it when I pull it out. I can’t pull it out every year because I just can’t stand doing that, you know. It’s like I have to hear different things. But the

kids love *Skylife*, you know. And it's, it has this groove thing that goes on and it's a different kind of music. Uh, I don't do lots and lots of it because the technique to play it is different from the technique required to play standard orchestral literature. But I think that's true; I think that I do lose some kids because standard orchestral literature doesn't speak to them.

*Emphasizing technical proficiency.* Like many high school music teachers, Mr. Owens and Mr. Klippen spent the majority of their ensemble class time emphasizing students' technical proficiency in music. This included giving primary attention to the mechanics of music making (i.e., correcting notes and rhythms, adjusting for proper intonation, adhering to printed dynamic markings, and watching the conductor) over the emotive and expressive dimensions of music making (i.e., shaping the musical phrase and discussing the emotional intent of the music). In fact, the course syllabus for the advanced orchestra indicated that class time was to be spent on "concert preparation, developing essential performance skills, and scale testing." My observations confirmed that a majority of class time was spent on concert preparation, with essential performance skills being developed only in relation to the music being rehearsed. The following excerpts from orchestra and band rehearsals evidence this process.

*Mr. Klippen says, "Ok, let's play." The orchestra begins to play the Moldau. He tells the strings to make more of their dynamics and especially to play softer when indicated in the music. This section of the music is not being performed well and is barely hanging together. He tells them, "This needs practice. Can you even hear the clarinets?" He has to call out rehearsal numbers as they come up to keep the ensemble together. They eventually have to stop and he tells the horn player which notes she is missing - she agrees she needs to practice. They continue to rehearse the difficult section and he has to tap his baton on the stand to keep them together.*

Mr. Owens utilized a similar approach with the band.

*"Everyone from the top." The ensemble begins to play again and they push the tempo when playing the first statement of the melody. Mr. Owens asks the alto saxophones to give him a stronger attack and make more of*

*the dynamics on the page. The trombones have trouble with their music – they keep playing on the wrong harmonic partials. He has to stop the ‘flow’ of rehearsal to help them distinguish their notes and the band gets a little restless. He slows down the tempo for the trombones and they eventually improve. Mr. Owens decides to move on and the entire band begins to play again. The opening section of the piece is fine, but the development section is much more ‘rough’ and the band has troubles staying together. He tells them, “This section is too sloppy folks – this part needs to be clean.” Many notes and rhythms are missed as the band continues to work through the music. He tells them, “Too many of you are not paying attention – I hate stopping all the time to fix things.” He seems frustrated now.*

In both excerpts, it is evident that teachers emphasized issues related to technical proficiency. As I noted in chapter four, this approach to rehearsal appeared to have disengaged students from the music making process until it was their turn to be “worked with.” Conversely, when teachers became enthralled with their intimate and visceral connections with the music, students appeared the most engaged in rehearsal. I return to an example from the chorus I presented in chapter four to elucidate my point.

*The next exercise (He is Him) sounds more like a gospel song than a warm up and the southern harmonies light a spark in Mr. Owens. He leans forward over the Clavinova, sinks his fingers into the keys, and sways with the feel of the music. The students stop fidgeting and focus their attention on his playing and their singing, which results in a fuller and richer sound. He improvises a brief gospel/blues tag at the end of the piece, and the students smile and applaud his performance.*

It is precisely when Mr. Owens forged a musical connection between his values as a gospel musician, his values as a teacher, and the genuine musical values, or interests, of his students, that a profound musical experience transpired between them.

Regardless of these impromptu, communicative musical episodes, rarely did teachers explicitly discuss their emotional or expressive associations with music with their students or elicit similar discussions from their students. This raises the question as

to why these teachers rehearse music in this way, and possibly more importantly, why students perform written music in this way.

In an effort to examine how teachers perceived the relevance and importance of technical proficiency and emotional expression in music making, I asked each teacher to describe an ideal student musician. What emerged was evidence of the value they placed on developing technical proficiency in their students. Mr. Klippen said, “I want good sound, good tone, I want in tune, I want rhythmically accurate, and if I can have those three things, then I can fix everything else. So ideal musician – showing up on time with all your stuff.” In addition to these technical skills, Mr. Owens mentioned the discipline and sacrifice required of all ‘driven’ musicians to master their craft.

They would have excellent tone, they would be able to read very well, sight read very well, they will have good technique, and they would know their instruments.... They will have good practice habits and they will have that drive and discipline. Discipline is key, [it] is the main thing to me. If they’re a disciplined student, they’ll be disciplined to practice.

Mr. Owens’s emphasis on developing “drive and discipline” is more than likely a result of his father’s insistence on having the family practice singing until one o’clock in the morning. Or maybe this value was influenced by the hard work required of him in the high school band. Regardless, neither of the teachers described ideal music students as being expressive, having the ability to perform a variety of musical styles, being comfortable with creative music activities (e.g., composing), or demonstrating a high level of musical independence – the same traits demonstrated by most of these teachers’ favorite artists and composers.

*Teacher-centered instruction.* Another long-established tradition borrowed from the formal performance culture is a teacher-centered (or conductor-centered) rehearsal.

Within the large-group ensemble setting, it is typical for the teacher to stand at the front of the ensemble and make all the musical decisions as he or she interprets the musical score for the students. This includes reminding students of information printed in the score they may overlook (e.g., dynamic changes, notes that have been altered by accidentals, and expressive marks like *ritardandos*), adjusting the balance of the ensemble, and controlling the overall tempo of a performance. Although students are actively making music in this setting and contributing to the performance, they often are not engaged in problem solving or invited to express their opinions about the musical decisions that need to be made.

The music teachers at CHHS honored this tradition and rehearsed their large ensembles through similar means. During most of my observations, their primary function appeared to be keeping time for the ensemble as students played through the music. However, they became more involved when performance problems arose or when the group could not stay together. In this example, Mr. Owens worked hard to get the band to transition smoothly between changing tempos in a piece.

*As the music builds to the first climax of the piece, Mr. Owens stops the band to discuss the *ritardando* and subsequent tempo transition. He tells them, "Watch me!," and proceeds to demonstrate how he wants them to handle the transition. He tells them, "We may put a slight ritard there at the end." As the piece slows to its conclusion, the saxophones take their own tempo and interpret their own *ritardando*, leaving them out of sync with Mr. Owens and the rest of the band. He tells them, "Let me direct that tempo right there." They try the section again and the saxophones do the same thing. He yells, "You're not watching altos!"*

Mr. Klippen rehearsed the orchestra in a similar manner, but often let his ensemble play longer without interrupting their performance or called out interpretive cues while the students continued to play.

Maintaining a teacher-centered classroom also involved placing the teacher's musical values and expectations above the students'. Because Mr. Owens is dedicated to music, practices hard, and wants to achieve inspiring performances of great repertoire, he expects the same of his students. To realize these aspirations, he felt it important to establish a strong structure and work ethic for his classes, which he monitored with strict discipline.

I consider myself a disciplinarian.... I [am] not gonna just let them sit and play flute with [their] legs crossed or lean back or talk or chew gum or whatever. And although they like that, they can't do that when they perform.

While this controlled environment may have reflected *his* personal music values, he conceded it may have turned a few students away from the program.

Um, they need discipline. Some of them appreciate the discipline, um because if I didn't give it to them, they would be worse. The class wouldn't be, I wouldn't be good. I wouldn't have good time management – dealing with discipline problems all the time.... I expect to lose a few kids, I don't know how many, but I expect to lose some each semester.

Although Mr. Owens is speaking here specifically about discipline, he touches on a perennial tension for any teacher; that is, striking a balance between the need for structure and control in the classroom with the varying needs and desires of students. At a deeper level, Mr. Owens's quote provides an insight into whose values are most important in the classroom and why. The result of this negotiation is a classroom full of students who conform to his values; thus, leaving little to no room for those who do not.

These teachers' musical values influenced the music-learning culture of their classrooms. Mr. Klippen and Mr. Owens selected music for their ensembles that emanated from the established school music canon because they valued it as musicians and teachers. Yet, they realized these choices may inevitably turn some students away

from the music program. These teachers also valued technical proficiency more than the intimate and expressive dimensions of music making and learning within the school music-learning culture. Though this choice seemed to be counterintuitive to these teachers' musical backgrounds, the expectations for technical proficiency permeate their large group ensemble rehearsals. Teacher-centered instruction also dominated these music classrooms and teachers admitted that not all students are willing to conform to the structure of these classrooms. The result of these teachers' values and decisions in the music classroom resulted in a school music-learning culture that closely resembled and maintained the long-established traditions of the formal music performance culture. Teachers also recognized that when their values and traditions were at odds with the musical values of their students, enrollment in their music classes would decline.

*Accommodating Students' Musical Values: Marching Band and Guitar Class*

Although much of the music instruction the teachers in this study delivered in school upholds the values, norms, and traditions of the formal performance culture, they attempted to accommodate the musical values of their students in select classes. I speak here specifically about the marching band and guitar class. In both classes, the music teachers identified ways to validate their students' musical interests outside of school.

*Marching Band.* One way in which Mr. Owens welcomed his students' musical values into the school music-learning culture was by allowing them to select music to be performed by the marching band. Before the start of school in the fall, Mr. Owens asked his students to compile music mixes of popular songs they thought were relevant and entertaining. He admitted he did not necessarily stay current with the popular music his students enjoyed, and thus relied on them to research what would excite the crowd at pep

rallies and games. Even though these songs were ‘a hit’ with his students and the crowd, he did not necessarily value the largely rap and hip-hop music they selected.

The only reason I play those songs is because that’s something they like. That’s what keeps them motivated. Because they get on Myspace and Facebook and all that and say, “We are playing this song and we are playing that song.” And they get into the stands and they get requests – “Can we play this?” And then they go back, “We played this and we heard you played that – boom, boom, boom!” And [the songs] are *so* elementary.

After collecting the mixes, Mr. Owens began writing arrangements for the band – a process he admitted was musically “painful” at times. Some melodies became short fanfares to be played in the stands while others were used in the halftime show. One song that made it from the students’ lists to the field when I observed the marching band was the popular hit *Closer* by the R&B artist Ne-Yo. While Mr. Owens was happy to make these concessions for his students, he also felt it important they be exposed to a diversity of music from various genres and time periods.

They’ll give me suggestions about songs they want, but no, they’re gonna play marches, a lot of warm ups, marches and a lot of R&B charts and rock-n-roll charts. Since we have a diverse group [of] Black and White kids in the band, we do diverse music.

This quote highlights the tension and compromise Mr. Owens must navigate when making decisions about repertoire selection for the marching band. In one respect, he was trying to acknowledge and honor his students’ musical values, but in the other, he felt there were certain standards (at least in terms of repertoire) he as a music educator was obliged to uphold.

Involving student input and incorporating current popular music set the CHHS marching band apart from its more traditional concert band relative; however, the show design and performance style (i.e., the marching technique, musical selections, and



approach to sound production) of the CHHS marching band still conformed to the norms and values of the historically Black college and university (HBCU) marching band culture Mr. Owens experienced in college.

*Guitar.* Another class in which students' musical values outweighed the teacher's was the guitar class. Although Mr. Klippen taught an occasional lesson to the entire class, he described the class as mostly "self-directed." Thus, students were allowed to learn and perform music that interested them and to work at their own pace. Not surprisingly, Mr. Klippen told me guitar was one of the most popular music classes at CHHS and was the only music class with a waiting list to enroll. He tried to discourage students who perceived the class as 'easy' by clearly stating his intentions for the class in the course description: "Students are expected to have a desire in further developing strong musical skills and abilities with the guitar." However, Mr. Klippen conceded students in the guitar class "aren't as serious and determined" as his orchestra students, thus his musical expectations for them were not as high.

Mr. Klippen believed the guitar class should focus on "building performance skills" and mentioned that he did not want to waste any energy trying to motivate or corral the students the way he would in an ensemble class when they were disengaged from rehearsal. Thus, in contrast to selecting music for the orchestra based on what he valued, the guitar class was based on what his students valued.

When it comes to guitar, I know that the kids will practice more if they choose music to play that they value, you know? I have kids that can play rings around me as guitarists, they can't read music, but they can play really well. You know, so I know that trying to get those kids to read music is going to be a real struggle because they don't value reading music – they see no reason to read the music.... So, I don't make them do stuff that they're not going to value – it's a struggle for me, it's a struggle

for them. I want them to succeed. I want them to feel good about the music that they're playing.

The guitar class, while much more relaxed than the orchestra, seemed to fit Mr. Klippen's personality. He is easy-going and laid-back. He did not want to waste energy fighting students to stay engaged with music they did not value if it was just going to frustrate him – an attitude that ultimately influenced how he taught and interacted with students.

If I had [the guitar class] reading music, it would be much harder for me as a teacher to keep them on track, on task. Um, and part of it is, I want them to succeed and if I'm requiring this thing that they don't value, they're not going to work at it – I *know* they're not going to work at it. But they will work at something that they *do* value. You know, so it's a two-fold thing. I don't have to work as hard, they get to play something and get better at something that they *do* value.

Embedded in this example is the question of whose values will be used to determine the structure of class. Mr. Klippen realized students do not come to guitar class to learn classical literature with formal technique. Rather, he conceded that they come to the class to realize their aspirations of being able to play music they commonly experience outside of school on an instrument that is familiar and accessible.

### *Theme Summary*

The school music-learning culture at CHHS is a result of teachers negotiating between their musical values, which are based on their musical backgrounds and the long-established traditions of the formal performance culture, and the musical values of their students. Consistent with the norms, expectations, and traditions of school music-learning culture, the teachers in this study valued LGPE classrooms that performed repertoire from the established school-music canon and emphasized technical proficiency within a teacher-centered instructional design. Despite these teachers' strong adherence

to these values, they also attempted to accommodate their students' musical values by offering alternative music learning experiences in the marching band and guitar class. Sometimes the choices teachers made in the classroom resulted in compromises between their values and the values of their students that teachers realized might ultimately deter students from their classrooms.

#### Investing in the Interested Few

The teachers in this study tended to invest their energy heavily in instructing small groups of students who shared their values as music teachers. Mr. Klippen selected repertoire for the orchestra that he valued and that his most capable and interested students could perform, and Mr. Owens was motivated to teach the small number of students who modeled his strong dedication to music. The choices these teachers made based on the talents and attitudes of the interested few had a profound impact on their classrooms and the school music-learning culture at large.

#### *Teaching to the Top*

Mr. Klippen's pedagogical approach to the advanced orchestra class was determined largely by the interests and advanced skills of the select group of dedicated students whom he called his "good kids." These students afforded him the luxury of selecting and performing the grade six repertoire he valued so deeply. He also felt these students motivated the less skilled students in the class. In the following quote, it is evident how Mr. Klippen's investment in the interested few influenced the learning environment of the entire orchestra.

I need to teach these top-level kids and keep [them] involved. So I always play the hardest music that we can play and challenge those children, those students, um, as much as I can and let the kids that are not technically as good, let them follow us along. I know that they play out of

tune, I know they don't have the technical facility to play all the notes, but we can still do level six material.... In a 50 piece orchestra, if I have seven top players, then I can do level six because I know that they will lead the rest of the orchestra and everybody else will step up and get better and better and better.

By using words like “follow” and “step up,” Mr. Klippen makes a clear delineation between those few students who are willing and able to ‘rise’ to the musical challenges he presents and those who are not (i.e., the rest of the orchestra). He expects the majority of the class will be motivated by these few individuals and will thus allow him to continue to select challenging music. However, later in the conversation he conceded that he can only push his group so far in terms of their collective ability as an ensemble.

You know, um, and we have to choose music that everyone can play which means that, there's some things that we just cannot play. I mean, if I pull out *Academic Festival Overture* by Brahms, we're not gonna be able to do it, you know. And it's in my library, but it just can't be done. Um, so we are limited by technique and ability – for high-end, really quality stuff.

The “top-level kids” were also the ones who were given the opportunity to perform solos with the orchestra during their senior year. Again, Mr. Klippen candidly spoke of how the capabilities of these few students determined the repertoire selection for the entire ensemble.

I look at what's in my library and I look at my instrumentation [and ask myself,] “Who do I have this year that can play?” For instance, at our fall concert, I had a good cellist in there and I also had a really good bassist. And I thought, “Ok, well, we can do the Faure *Après un reve*.”... So I handed it to my cellist and I said, “Here, we'll do this for a concert.”... I like to have all of my good kids – give them the opportunity to solo – you know, to have a solo with the orchestra. I have done that, especially seniors, if they choose and they're capable, um, “You get to have a solo. You know, we'll program a concerto for you. So, let me know what you want to do.”

In one respect, this is an incredible opportunity for advanced students to showcase their skills and take a moment to ‘shine.’ It also allows these students an opportunity to

share their interests with Mr. Klippen and the rest of the orchestra. However, this opportunity is framed within Mr. Klippen's personal musical values instead of those of his students and is reserved for only those students with advanced skill. As Mr. Klippen said, he tries to give "all of [his] good kids" this opportunity. In doing this, the attention is shifted from the needs of the ensemble as a whole to what can be accomplished by select, interested individuals. When asked what he would do without his top players, he mentioned deleterious results.

I thought, you know, "Ok, I have kids that can only play grade three stuff – that's what they'll be able to do. They won't get better, they won't practice." Um, you know, I, so I just, one year I thought, "Ok, I need to let these kids succeed." So I played grade three stuff and all my top-level kids – that were capable of much higher things – dropped out. You know? So, I wound up with only grade three kids. So the next year, I wouldn't, I didn't do that, I thought, "Ok, I need to teach these top level kids and keep [them] involved."

Clearly, Mr. Klippen would rather retain the interested few by providing them the opportunity to perform challenging music than accommodate the needs of a majority of the class. At a fundamental level, Mr. Klippen seems to neglect slightly easier grade repertoire (i.e., grade four and five) that may stimulate his advanced students while also allowing his intermediate students to succeed. On a deeper level, he makes no concessions for a learning model that promotes the development of music knowledge and skills in a sequential manner. That is, his investment in the interested few results in an 'all or nothing' approach to teaching.

The advantage to investing in the interested few was that Mr. Klippen was able to share some of his most cherished masterworks of the Western symphonic music canon with his students. However, a majority of students did not demonstrate the skills or abilities to perform this music and often became overwhelmed during rehearsal. I will

return to an excerpt from an orchestra observation I described in chapter four to illuminate this point:

*The orchestra is forced to stop at letter E because there are too many people lost in the music. On this break, Mr. Klippen makes a joke about the music and many students smile, but few laugh. This evolves into a discussion about getting a harp player for the concert to cover a vital part in the music. The trombone player jokes that he is willing to learn how to play the harp. Mr. Klippen quickly laughs and assures him there is not enough time for that, but he does consider bringing in someone to cover it on keyboard. The students continue to giggle about the situation and so does Mr. Klippen.*

*The laughter eventually dies down and Mr. Klippen casually resumes rehearsal. The students at the front of each section are poised at the edge of their seats and playing with focus and intent. They do their best to keep up with the music and I notice that they are contributing the most to the overall sound of the group. However, the students at the back of each section sit with poor posture and some barely play. About half of the students are no longer playing – they simply sit there, staring longingly into the music. These students look frustrated and defeated. Regardless, Mr. Klippen continues to rehearse and ‘pushes through’ the music with only the most skilled players keeping pace with him. Unfortunately, very few students are left playing at the conclusion of the piece. Mr. Klippen lowers his baton and many students laugh. The horn player gasps, “Wow, that sucked!”*

My field notes are filled with accounts of similar rehearsals in which a majority of the class stopped playing when the music was too challenging. Not until the final preparations for the concert did it seem as if most students in the orchestra were able to keep up with the music, and subsequently their more advanced peers. More importantly, I rarely witnessed Mr. Klippen adjust his rehearsal strategy or provide systemized instruction to accommodate his students’ skill development. Nor did he mention any type of pedagogical approach or philosophy for developing his students’ performance skills in our conversations. Rarely, he would take a brief moment to slow down passages so that more students could play successfully. It is somewhat ironic that by tailoring the culture of the orchestra to the skills of the interested few, Mr. Klippen abandoned any

recognizable process of teaching and learning – the essential process that develops future “top-level kids.” Instead, he rehearsed the advanced orchestra the way a professional conductor would.

Mr. Owens adopted a more inclusive approach to his repertoire selections and tended to make choices in the classroom that accommodated the needs of the majority of his students. However, he did provide experiences for dedicated student musicians to extend their performance opportunities. One of these opportunities was the quintet of singers who performed the challenging arrangement of *The Star-Spangled Banner* described in chapter four. Similar to their orchestral counterparts, these select individuals were willing to work hard on difficult music and not back down from the challenge. While Mr. Owens did not subject the rest of his class to the arduous task of rehearsing this demanding music (as was the case with the orchestra), they did have to sit quietly and wait while he focused his attention on his more interested students.

#### *A Hunger for Learning*

Mr. Owens was inspired by the development of his beginning instrumental students –the ones whom he described as having a “hunger for learning.” Stories of these interested few stood out in his mind and were always readily available as he recounted memories of success and happiness in the classroom.

I have four kids that’s in the beginning band class – really good, two percussionists are doing really well. And they’re playing, they’re practicing every morning because now they can hear and see what they can do and read – their reading skills are really improving (for beginners)... They are hungry to learn. That motivates me. That’s what really keeps me going.

The stories of these dedicated individuals always brought a smile to his face during our conversations and he was not hesitant to share their accomplishments with the rest of the band students.

*He tells the band that the flute player they hear in the hallway is a beginner. He brags about her accomplishments and asks if they can recognize the difficulty of what she is playing in relation to her skill level, "Pretty good for someone who just started and hasn't had any lessons?" He wants to point out to them how determined and dedicated she is and that they should feel "challenged" by her – "Just goes to show you what a little quality time of practicing can do." He really makes a big deal out of how good she is to the band. He returns his discussion to the music that is sitting on their stands and emphasizes their need to work on rhythm and enharmonic note reading. He urges them to "do your homework, do your part" to get ready for the concert. Whether intentional or not, there is an air of disappointment in his voice.*

I believe Mr. Owens's appreciation for these hard-working individuals, especially beginners, was a direct result of his personal experiences as a young, dedicated musician. The memories of his early days in the high school band are laden with the pride he felt in being able to challenge upperclassmen that were supposedly some of the best musicians in the program.

I went up to the high school because they told us that's when [marching band] was gonna start for the freshmen and this guy walks up, and... he walked me over [to the field] and I was kind of intimidated by him because he was tall and he and the trombone player said, um, "What are you doin'?' You trying to join our band?" And um, I said, "Yeah." (a confident smile breaks across his face) and he says, "You're not gonna make it." (Mr. Owens laughs). He said, "You're too little!" and then he said, "You can't even hold the instrument!"...

He said, "Do you read BC or TC?" I said, "BC." He said, "Well, I just have TC." He said, "I'll tell you what, play this!" And he played the fanfare all the way through then he said, "You got that?" (said with bravado) I was scared, I said, "Yeah." And he looked at me and he said, "Play it." I played it all the way through – from *memory*. It was the opening fanfare from the field and then the trombone section leader like, "AAAHHHHHH!" you know, he was surprised! Then um, Michael took out *Star-Spangled Banner* and played the euphonium part. He said, "You got that?" I said, "Yeah." (Mr. Owens grins again) But I was scared, I



really, I didn't think I had it really because he played the entire euphonium part and I played it back. Lucky! Really lucky on that one. And that's when the trombone player said, "You're gonna be my friend, you're alright, you're gonna be ok."

Clearly, the pride in Mr. Owens's voice and expressions on his face communicate his fondness and appreciation for hard work and dedication to music. Thus, it is understandable why he invests in students who practice with the same determination he exhibited as a young musician.

The teachers at CHHS invested in the interested few because those students best resonated with their personal experiences and values as music teachers. The interests and skills of six or seven students largely determined the repertoire and rehearsal approach Mr. Klippen adopted in the advanced orchestra. These students were also given opportunities to solo with the orchestra. This resulted in a clear division between those who *can* and those *cannot* and left a dearth of educational opportunities for students who may have needed to further develop their music knowledge and skills. Mr. Owens adopted a much more inclusive approach to his ensembles, but provided challenging opportunities and extensions for his more musically interested students. However, he too made clear distinctions between the select students who were more motivated to learn music and the other members of the ensemble.

*Keeping Things in Perspective: An Inclusive Philosophy*

While these teachers focused on the interested few, they also advocated an inclusive philosophy for the music department as a whole. The CHHS music department philosophy states:

*Music is a basic human need. It nourishes the intellect, the body, and the spirit. It can be enjoyed actively or passively. All students should be given the opportunity to study music.*

Although I never learned who authored the philosophy statement, my conversations with Mr. Klippen led me to believe it was he. When I asked him about his personal philosophy of teaching, he replied:

I like for kids to be included. I think everybody should have music in their lives and that's part of our philosophy here – is that every child deserves to have music, you know. And I just, you know, I want to see kids involved. Um, if there are kids out there who are, who play wind instruments, but don't want to be in band, I will take them in orchestra because I know that if I don't take them in orchestra, then they won't be in band and then music will be totally lost.

Mr. Klippen's inclusive philosophy was most prominently displayed in the guitar class. As was previously discussed, the guitar class was open to any student who expressed an interest in playing guitar. The self-directed nature of the course allowed students to work independently at their own pace on material they found interesting. When they needed help, Mr. Klippen was there to facilitate their learning. His inclusive philosophy also found its way into the advanced orchestra. When the music called for solos and duets, Mr. Klippen ensured that they were shared among the entire section so that everyone had a chance to play them. As he said, he would also accept wind and percussion instrumentalists who did not want to participate in the school band.

Mr. Owens also encouraged inclusion by accommodating beginners in the band program. Ideally he would have liked to see a separate class for these students; however, they were often pushed into the concert band class due to low enrollment numbers. Mr. Owens did his best to integrate beginners into the concert band, but often they were asked to practice independently in the hall or practice rooms, as was the case with the flute player, while he worked with the more advanced students in the band. A much smaller beginner band class met in the spring, but advance students were enrolled in the class as

well. On the days I tried to observe the class, students were working independently while Mr. Owen taught private lessons in his office. There were also many novice singers in the chorus; however, unlike the beginning band students, they made up the majority of the ensemble membership. This required Mr. Owens to select music for the students that was appropriate for their limited skill levels.

Accommodating beginning students, as well as students' diverse musical interests, presented some logistical problems that often left these teachers frustrated. Implicit in this discussion was the issue of curricular requirements and scheduling conflicts. Teachers often felt these roadblocks prevented them from realizing the fully inclusive music program they desired. In this example, Mr. Klippen expressed his frustration in trying to develop a 'zero hour' to accommodate the various skill abilities of his students.

And then this semester, I have one orchestra – there's no place for beginners, you know. Um, and so, there's just nothing I can do about that. For the last five years I have asked for a zero period so I can get kids that can't take the class for one reason or another um, and [the administration is] not giving it to me. They're not allowing me to teach outside the school day because they haven't run it by somebody or whatever. It's just not been happening. Um, with the renovations that are going on around here, I asked for, there's a technology credit required for all graduating seniors. I asked for a recording studio, music technology is a wonderful thing to add to the curriculum – it's not happening.

Even though the music department philosophy recognizes the basic human need for music and advocates that all students should have an opportunity to study music at CHHS, the evidence provided in this section suggests that these teachers have limited perspectives of the music participation and learning paradigm. That is, they only made accommodations for students who demonstrated an interest in learning music the ways it is taught *in school*. If students did not perceive any of the school music classes as

relevant to their musical lives, they were unlikely to enroll. Thus, it raises the question to whether or not this philosophy is ‘inclusive’ in the broadest meaning of the word.

### *Theme Summary*

The teachers of this study tended to invest heavily in the small group of students who shared their values and interests as musicians and educators. Mr. Klippen selected repertoire for the advanced orchestra based on the skills and interests of only six or seven students out of 50. Conversely, Mr. Owens’s motivation for teaching derived from fostering dedicated beginners’ desires and determination to learn music. In both cases, these teachers focused their attention on students who shared their musical values. The inclusive music department philosophy these teachers advocated seemed paradoxically at odds with their choices to invest in the interested few. However, the inclusive philosophy only accommodated those students who were willing to subscribe to the values, norms, and practices these teachers upheld within the school music-learning culture.

### Chapter Summary

The music classes at CHHS were influenced by the musical backgrounds, assumptions, and practices of music teachers. Many of the decisions and choices these teachers made in the classroom reflected the values, norms, and expectations of the formal performance culture most commonly found in professional performance ensembles. This included studying mostly Western music, emphasizing technical proficiency in performance, and maintaining teacher-centered classrooms. Although these teachers recognized that their musical values might have been different than their students’, they did not make concessions to accommodate those differences in the LGPEs that dominated the school music-learning culture. However, they did provide alternative

music learning experiences in the marching band and guitar class that honored adolescents' musical values. These classrooms evidenced an incorporation of students' interests and ways of knowing and learning music that the teachers in this study may or may not have necessarily valued personally. Regardless, the existence of these classes demonstrated one way in which these teachers negotiated musical values to develop the CHHS music program.

Teachers also tended to invest heavily in the select group of students who shared their musical values and interests as musicians and educators. The repertoire that was performed by the orchestra was determined in large part by the capabilities and interests of these select students. Mr. Klippen also believed these students implicitly motivated less interested or skilled students to become better musicians. For Mr. Owens, this theme manifested itself in the attention and adoration he gave to the small number of students who shared his dedication to music and determination to learn. Investing in the interested few and making pedagogical choices based on their interests and needs appeared to contradict the inclusive music department philosophy these teachers advocated. However, this inclusive philosophy only accommodated those students who were interested in pursuing music instruction *within* the values, norms, and practices teachers endorsed in the school music-learning culture.

More often than not, teachers chose to maintain norms and practices of the formal performance culture over the diverse interests and practices that shaped their own musical lives. Likewise, they acknowledged that their students' musical values sometimes differed from the types of music and learning experiences they provided in school. Thus,

it is important to examine the musical lives of adolescents relative to the perceptions and experiences within and outside the school music-learning culture.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESONATING WITH THE MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS

You can even take somebody's song that you didn't write, and you can sing it to yourself or you can sing it out loud, and it will speak to you. That's what I think music does, it speaks to everyone. Not only the people who you are singing *to*, but it speaks to you. (Tiffany)

This investigation affirmed the generally acknowledged belief that music and the lives of adolescents are inextricably linked. Consistent with extant research and anecdotal observations, participants perceived music as a vibrant and integral part of their worlds. Their consciousness of music's prevalence in their lives was emphatically portrayed in the design of the senior-class t-shirt, which featured a hawk, the school mascot, listening to an iPod.

Music permeated and colored the worlds of these teenagers; and all participants readily acknowledged its ubiquitous presence and influence. James commented, "I think music definitely is one of the most driving forces in our society because we all have something that we can relate to about it and you know, 97% of the population listens to music regularly." James's perception of music's wide appeal was affirmed by Krista, who remarked, "I've never met a person who doesn't like music – ever," and Marcus, who joked, "Everybody likes music, even the jocks like music!"

In this chapter, I present findings that address two supporting research questions: (1) *How do adolescents describe their affinity for music?* and (2) *How do adolescents' personal relationships with music influence their beliefs and choices regarding music*

*participation and learning?* The first question is answered by one theme that emerged from the data: *striking a chord with adolescents: four dimensions of music's genuine appeal*. The data suggest that participants described their affinity for music across four dimensions: (1) *expression and feeling*, (2) *relevance*, (3) *quality in artistry and craftsmanship*, and (4) *diversity*. The second question is answered by three emergent themes: (1) *musical roots: nurturing personal and social connections with music*, (2) *motivated learning: seeking relevance and challenge*, and (3) *finding a voice: striving toward musical independence*.

Adolescents in this study had rich and complex musical lives that blurred the boundaries of home and school as well as other personal and social settings. Within the school music-learning culture, I was able to observe students listening to mp3 players and sit in on their music classes. However, observing their musical lives beyond school posed research challenges significantly different from those inside school. First, music-centered gatherings outside of school occurred less frequently and with less regularity than those in school. Second, out-of-school musical experiences, such as listening to and creating original music, occurred on a personal, often private, level that made it difficult to observe these behaviors directly.

As the researcher, I sought to discern carefully how to encourage discussion of these experiences without becoming personally intrusive. The majority of findings regarding participants' personal relationships with music derived from the music mixes they compiled and our conversations during music elicitation interviews. Findings regarding participants' beliefs and choices about music participation and learning derived from these sources, but also include observations of real-time music experiences inside



and outside of school and participants' reflections about them. In the following pages, I endeavor to allow participants' voices to speak for themselves.

Striking a Chord with Adolescents: Four Dimensions  
of Music's Genuine Appeal

Participants described their affinity for music across four dimensions of genuine appeal: (1) *expression and feeling*, (2) *relevance*, (3) *quality in artistry and craftsmanship*, and (4) *diversity*. Participants spoke of the lyrics, message, and implied emotional feel of music, exemplifying what Green (2008) calls the “delineated meanings” of music, as well as the inter-sonic relationships within music, or, as Green refers to them, music's “inherent meanings” (p. 87). Both forms of meaning undergird the four dimensions of appeal that emerged, and together these dimensions help explain why music was an integral part of these young people's lives.

*Dimension One: Expression and Feeling*

When asked why he thought humans appear to be so fascinated with music, William said:

I think music is one of the most natural ways of human expression. Even if it is just sitting on a chair and just banging away, or actually sitting at a grand piano and playing – I think it is just a natural form of human expression. Um, of feelings of just... of emotions.

All participants consistently acknowledged music's capacity to express human emotion and feeling. Describing the emotional connection with music was definitely the most popular response to my inquiries and often the first dimension of appeal participants mentioned in our conversations. Specifically, they spoke of music as a conduit through which they could channel the energy and emotions of artists, as well as express their own feelings. Krista described this process aptly by saying:

[Music's] an expression of how you feel and... you can relate to an emotion a song is trying to evoke. And you're just like, "Wow, that's how I feel right now." Or, "I've been through that." Or, you know, "This makes me feel this way" – if there are no words to it.

Krista's remarks indicate her ability to recognize how music's inherent and delineated meanings resonate with her personal feelings. William was in constant awe of his rock idols' abilities to express themselves through their music: "Eddie Vedder's an amazing writer and singer, and he goes and sticks his heart out and adds a lot of, sort of, feeling to it – uses the lyrics to sort of uh, encapsulate that feeling." As he said, Vedder's delivery "adds a lot of...feeling" to the music that is being performed. Although William mentioned Vedder's use of lyrics to express emotion, he was apparently more inspired by Vedder's capacity to 'bare his soul' through his music. Tiffany also recognized music's ability to transcend the notes, rhythms, and lyrics of a song and connect with people on a deeper level. She mentioned in one of our conversations, "When you're singing, you're performing. So, you're making other people feel, um, feel what you're feeling." At the young age of 15, Tiffany was able to articulate that the exchange of emotion and feeling between artists and audience is what transforms singing into performing. She continued, "I'll even start crying when I'm singing 'cause I'll *feel* it, and um, it will hit what I'm doing at that time." Tiffany's candid response provides an intimate view of music's power to influence the emotions and indicates her strong affiliation with music's expressive capacity.

Participants also suggested that the emotional impact of music is not solely reliant on language. Rather, emotional connections with music were often a result of music's inter-sonic properties. William keenly noted, "Language itself sometimes isn't enough. I think that's why humans tend to go towards the outlet of music or the art of painting,

because there's a different way of representing something." Having a broad appreciation for music, William was often attracted to music by foreign artists. However, as this quote describes, language never interfered with his ability to receive the intended emotional message of their music.

I don't understand a word of Swedish.... But, it's the feelings of the songs that I can catch. [The music] conveys exactly what he was trying to say. I actually looked up the English translation of the lyrics and they match what I thought it was about.

Another prominent remark by participants was how the inherent meaning of music had the ability to arouse them to excited or "pumped" states of being. Of all the participants, James (who was not an active music learner or maker) seemed to get the most excited about listening to music. By engaging in a music elicitation interview with James, rather than simply having him talk generally about music, it became apparent that to communicate about music typically involved demonstrating it through performance. During his music elicitation interview, James would fervently mimic the drum parts of the music on his legs and would freely sing along with the recording in full voice – even in the middle of a crowded coffee shop! For James, it was the intense emotional and physical release that certain music fostered that made it so appealing.

Whenever I'm in my car, and I'm listening to [*Monkey Wrench*], I usually like to scream that part because it gets me pumped up.... 'Cause I love rockin' out. I mean, plain and simple. I *love* rockin' out. I love the head banging.

William also felt an affinity for music that provided a heightened state of arousal. When I questioned him as to how he determined which Oasis (a popular rock duo from England) song to put on his music mix, he told me, "*Cigarettes and Alcohol* – got to be one of the best straightforward rock 'n roll riffs I've heard in my life. It's so catchy. You

just want to jump to it you know – rock out!” It was the “straightforward rock ‘n roll riff” (i.e., the inherent meaning in the music) that elevated his state of arousal and ultimately provided an enjoyable experience. Although she did not mention “rockin’ out,” Mya shared similar experiences while performing with the CHHS marching band: “Finishing the [halftime] show, it’s a really good feeling. It’s like you’re sweaty, but you’re pumped and you’re kind of – it gets the adrenaline pumping.” In all these cases, the sonic properties of music promoted a heightened state of arousal that often resulted in a physical response.

The fusion of inherent and delineated meanings in conveying music's perceived feelings was implicit in many of the discussions I had with adolescents, but it was rarely expressed overtly. In the following example, William blended "feeling" with a description of "sonic quality." He did not attach specific feelings to the musical sounds, but he clearly suggested that the feeling "you" get from the music was intrinsically tied to the music's sonic features.

It’s the feeling that you get from the music – you can sort of hear it – it’s like the sonic quality of it because it’s, it goes up and it’s like really powerful and then takes a tiny little drop for maybe a quarter of a beat or something like that – thanks to the bass or the guitars or something, you know, changes a note or something, and then it just goes back up again. It’s just very wave-like, I’ve always loved that kind of music. I think it’s really cool.

These adolescents also perceived listening to music as a safe and effective way to regulate their moods and deal with the stresses of teenage life. James noted how music’s emotional capacity allowed him to alleviate frustration in healthy ways.

I think it expedites the process of feeling that emotion, you know, like... if you’re like mad or something and you’re pouting in the corner or something and you’re like, “ERRGGGHH! I’m so mad!” you know, it’s one way to release. But if I can listen to music too, you know, it gives me

another outlet to get rid of frustration and stuff. So, so I'm angry and I want to listen to something, you know, really loud and I, you know, rock along to it, then um, like, I'll, you know, I get rid of energy – expend energy. So, I'm like too tired to be angry.

James's realization that music "expedites the process of feeling" speaks to a correlation between his affinity for music and the intense emotions he feels as a teenager. William also appreciated the ways in which music helped him navigate the stress of adolescent life, as shown in this description of having "survived" his freshman year.

I get more, more depth into sort of myself and understand myself.... you sort of start reflecting upon what went wrong and what's with you and what's going on inside your head and you can sort of, music serves as an outlet to do that.... When I started high school in ninth grade, everything was tough and I would have not survived if I hadn't been playing guitar because it was sort of my outlet and a way for me to relax and sort of be in my own happy place, which is where I try to be.... Every single day I go home and I play for hours and hours and I go through songs by my favorite bands – I sit and play them on my own, I just, it's helps me sort of get rid of any bad feelings I have.

William offered a compelling picture of how music aided him in self-expression and finding his own "happy place." His words also indicate how important music was to his emotional stability. Statements like these help to elucidate the importance of music in the emotional lives of adolescents and makes evident why these adolescents are attracted to music that resonates with their personal feelings and emotions.

#### *Dimension Two: Relevance*

One of Marcus's musical mentors once told him, "A person will like a song because of something that is going on in their life." I found this observation to hold true generally with the participants of this study. They expressed an affinity for certain types of music, or songs, because they found the music relevant to their lives. Here, I define 'relevance' by the ways in which music resonated with these adolescents' feelings or the

personal and social conflicts with which they struggled *as well as* their familiarity with the sonic properties of the music itself. For example, participants may have considered a piece of music relevant because certain lyrics described their feelings, because the sounds of the instruments and chord progressions used were commonly heard in the other music to which they listened, or both. Tiffany described relevance as music's ability to "speak" to her regardless of the artist's original intent.

You can even take somebody's song that you didn't write, and you can sing it to yourself or you can sing it out loud, and it will speak to you. That's what I think music does, it speaks to everyone. Not only the people who you are singing *to*, but it speaks to you.

Mya felt that Pink's music spoke to the issues of identity and self-concept with which she once struggled and helped her feel more comfortable about her unique personality:

I really like Pink 'cause... when you hear her songs, it makes you feel like it is good to be your... own individual. And, 'cause I used to have issues with my personality – when I listen to her, I feel good to be that crazy, wacky person that no one likes. I just like feeling good about myself.

Almost every conversation I had with these young people involved a discussion about how they related to music because of the way it "spoke" to their perceived identities and/or personal tribulations. James revealed poignantly why he included the Red Hot Chili Peppers' song, *Under the Bridge*, in his music mix description: "I've heard it on the radio and I fell in love with the guitar riff and the soul of the song. This song speaks to me at the inner most core of myself." When I asked James why the song resonated with him, he told me that, like the lyrics of the song suggest, he felt alone in the city in which he lived. William's music mix description also provided an intimate view of his self-concept.

*I put [Cigarettes and Alcohol] on my top 5 because it represents my personal way of life, with the exception of drug use which is referenced in*

*the song: laid back yet contemplating and proactive.... And I chose [All or None] because it is one of my favorite songs and it makes me feel understood when I feel like life is giving me troubles.*

When I explored these issues further during our music elicitation interview, I gained a richer understanding of how each song represented dichotomous aspects of William's personality.

I have sort of two parts of me, I have the part that's a completely lazy bum and I have the obsessive perfectionist. And uh, every time the obsessive perfectionist is starting to win, then [*All or None*] is ruling and every time it's the lazy person, it's the song before it, *Cigarettes and Alcohol*.

These examples indicate that participants relied on a sense of music's relevance to their feelings to aid them in experiencing their developing identities and in expressing their self-concept to others. They seemed to be saying, "If you want to know who I am, then listen to this song." Thus, music perceived as personally relevant might be particularly comforting at a time when adolescents feel misunderstood by others and are working hard to understand themselves. Consistent with Lewis's assertions (1995), I found that these adolescents "choose music not only for its message, sound and/or danceability, but also for the ways in which it can bolster their self-image and, like a cultural mirror, send strong reflective messages about them to the rest of their social world" (p. 37).

#### *Dimension Three: Quality in Artistry and Craftsmanship.*

The third dimension of appeal that participants articulated was an affinity for musical quality. Although some adults may think adolescents blindly accept music as being 'good' simply because it is the latest hit on the radio or because their friends like it, participants revealed rich and astute, often sophisticated, perceptions of musical quality based on the artistry of the performer(s) and the craftsmanship of the music itself.

*Artistry.* Moving beyond a superficial infatuation with an artist's appearance or 'star quality,' participants appreciated the refined music skills of their favorite performers. For instance, Tiffany's adoration of Frank Sinatra went beyond his popularity: "I've always loved Frank Sinatra's sound. Always, his voice and the way that he can bring songs across." In this way, these adolescents referenced a deeper, more critical level of thinking that revealed their notions and understanding of the expressive dimensions of artistry. In some cases, they portrayed a surprising level of maturity in integrating knowledge *about* artists with commentary on their actual performance. Mya, for example, demonstrated her breadth of knowledge in comparing several well-known jazz performers.

[Louis Armstrong has] that raspy kind of voice that's not like everyone else's... I remember [Dizzy Gillespie's] range was *incredible!* And Wynton, Wynton is just kind of his own person – he's just like a Louis Armstrong. And Louis is just like his own person, he's like at the top.

Mya determined the quality of an artist's performance by considering the fusion of personality and musical abilities. Eric, too, was able to recognize the relationship between an artist's persona and his or her skills as a performer. Eric made this relationship clear when describing the music of Jimi Hendrix.

What I find most interesting, [Jimi Hendrix] was one of the first guitarist to – or rock guitarist – to incorporate a lot of jazz type stuff into his solos and he just didn't really play by the rules of what was generally accepted as um, how rock guitarists should sound. I mean, that's sort of the melodic feeling that it's got to it.

Eric's well-articulated description evidences an ability to perceive and discuss issues of skill and creativity that influence his affinity for Jimi Hendrix's music.

*Craftsmanship.* Perceptions of quality in music as revealed in music mix descriptions and music elicitation interviews also showed participants' keen awareness of



how the elements of music were used compositionally, particularly timbre, texture, tempo, and dynamics. As Tiffany put it, “I like the way that everything comes together – the violins are playing, but then you can still hear the difference between the violins and the guitar player and how they mix together.” Participants often spoke of varied instrumentation and the overall complexity of the music as a whole, and their vocabulary was frequently rich with descriptive adjectives and accurate terminology, as is apparent in this excerpt from William’s music mix description:

*[Save Me from Myself] is extremely uplifting and is powerfully driven by the thundering drums, the bass in the chorus, and the adequate use of synthesizers to add sonic character. I chose to add this song to my top five because the song... itself is simply tactfully composed.... [Nightmares in the Daytime] starts out slowly with the vocals carrying the verse. However, as it moves into the chorus, the lead-guitar player starts taking over and adds a simple riff that lifts the song up to a completely new level. Simplicity is really the best when it comes to rock and this song shows it.*

Even more compelling than the rich language William used to accurately describe musical features is his astute observation that sometimes, simple compositional devices yield the "best" musical result.

Even though James had received little formal music training (i.e., he played trombone in sixth grade for six weeks and took a few guitar lessons), he was able to articulate his perception of how musical elements combine to form an expressive whole. “I like how the instruments and the mus[ic], you know, and the singer, all harmonize together and that’s probably my favorite thing about [Foo Fighters].” Speaking again about the Foo Fighters’ song *Monkey Wrench*, James also recognized the importance of the song’s temporal flow in his music mix description. “I was intrigued by the pacing of [*Monkey Wrench*] and the way the music moved from one verse to the next. The blatant musical pause within the first few seconds seems to ‘wake the listener up’.” This excerpt

reveals James's assessment of quality based on the perceived relationship between the construction of the music and the physical responses it can elicit from the listener.

William noted that without a certain level of craftsmanship, some music does not meet his highest standards of quality.

The primary thing about music for me is that everything in the music has to work together in a very nice sort of harmonic way, even if it's rock n' roll or jazz or blues or maybe even metal.... Otherwise it's just not, um, it's still music, but it's not wonderful music to me.

William's comment suggests a relatively sophisticated capacity to identify and defend differentiations between lesser and greater musical value and to make knowledgeable choices within the context of those judgments. While judgments of greater or lesser quality may not inhibit the range of music these adolescents enjoy, such judgments may determine which songs and pieces they value most. These judgments are based on more insightful perceptions than adults, including music teachers, may believe adolescents to be capable of articulating. Understanding that adolescents can and do make such distinctions is important because it provides clues as to how they make choices about the music they listen to and perform.

#### *Dimension Four: Musical Diversity*

Participants in this study acknowledged and embraced a variety of musical expressions, styles, and genres. James commented that it was easy to be attracted to music because "it's so diverse. I mean, it's like movies – they come in all sorts of varieties and everybody can find something that they like." Although most participants preferred one or two genres or artists, they felt it important to maintain a broad perspective on the variety of music offerings available to them. Given the diversity of

their music preferences, participants found it difficult to select a limited number of their favorite songs for their music mixes. This task was particularly problematic for Krista.

I don't have just all the same type of songs on my iPod. I have a diverse selection on my iPod, so I would want – for somebody to look into my iPod, like, “Give me a summary of what your iPod looks like.” – I would want to give them a little bit of everything.

Krista's initial music mix included over 20 songs, rather than the five I requested, because she wanted to “give [me] a little bit of everything.” Her indecision stemmed from the fact that each song represented a different facet of her personality or a cherished memory of a person, place, or event. Thus, her appreciation of diverse musics seemed to be a metaphor for her comprehensive and holistic concept of self. She would not want to be constrained by a limited choice of musical repertoire, just as she would not want to be known for only one facet of her personality.

Mya and Tiffany also thought it important to embrace various expressions of music, but often felt like their peers judged them for deviating from the cultural norms expected of their race. Mya's music preferences were perhaps the most eclectic among participants. Her mix included: (1) *Don't Let Me Get Me* (2002), by the female pop artist Pink; (2) *La Vie en Rose* (1950), by jazz legend Louis Armstrong; (3) *Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy* (1976), by the 1970s classic rock band Queen; (4) *That's What You Get* (2008), by the alternative rock band Paramore; and (5) *The Incredits* (2004), the end credits music to the animated movie *The Incredibles*, by Michael Giacchino. As Mya remarked, the broad range of her music preferences was negatively perceived among her friends:

It's a mix really, but it's still mostly alternative, but it's still sort of a mix of people – some people kind of make fun of me for that – it's more alternative, but it's like, “Why are you listening to this?” (said

judgmentally) “You should listen to something better.”... My mom told me, “Well, if they say it again, tell ‘em you have an eclectic taste in music.”

Further exploration of this issue revealed that Mya’s peers considered alternative music as “White people’s music” and questioned why she was not more interested in music commonly associated with Black youth such as rap or hip-hop. Like Krista, Mya’s interests in diverse musical expressions suggest a broader perspective of self-image that fellow adolescents may not fully appreciate.

Tiffany also recognized the influence of racial expectations in shaping music preferences, yet still advocated an informed perspective of a wide range of works, regardless of racial identification.

I always listen to everything, no matter what. I even like listening to, I don’t know, like polka and things. I’ll listen (she laughs) to that just so I know what’s going on in every genre. Because you can’t exclude yourself just because you’re of, of a race. I mean, you can’t say, “Well, I’m Black, so I’m just gonna listen to gospel and R&B.” Because, you never know where the other side could take you.

Tiffany’s optimistic outlook on life and her readiness to embrace new opportunities manifested itself in her appreciation of musical diversity. Marcus was also accepting of all musical expressions regardless of their perceived stature within an implied hierarchy of musical worth.

All music is real music to me. Um, African music, people just on drums, I think that’s music. That’s real art I think. And um, so, I just think that more people should expand their horizons and just view all types of music as, they could probably try to appreciate different types of music.

Marcus’s response indicates a mature and grounded perspective on how people value different musical expressions. Further, he shares a vision for a more inclusive approach to music appreciation that moves people beyond their familiar, or limited, perspective of

musical value. Statements like these speak to these adolescents' broad definitions of what music is and more importantly, how unnecessary it is to delineate music along stylistic or cultural lines. These perspectives provide additional indicators of how these adolescents' relationships with music influence their choices to seek out diverse music expressions and experiences.

Embracing musical diversity may also include intentional efforts to discover new and unique music. Marcus spoke of valuing music that he called "diamonds in the rough" – music that was particularly intriguing yet relatively unknown. These "diamonds" included yet-unknown artists, new styles, and new ways of putting music together. James's appreciation for alternative rock was derived from its inherent non-conformist attributes: "The thing about alternative rock is that it doesn't have a formula to it – it doesn't have to be any one thing because it's alternative. It's, you know, not normal." The motivation to seek out new music was internal, inspired by the music itself and participants' relationships with it, not born of local radio station broadcasts or commercial pitches for certain artists and music. Tiffany was especially interested in music that she considered on the forefront of musical trends.

I'm always looking for something new. I'm always looking for the new style. Always, like style that is coming out in a couple of years to everybody else, but I'm, you know, already there. Um, I'm always looking for the next thing.

Tiffany's motivation to find new music may stem from her desire to become a recording artist and music producer. Regardless, she was driven to find new styles that enriched her current musical offerings and provided a wealth of new musical material to experience.

### *Theme Summary*

Participants described their affinity for music across four dimensions of genuine appeal: (1) *expression and feeling*, (2) *relevance*, (3) *quality in artistry and craftsmanship*, and (4) *diversity*. Present in the first three dimensions of appeal were the multiple connections these young people made with the delineated and inherent meanings of music as articulated by Green (2008). That is, participants were attracted to music for what it implied, suggested, or evoked as well as for the sonic properties and construction of the music itself.

This evidence suggests participants' affiliations with music extended well beyond limited perceptions of popularity and the influence of mass media. Regardless of genre or style, the youth in this study made vital and meaningful connections with music that resonated with their identities, emotional and intellectual interests, and developmental needs. Although these dimensions cannot fully explain each participant's affinity for music, they do provide valuable insight into the informed, deep, and significant associations they formed with music and how those associations were utilized when making decisions about music participation and learning.

### Making Musical Decisions

Three themes describe how these adolescents' personal relationships with music influenced their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning: (1) *musical roots: nurturing personal and social connections with music*, (2) *motivated learning: seeking relevance and challenge* and (3) *finding a voice: striving toward musical independence*. In the first theme, I examine the ways in which participants used music to fulfill personal and social needs. The second theme addresses these adolescents'

desires to learn music that was relevant and challenging. The final theme explores the relationship between these young people's sense of musical independence and their need to express their individuality as creators of original music.

*Musical Roots: Nurturing Personal and Social Connections with Music*

Already, at this early age, participants in this study voiced an insightful, profound sense that music was an essential component of their lives. Such insight was expressed by Krista who told me, "I don't think you can live without music...I couldn't," and Mya who said, "If there wasn't music... I wouldn't be me." Thus, like roots of a tree, these adolescents' deep and complex connections with music nourish their lives in meaningful ways and provide the foundation for their future musical growth. The taproot of these young people's musical lives is the family. My discussions with participants revealed their appreciation, relationships, and passions for music were profoundly influenced by their parents' affiliations with music. The breadth of these adolescents' musical roots is measured by their almost constant engagement in music activities. Observation and interview data evidenced participants' necessity to listen to or perform music as often as possible throughout their day. The complexity and interconnectedness of a tree's root system is symbolic of the rich social connections the participants in this study made through music.

*Familial influences.* Although I expected for these adolescents' musical lives to be shaped by their social networks, I was surprised to learn how influential their parents and siblings were to their musical development. Parents not only provided the resources needed for these adolescents to engage in music activities (e.g., buying instruments,

paying for lessons, and providing space for garage bands to practice), but also modeled a sincere interest in music that participants carried into their own lives.

William admitted his dad was extremely influential in developing his personal level of appreciation for a variety of musical expressions and artists.

[My dad's] probably one the most diverse music listeners. He's got everything from Bach and Beethoven to Led Zeppelin to Norah Jones to Django Reinhardt to B.B. King uh, Solomon Burke – all these great, great diverse musicians. Um, and I think I've always, just growing up with that, I've appreciated, learned to appreciate a lot more.

William not only learned to appreciate diverse styles of music, but also keenly observed his father's ability to judge musical quality. Implicit in his remark, William learned to embrace a broad range of musical expressions as “great [and] diverse” regardless of the genre or style.

Tiffany's experience at home was particularly more focused on gospel music. In addition to learning an appreciation for music, Tiffany also gained an intimate knowledge of music-related careers for gospel musicians from her family.

My whole family is gospel music. Music in general. I've, my mom's side is uh, and that side is really into producing and singing, preaching and all, I mean, my whole family is all gospel. Like everybody was brought up in music and preaching so, it's like, I've kind of, that's how I got into it first of all.

These familial music experiences established Tiffany's personal interest in music and provided a type of informal education of the music business that has consequently shaped her life. In a later discussion, Tiffany told me she wanted to eventually make a living as a singer, producer, preacher, or music teacher.

Marcus described his involvement in music as unavoidable given his parents' professions: “My mom is a musician and a music teacher and my dad is a musician, so I



guess I was bound to be into music at some point.” Marcus later admitted that the rich, musical environment in which he was immersed at home had a definite impact on his developing musical tastes: “I say I was influenced by most of the music that they listened to when I was growing up.” The only participant who did not mention a familial music influence was James. Coincidentally, he was also the only participant who was not actively pursuing music instruction or engaged in active music making during data collection.

*Music 24/7.* Whether plugged into an mp3 player, singing music in their heads, or performing in a group, music provided a seemingly constant soundtrack for participants’ lives. Mya humorously remarked, “Like, I listen to it in the shower. I listen to it, like, if I wake up and I have to go do something like feed the fish – something like that – I’ll have to have a theme song!” All participants noted a similar ubiquitous presence of music in their lives; however, some participants, like Tiffany, mentioned that music consumed a majority of their available free time.

Involved in music? 24/7 (she laughs). Because, if I’m not singing, vocalizing music, I’m thinking about a song. Or, I’m thinking about going home and listening to a song or I’m thinking about, “Ok, so, uh, what can I play when I get home?” Or if I heard a lick that I can practice when I get home. Or, “What am I doing afterschool?” Or even if I am annoyed with something or somebody, I’ll think of a song and I’ll just start humming it. Or if I’m in the hallways, especially by myself, people will come and surprise me and be like, “Ah, I like that, uh, run you did!” ‘Cause I’ll just be singing, and I’ll sing out loud when I’m in the hall by myself. Or even when I’m around people, I just sing. And um, I, that’s what I do 24/7 – it’s always in me.

Tiffany’s deep affiliation with music manifested itself in an intentional, and potentially uncontrollable, choice to engage in music activities on a constant basis. In fact, Tiffany and Mya stated that the music room at CHHS was like “a second home”

because they spent so much of their free time in the music department classrooms.

Marcus also mentioned a “nonstop” affair with music – an infatuation that was encouraged by technology.

I’ve been listening to music a lot, but with like the introduction of the iPod, I’ve started listening to it a lot more.... but I would listen to it a lot on the bus rides home and car rides –I listen to music like nonstop.

William also seemed unable to suppress his need to interact with music; so much so, that it interfered with his time in class.

Listening, um, I think, I mean, considering the fact that I do carry my iPod around with me at school (he proceeds to pull his iPod out of his jeans pocket), and I have a tendency to listen to it in class too (he chuckles).... I think about maybe five to six hours a day goes to just listening to music.

The introduction, and seemingly constant development, of personal music listening devices, such as compact disc and mp3 players, has pervaded adolescent culture. Every day I visited CHHS, and in almost every class, I observed students listening to such devices. This activity was particularly prominent in the guitar class when students would consult recordings on their mp3 players as they learned to play the songs on their guitars. These technologies have enabled adolescents to integrate music into their daily lives in ways never before seen in history and thus raises questions about how adolescents perceive access to music and the purpose and function of school music programs relative to their personal, and now portable, listening experiences.

*Belonging: Fulfilling social needs.* Participants frequently described how music facilitated a sense of community and belonging among their peers and human kind in general. Tiffany appreciated music’s capacity to dismantle tension and facilitate dialogue among a group of people through their shared interest in music.

Music always unites everyone. Any culture, everything, I mean, I've seen it happen even with um, going to different schools and going different places in the country where, as I would walk into a room, I mean, you could just *feel* tension in the room. And you find *one* person who can sing, or one person who can play, or a few people who can sing and play, it will completely break the tension of the room.... And then you might go on to talking about another song and then you build a relationship off of *music* and that's a lot of ways I've built relationships – is off of music.

Tiffany enjoyed how music served as a conduit through which she could form meaningful relationships with others and, more importantly, she recognized that these bonds develop primarily through the act of making music. Seeing beyond her own personal relationship with music, Tiffany understood how music functioned in the larger social arena.

For Marcus and William, the camaraderie that developed within a shared, social musical experience partially fulfilled their need to belong. Although Marcus elected out of the orchestra, he still expressed fond memories of the social and developmental advantages of participating in the group.

The orchestra I was in had a really fun atmosphere and... everybody there was friends.... Camaraderie, I say. A lot of people uh, with the same goal I guess, playing together. You get to feel a part of something and um, I mean, I think it's a good way to learn music.

This quote highlights the multiple, advantageous dimensions of learning music in a social context. At a superficial, yet potentially meaningful level, Marcus enjoyed orchestra because he shared the experience with his friends. Deeper still, this experience fulfilled his social need to belong, or as he said, “to feel a part of something.” Finally, Marcus’s astute observation that learning music within a social context may be beneficial reveals a mature, implicit understanding of what he believes is the best way to learn.

William also felt a sense of camaraderie when sharing music experiences with others.

Camaraderie is, it's I think it's a good feeling to feel when, somebody, other people are interested in the same stuff that you are doing at that exact moment. And you can share it together and make something great out of it.

William's ability to recognize and articulate the positive feeling that results from the exchange of energy among fellow musicians during performance is extremely compelling because it speaks to his informed understanding of how the unique process of making music can elicit potent and meaningful social interactions. James was able to simulate the social music experience by playing the popular video game *Rock Band* and remarked that the experience "makes [him] feel like [he and his friends] are a band." It was this *feeling* that resulted from social interaction through music that seemed to be a driving force behind these participants' compulsions to make music in social settings.

### *Theme Summary*

Participants shared a profound realization that music was an essential component of human life. Like the roots of a tree, these participants' personal and social connections with music ran deep and wide, nourishing and enriching their lives in meaningful ways. These adolescents' affinity for music was derived from their musical experiences at home and the ways in which family members, particularly parents, modeled appreciation, affiliation, and passion for music. The resulting manifestations of these connections involved an intense and constant need for musical activity as evidenced by ways in which these young people devoted a considerable amount of their available time to listening to or making music. Music was also vital to participants' social lives. Through music, they were afforded the opportunity to develop strong and meaningful bonds with others

through a shared, common experience that fulfilled their basic human need to belong.

This evidence suggests that participants viewed music as much more than a recreational activity; rather, it was an essential component of their identities and a medium through which they could nourish their lives in personally and socially rewarding ways.

*Motivated Learning: Seeking Relevance and Challenge*

These adolescents' motivation to learn and develop skills in music was a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. When electing to engage in self-selected music learning experiences, participants sought out music that was relevant in terms of its familiarity and accessibility. These young people also sought out learning experiences that were initially easy to master. However, participants who chose to continue their musical development mentioned that accepting a challenge in music was also rewarding. In either case, what was most important was striking the proper balance between their capabilities and the challenge the learning activity presented.

*Seeking relevance.* All participants, except James, were engaged in an educational music experience such as learning to play an instrument or learning to sing. These adolescents' desire to learn music was driven by their interest in and fascination with music as well as how they perceived the significance and relevance of music to their current and future lives. The following quote exemplifies how Tiffany's intrigue with music and the influence of family members motivated her learning.

I actually kind of learned how to play that song on [piano], 'cause I liked it so much, and I heard my cousin play it when I came here. And I was like, "Hmm, I guess I could try it." And I did.

Mya's interest in learning music was sparked by her exposure to the band programs in her school and community.

I wanted to play in the band, 'cause I used to watch the kids go to festival in my elementary school, and the local high school band used to play, like, down the street – so I could hear them. And I was like, “Wow!” I always wanted to be in band – I always wanted to play an instrument at least.

Both examples speak to these participants' genuine intrigue with music and their desires to learn music that was familiar and accessible. For Tiffany, the impetus for learning resulted from her interest in the music itself, which was then reinforced by her cousin modeling musical behavior. Conversely, Mya's desire to learn music began by observing older students modeling musical behavior, which was then reinforced by her fascination with the sounds of the high school band emanating “down the street.” Regardless of what initiated their desire to learn music, it was the relevance of the musical experience (i.e., the familiarity and accessibility of the musical content and context of learning) that motivated Tiffany's and Mya's learning.

Nowhere was the issue of relevance in learning more apparent than in participants' discussions about learning guitar. The young people in this study perceived the guitar as a familiar and accessible instrument that could be found in most of the music they enjoyed and was valued for its cultural capital. James described the guitar's relevance in terms of its ubiquitous presence in contemporary society by saying:

I do want to play the guitar – not like for a band or anything, but you know, it's always a cool skill to have. Everybody respects a guitar player I think.... Some guy coming in with a guitar into, you know, like some random place and just starts playing it, you know, people will say, “Hey, that guy can play guitar.” But you know, somebody comes in with a like a trumpet and starts playing, and people are like, “What is this guy doing? Why did he just come in here with a trumpet?” You know, it just seems like guitar is an instrument that everybody can relate to more.

James's comments are important because they provide insight into how he perceived the familiarity and accessibility of various instruments. His choice to describe

the guitar in terms of the “respect” it garners among young people connotes a hierarchy of social acceptability among instruments. James also concluded “guitar is an instrument that everybody can relate to more.” He also implied a distinction between instruments more commonly encountered in public and those studied in school. Marcus also recognized this implied distinction and noted how the introduction of guitar into the school music program provided evidence that people his age sought relevant music learning experiences.

More people wanna just learn how to play, like with the addition of our guitar class, a lot more people have been enrolling in that I think. And so, I think that shows my point that people just want more options to play, I guess more contemporary music.

The guitar class was so popular at CHHS, Mr. Klippen told me there is a waiting list to enroll in the class every semester and joked that it is one of the few music classes in which adolescent boys would enroll. However, my observations indicated guitar had a much wider appeal than just adolescent boys.

*The room is packed with students, 26 in total. There are 11 girls, 15 boys, seven Black students, 11 White students, as well as a few Latinos, Indians, and Asians/Pacific Islanders. It is definitely the most diverse music class I have observed. It is also diverse in terms of ability level. I see many students struggling to get their fingers on the proper strings and frets, a few boys who passionately jam on the same four chords over and over, and a couple of introverted individuals (mostly boys) who display their technical prowess by moving through various licks and styles with speed and grace. I don't hear anyone playing classical guitar repertoire, rather, I mostly hear the repetitive cycle of contemporary popular music chord progressions. A few of the more vocal girls sing along as their friends play popular songs I have heard on the radio. Occasionally, I will hear one of the more advanced students conjure up a blues or jazz lick; however, like a gust of wind, it quickly dissipates.*

This evidence might suggest that the relevance of guitar was based merely on its popularity; however, Mya spoke of a more meaningful connection with guitar based on a personal desire that developed at a young age.

I've always wanted to like, back when I was little, I wanted to be, I wanted to play guitar – like dead set. My parents bought me a piano, I was like, “Uh...ok” (said with reluctance). Then I never played the piano, then they bought me a guitar, and it was defective so they had to take it back and I was sad. And then I picked up the trumpet and that kind of filled the void, but then once I ended up getting a guitar, I was really happy.

Although her parents found multiple musical substitutes, Mya mentioned that none of them quite “filled the void” that was left from her desire to play guitar. Mya continued to play trumpet in the school band and other instruments at home, but this comment denotes that the guitar captivated her primary musical interest.

Krista was also attracted to the guitar for reasons beyond its popularity. She was drawn to the sound of the instrument and its perceived ability to facilitate expression. When I questioned Krista as to why she chose to learn guitar over another instrument, she said, “I like the sound [the guitar] makes. I dunno... like there's a passion when you play the piano and guitar and like the violin, you can like, feel the passion of like the person.” As was the case with Mya, it is evident that adolescents' appeal for guitar runs deeper than its social acceptability. Rather, these adolescents chose to play guitar because it resonated with their personal connections with music and presented an opportunity to learn an instrument they perceived as familiar and accessible.

*Seeking challenge.* When developing their skills as musicians, participants endeavored to strike a balance between what was easily achievable and what presented a welcomed challenge. For Krista, the ease of playing, or pretending to play, guitar in *Rock Band* was part of the immediate appeal of the game.



When you're playing *Rock Band*... I dunno, like, you're always entertained because you like find these songs that you like and always go back to those songs and then you learn new songs. And you keep playing 'till you get to know it. And then it's just like, you're just pressing buttons, so it's not as hard as when you're actually learning the guitar.

One could question whether playing *Rock Band* constitutes an authentic musical experience; however, comments like, "then you learn new songs," revealed Krista's perception that the game engaged her in a learning experience *based in* music. The enjoyment Krista experienced while playing *Rock Band* speaks to her desire to learn familiar material (i.e., "songs that you like") through a process of repeated encounters until the material was mastered (i.e., "go back to those songs... 'till you get them.>"). What was unique about this learning process was that Krista interacted with the game to control the balance between ease and challenge of learning new material. Krista admitted that playing a real guitar was much more difficult than the video game; however, she still enjoyed learning guitar and was proud of her skill development in the class.

Participants with more advanced skills also recognized the importance of learning simpler material when they started on their instruments. William remarked, "I started playing a lot of [Green Day's music] um, sort of pop/punk stuff that was really simple to play because it was easy to get into." William selected this music because it was familiar to him (i.e., Green Day was a popular band with adolescents at the time) and, more importantly, because he could easily learn the skills required to perform their music. Although Mya was trained how to play trumpet and read music in the school band program, she too had to start with music that was readily achievable when teaching herself to play the drum set by ear. "I like to listen to the beats and try to imitate them on my own drum set. So, I just gotta find something that's slightly easy (she laughs)."

When self-selecting initial music learning opportunities, these adolescents critically assessed whether familiar music was appropriate and achievable given their current skill levels. William remarked that he was able to “get into” the music because it was simple to play and Mya recognized that her success on the drum set was dependent on identifying easy music to learn.

Moving beyond the mastery of easy material, participants who desired to further their musical skill development expressed the intrigue and satisfaction that accompanied their choice to engage in challenging learning experiences. Even at his young age, Marcus clearly articulated how his enjoyment of the learning process resulted from the challenge it presented.

It’s fun to, to get better, to struggle, and I guess, the whole grind of everything is a draw.... just getting, wanting to get better or just striving to want to get to the next level or to uh, I guess, just make sure, getting more professional I guess.

Eric also noted how performing challenging music maintained his interest in the material being learned. “I think it keeps your attention more. It’s just a lot more fun to learn something that’s difficult and actually spend time learning it, uh, then something that’s just really basic.” Although participants welcomed challenges in learning music, it was crucial that they struck a balance between those challenges and their musical capabilities. Mya felt this was particularly important in the school music-learning culture.

[People drop out of band because] they’re not getting challenged enough. Like I can see like, once you get through middle school, you think, “Ok, it has to be more – in high school it’s probably gonna get way harder.” And it’s either they can’t take it or they just aren’t getting challenged enough.

This evidence has obvious correlations with Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) “flow” theory in that adolescents in this study recognized how an optimal musical experience

resulted when the challenge of the experience harmonized with their abilities and skills as performers. These young people's comments would also indicate that moments of "flow" are intensified when the material being learned is perceived as being relevant to their lives. This raises the question of how these young people perceived the familiarity and ease of school music instruction relative to these findings.

### *Theme Summary*

These adolescents' motivation to learn and develop skill in music was a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. When electing to engage in self-selected music learning experiences, they sought out music that was relevant in terms of its familiarity and accessibility. Learning guitar was perceived as particularly relevant because of its ubiquitous presence in the music these young people commonly experienced on a daily basis. Once engaged in the learning experience, these adolescents described the importance of striking the proper balance between ease and challenge in learning.

This evidence underscores the importance of what Lerner and Castellino (2002) call a "goodness-of-fit" between affinity for music and developmental needs as learners. That is, the young people in this study desired to learn music that "fit" with what was culturally relevant to their lives in ways that were developmentally appropriate given their music abilities and capacities. Building on Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) "flow" theory, it appears that learning music can have a potent impact on the lives of young people when their skills and abilities as musicians are properly matched with adequate challenge in learning *relevant material*. Considering this evidence, I am reminded of Green's (2002) assertion that a natural music learning process derives from how learners *learn* rather than what is *taught* by teachers.

*Finding a Voice: Striving Toward Musical Independence*

Musically advanced participants desired to express themselves as unique and musically independent individuals. In taking this step forward, participants had to carefully balance their reliance on music teachers and mentors to further their musical development while also recognizing when they needed independence from those teachers. These adolescents also engaged in creating original music as a way to communicate intimate and meaningful stories, emotions, and ways of knowing music.

*The role of the 'more knowledgeable other.'* Essential to the music learning process was the guidance of more experienced and skilled musicians, or what Vygotsky (1978) termed, the *more knowledgeable other* (MKO). These mentors provided music knowledge and skills to participants in ways that furthered their musical development through sharing, modeling, and apprenticeship. Moving beyond the obvious recognition of teachers as significant MKOs, participants in this study also learned about music from older family members, musicians in the community, and peers.

At a fundamental level, MKOs provided the essential knowledge and skills these youth required to solve musical puzzles and advance their capabilities as performers. Participants perceived this assistance as being most helpful when they were learning music through aural means. Although Mya had learned to play the drums by ear, she knew her limitations: "I mean I tried to do it by ear, but it's kind of hard. I usually can do it by ear, but uh, this [song is] really hard – so I had to ask for help." Mya eventually asked Mr. Owens for help and continued her development as a drummer. Eric noted that, "A lot of the time, the tabs won't cover exactly what is being played. So [my private guitar teacher's] really good with listening and being able to figure out what's being

played.” While these adolescents were capable of learning music on their own, their learning was greatly enhanced with the help of an MKO.

MKOs were most often older adults – performers and teachers alike – but these adolescents also learned from their peers. I observed participants consulting classmates in school or friends at garage band practices when they needed help with a particular piece of music or wanted to learn more about their instruments. This activity was particularly prominent during the independent study days in the orchestra (usually Thursdays) as many students helped each other explore and learn new instruments and music:

*Mr. Klippen encourages one of the bassoon players to pick up the viola music in order to cover the missing part in the ensemble. The French horn player moves to the double bass section, picks up a bass, and begins to play. The other bassoon player sneaks up behind her and peers over her shoulder, watches her play, and asks questions about how she knows where to place her fingers to play the right note. The timpanist moves to the front row and watches a cello player practice. He touches the strings while the other student moves the bow. They are amused by the sound that is produced. He soon leaves and comes over to hear the flute players practice their duet. The clarinet player gives her instrument to the flute player and laughs while the flutist tries to play a few notes.*

Peer teaching was also an essential component of the informal music making sessions I observed. For instance, William provided musical and technical support to the less experienced musicians in Eric’s band.

*William ensures that the bassist plugs into the proper amp, tunes his instrument, and helps him get the right settings. In the midst of fiddling with the bass, Eric calls out from across the room asking how to achieve a particular sound on his guitar. William answers that he will be over there shortly to help. Later he helps Eric set up his computer to record the band’s performance of their latest composition.*

These observations indicate that the adolescents in this study have a natural curiosity for music driven by experimentation and that that curiosity can be fostered and/or nurtured with assistance from their peers. This process of aided experimentation

was markedly different than the type of teacher-directed, formal music learning I observed during most school music ensemble rehearsals.

MKOs not only helped participants develop knowledge and skills, but also served as models or exemplars of the types of musicians these adolescents wanted to emulate. Tiffany recognized MKOs as those who could give her an ‘insider’ perspective of the various music careers in which she was interested (i.e., singing, teaching, or music production).

When I look at somebody who will teach me, I always look for somebody who is doing what I want to do.... I always love to be on the inside because you can always learn so much from people on the inside.

Albeit not explicitly, Tiffany suggests a distinction between the types of formal knowledge transmitted in school and the more authentic knowledge that is transmitted in an apprenticeship model. Marcus also saw the advantage of modeling the behaviors of more experienced musicians.

I look at other artists, I try to emulate some things they do. Um, and I also know a lot of musicians that are like older, so I can talk to them a lot about things.... So I think that the even older people that, ‘cause I’m sure they were into music throughout their lives, probably have the same aspirations that I have.

In both examples, participants’ desired to learn from MKOs who reflected their personal musical interests and affinity for music. Tiffany said she looked for “somebody who [was] doing what [she] want[ed] to do” and Marcus conjectured that older musicians have the “same aspirations that [he had].” Thus, they sought out musical mentors whose work was relevant to their lives – regardless of whether or not they were certified music teachers. Collectively, these data present an alternative perspective of learning music that

is based on these adolescents' affinity for music and their immediate needs as performers rather than the interests, values, and needs of teachers.

*Striving toward musical independence.* Along the continuum of musical development, the most advanced adolescent musicians in this study (Tiffany, William, and Marcus) articulated a need to eventually transition away from the guidance of their mentors in order to express their musical independence. William recounted a story I feel best elucidates this process:

My [private guitar] teacher, um, he was a lot of help to me. He's, he basically gave me the stuff and um, for example, one day he was playing something while I was, he told me to solo, and I was like, ... "How do you know which chords to pick?" and he was like, "Oh, music theory!" and I was like, "What's that?" And he was basically, he was like, "Ok, I don't think you'd be ready for this," but he basically laid out exactly what it was for me – and I didn't understand it. I didn't understand it for half a year after that, but then I sort of took it out half a year after, and I looked at it, and I was like, "Hmm! I get this now." ... He gave me the tools and I'm just, I'm using them - I'm very thankful for them.

What I find particularly illuminating about this quote is how it makes evident the function of the MKO in facilitating William's advancement toward musical independence. He stated in the most simplistic terms, "He gave me the tools, and I'm just, I'm using them." Tiffany also noted the importance using the "tools" she possessed to facilitate her independent music making: "So now I get to build on the tools that I already have and go ahead and build more in the way that I want to go." Even though she was only 15 at the time of the study, Tiffany felt compelled to break from the conventions of her music training in order to express herself as an independent musician.

Equipped with advanced music knowledge and skills, William, Tiffany, and Marcus asserted they knew enough about music to create their own original music. With

expected adolescent bravado, Marcus was confident he did not need the help of adults, teachers, or even notation to be successful in his musical endeavors.

I guess I can organize music in my head and um, play it so that I don't have to, I guess, I don't know, I don't have to have it written, or I don't have to uh, have someone else do it for me.

William's sense of musical independence was aided with technology: "I can sit at home and write songs on my own and record them and then, nowadays with software, I can even do drums and bass and strings and all these other things." Comments like these indicate that, much like the introduction of the iPod, these adolescents no longer need classrooms, ensembles, or teachers to engage in musical activity, and again, raise the question of how the school music program accommodates musically independent adolescents.

These participants' advanced levels of musical independence may have resulted from their self-reported 'gifts' for music. Tiffany commented that she was on "another level past people who can't read music. [She] can play, go and play with the orchestra at the same time [she] can also sit down and blow you away just by using [her] ears." In contrast, William attributed his advanced knowledge and skills to his dedication to the music learning process rather than innate talent: "I think a lot of it I figured out on my own just because I'm more introspective when it comes to music." Marcus recognized the integration of his varied musical experiences *and* innate musical gifts as the root of his advanced skills: "I guess I've experienced a lot of different music.... I understand about the nature of written music and also I understand about, 'cause I have a, I guess – I'm not being vain – but I have a good ear for music." Marcus and Tiffany both noted that they could read music *and* "use their ears." This distinction is important because it implies that



they perceived a dichotomous relationship between the ways in which different musical contexts require different musical skills. Regardless, their confidence to function successfully in any musical context speaks to their perceived level of musical independence.

*Finding a voice.* Through our discussions and my observations, it became apparent to me that these young people desperately wanted to find their unique musical voices in which to express themselves. Whether alone or in a group, creating original music afforded participants an opportunity to synthesize their advanced knowledge and skills in music with their deep personal affiliations with the art form.

Participants found their unique musical voices by building off the works and sounds of other artists or by blending various artists and styles together to create a new sound. Regardless, each participant stressed the importance of understanding the basic structure of the music before adding to it or departing from it. Mya appreciated the opportunity to do this in the jazz band as a trumpet soloist.

You get the basic thing and then once you get the basic thing down, you can put your own little thing in it. But that's kind of the same with trumpet too – if you think about jazz. If you get the basics down, then you can alter it and make it your own style.

The opportunity to “alter [music] and make it [her] own” was important to Mya as she searched for her individual musical style. I later questioned whether she wanted to sound like her jazz idols, and she said “yes,” but not without sacrificing her own voice. Tiffany also believed it was her duty as a performer to interpret a song and make it her own.

I always internalize the music so then I know where the artist was going with it. And then that also helps me find where I want to go with it – ‘cause I always believe artists want you to take their song to the next level. They start out with it, they give you basics of it, they share their heart

through it, and then you take it to your level – you can add some of yours to it.

What is compelling in this quote is how Tiffany conceptualizes the music making process. She talked about “internalizing” the music first in order to understand the original intent of the artist. As she said, this is when she feels the “heart” of the artist. Only once this is accomplished does she feel it appropriate to interpret the music for herself. In fact, she believes it is her duty to “take their song to the next level.” At first glance, this approach seems to contradict what many music teachers may try to accomplish; that is, getting students to replicate musical information as accurately as possible. In fact, many of the observations I conducted at CHHS would support this claim. However, careful consideration of Tiffany’s process reveals a more transcendent goal of music education; that is, enabling students to “go beyond the page” and communicate a unique interpretation of musical material.

William also felt it necessary to find a unique voice as a solo guitarist. This process began by copying his favorite artists, then gradually evolved into his own independent style.

Yeah, that’s kind of how I developed into my own sort of style of playing is that I, instead of trying to copy what everyone else is doing – when I’m playing, I used to try and do that. I see a lot of my friends doing that now, and I’m like, “What are you doing? You’re sounding like somebody else.” ... You don’t express your individuality when you’re doing that.

William vehemently believed it was important to “express your individuality” through music. This may have been because he valued originality and creativity in music or because expressing himself as an individual was so important. Regardless, William’s thoughts on the matter confirm that individual expression is a key component of these adolescents’ desire to create their own music.

Marcus's creative process began with trying to express a feeling. Then, he applied his knowledge of music to communicate that feeling through various compositional techniques.

I basically try to come up, try to um, portray a feeling I guess. So, I'll figure out a feeling I want to do and then I'll just come up with something that portrays that feeling – with like a melody... You can use different chords to make it sound like melancholy type of, or like also, I mean, I don't know, it's a, it can blend different, different, where different combinations of notes can bring out different emotions. So, I found that songs can bring out um, emotions that I've never experienced or ever seen anybody experience – I don't even know if it is an emotion, but it, songs with different feelings - and I think it's more diverse than actually, than we are as humans.

Marcus's insightful and profound conclusion of the potential of music to transcend the limits of human emotional capacity sends a clear message that he creates music to express himself in ways that nothing else can. Marcus did not speak about any other music activity or class as having as big of an impact on his personal life as creating original music did.

William was just as passionate about his creative process; yet more specific in terms of how he manipulated musical elements to achieve a heightened emotional impact. Notice how William integrates the inherent and delineated meanings of music to construct an expression of the highest quality:

I see how this scale fits and I see how the mode changes that - because then it adds this sort of mood to it. For example, um, you can take something major and then, which I did with one of my songs in Blue Sky Vendetta, which – a song called *Morning Rain* – where um, it's essentially starts out in this very C major type of thing where it's very sort of, linear and happy. Then it, at one point, it shifts into um, C mixolydian – by throwing in that flat 7th in there, certainly the entire songs shifts into this more, “Oh My God!” this is straight forward rock n' roll, there's a lot more sort of an outpouring of emotion in it. Um, not in a very bad way, but just in the like, it becomes a lot more powerful for that one instance where, and then, we – me and my band mates – we then made the music

sort of shift in, more into that gear. Um, because the basic melody of it, you know (he begins to sing sweetly), “I gaze up, into the morning rain.” But then it goes from that into (he switches to a forceful, painful voice), “Just a few drops become a flood!” Like that. So, it gets a lot more powerful.

Not only does William have an accurate and informed perspective of music knowledge and skills, he also perceived a need to constantly evaluate how the compositional techniques he employed served the expressive intent of the music. Thus, knowledge and technique are pointless if the music cannot elicit an emotional connection with the listener. This realization affirms that William’s affinity for music was cyclical and holistic in that he tried to create music that exhibited the same expressive attributes he is drawn to in the music he appreciates. No other participant, setting, or context in this study revealed this level of musical awareness and independence. William’s sense of musical independence brought to my attention that these adolescents have a wealth of music knowledge and skills that may or may not be recognized by adults – particularly within the school music-learning culture.

### *Theme Summary*

The data presented in this theme suggest that adolescents with advanced musical knowledge and skills found it necessary to express themselves as individuals through music. Along their paths toward musical independence, these young people struggled to find equilibrium between a reliance on and distancing from more knowledgeable others in music. In one respect, they recognized the vast amounts of information and skills they can glean from experienced musicians such as teachers, older adults, or peers. However, they were also confident they could be musically successful without anyone’s help. These young people were eager to create original music that established them as individuals

with unique musical voices of expression. It was through creative musical experiences that these adolescents realized and could communicate their most intimate and potent associations with music. Collectively, these findings reveal the informed and rich musical lives of these adolescents as independent musicians and calls into question how they navigate their musical independence in the school music-learning culture.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented findings that addressed two supporting research questions: (1) *How do adolescents describe their affinity for music?* and (2) *How do adolescents' personal relationships with music influence their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning?* Participants described their affinity for music across four dimensions of appeal: (1) *expression and feeling*, (2) *relevance*, (3) *quality in artistry and craftsmanship*, and (4) *diversity*. Participants' beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning were influenced by their need to (1) *nurture their musical roots*, (2) *engage in motivated learning* experiences, and (3) *express their musical independence*.

The four dimensions of genuine appeal provide valuable clues as to why these young people were so enamored with music. First, they enjoyed music that expressed the full gamut and magnitude of human emotion. Second, participants were drawn to music that in some way was relevant to their lives. This included the communicated message of the music as well as the inherent sonic properties of the music. Third, the young people in this study appreciated music that exhibited high levels of quality in terms of the artistry of the performer and the compositional craftsmanship of the music. Fourth, the diversity

of music available to these adolescents allowed them to find music amenable to their diverse personal interests and complex facets of their identities.

Collectively, the four dimensions of music's appeal "struck a chord" with participants that resonated beyond superficial measures of popularity. Rather, these young people valued music that connected with them across multiple emotional and intellectual strata. Identifying the various dimensions in which these adolescents made meaningful connections with music facilitates a richer understanding of how these young people thought about music and responded to musical material. With this knowledge, it is possible to look past labels of rock, hip-hop, jazz, and classical to a more informed perspective of how and why the elements, design, and cultural contexts of various music expressions may or may not captivate the minds and hearts of the youth in this study. Most importantly, these findings indicate that participants had a wealth of musical knowledge and made judgments of musical value based on explicit intellectual and emotional responses to music that adults may or may not always recognize or validate.

A richer perspective on how adolescents in this study described their affinity for music was helpful in gaining a better understanding of how and why they made decisions to include music in their lives. The four dimensions of appeal continually emerged throughout the three themes that describe how these adolescents' personal relationships with music influenced their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning. These themes are: (1) *musical roots: nurturing personal and social connections with music*, (2) *motivated learning: seeking relevance and challenge* and (3) *finding a voice: striving toward musical independence*.

Participants expressed a profound sense that music was essential to their lives. Like the roots of a tree, these participants' personal and social connections with music ran deep and wide, nourishing and enriching their personal and social lives. Family members, particularly parents, modeled appreciation, affiliation, and passion for music that subsequently influenced these adolescents' future musical endeavors. Most participants mentioned a need to constantly have music in their lives, which was usually achieved through multiple hours of music listening on personal music listening devices, such as iPods. These adolescents chose to participate in music activities because group music making afforded them multiple opportunities to develop strong and meaningful bonds with others. This evidence suggests that participants viewed music as much more than a recreational activity; rather, it was an essential component of their identities and a medium through which they could enrich their lives in meaningful and rewarding ways.

An interest in learning music was marked by the need to seek out relevant and challenging learning experiences. First and foremost, these adolescents chose to interact with music that was relevant, that is, familiar and accessible, to their lives. Nowhere was the issue of relevance more prominent than in these young people's desire to learn the guitar. The guitar was viewed as an instrument that was commonly found in the music these adolescents enjoyed and exuded extensive cultural capital. The learning process also involved identifying learning tasks that balanced ease and challenge in a way that fulfilled these adolescents' developmental needs and musical aspirations. Additionally, achieving a state of "flow" in music learning may be further enhanced by the relevance of the material being learned.

Implicit in this discussion was how these adolescents intuitively approached learning from *their* perspective, rather than from the perspective of teachers and schools. That is, learning was motivated by participants' genuine intrigue with music and their individual developmental learning needs, instead of what teachers thought participants should know and be able to do in music.

Musically advanced participants desired to express themselves as unique and musically independent individuals. These adolescents recognized the role of more knowledgeable others in providing them music knowledge, skills, and experiences they needed, valued, and respected. However, they also felt it necessary to apply their skills in a free and autonomous manner. This often involved finding their own, unique musical voices and/or creating original music. By creating original music, these young people were able to express themselves as individuals and communicate their intimate and meaningful connections with music to the world at large. In light of these findings, it is worth considering how musical independence and musical creativity are negotiated within the school music-learning culture.

These findings suggest that adolescent participants have their own informed and highly developed perspectives about music's place and function in their lives and intuitively seek out learning experiences and opportunities for musical expression that manifest these perspectives. Sometimes these musical ventures involve adults, mentors, or music teachers, but only when adolescents perceive it necessary to do so. Thus, it is important to examine the interactions between these adolescents' ways of knowing, learning, and creating music and the ways music instruction is delivered and experienced within the school music-learning culture.



## CHAPTER 7

### MUSICAL LIVES OF ADOLESCENTS AND THE EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL MUSIC-LEARNING CULTURE

I mean music is, after all, is always about being, expressing yourself and I think by limiting, by just having the traditional programs in schools, you're limiting the ability to express yourself. (William)

In previous chapters, I have examined school music-learning culture, how the attitudes and beliefs of music teachers influence that culture, how adolescents describe their affinity for music, and how personal relationships with music influence adolescents' beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning. In this chapter, I address my primary research question: *What interactions exist between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture?*

Findings of this study indicate that interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture were limited in scope and significance. Two themes emerged to support these findings. First, adolescents and music teachers alike portrayed and experienced musical life and school music-learning culture as largely non-intersecting; thus, they largely experienced a *dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school musical assumptions and practices*. Second, those limited interactions that did occur between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture resulted from a process of *sharing musical capital* that overcame segmentation among music-learning, out-of-school experience, and elective participation in secondary school music programs.

## Dichotomy Between In-School and Out-of-School

### Musical Assumptions and Practices

Throughout this study, when I explored questions and dimensions of ‘the musical lives of adolescents,’ participants primarily evidenced and invoked experiences and practices that occur *outside* the school setting. Such experiences theoretically could be formal (e.g., systematically delivered instruction, as found in youth ensembles or private guitar lessons) or informal (e.g., learning to play by ear through self-directed and imitative activities). However, participants in my study mostly referenced informal musical activities such as listening to and performing contemporary popular music, participating in culturally relevant music and learning, and creating original music within collaborative, interest-driven contexts. By contrast, participants’ descriptions of ‘school music-learning culture’ consisted largely of long-established traditions, assumptions, and practices of the music education profession that occur *inside* the school setting (e.g., studying Western symphonic music, emphasizing music literacy, and participating in teacher-directed activities).

Though adolescents did describe their musical lives as incorporating some elements of in-school music-learning culture, my inquiry revealed an evident and pervasive dichotomy between their musical lives inside and outside of school. Adolescents and teachers alike perceived and accepted an inherent distinction between these contexts of musical participation, with relatively few overlaps. Thus, the discrepancy between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture can be explained in terms of the assumptions and practices participants associated with

music *inside* and *outside* of school. This dichotomy persisted even when participants envisioned an ideal, comprehensive, integrated music program.

### *Dichotomous Musical Assumptions*

Part of the discrepancy participants portrayed and experienced between the musical lives of adolescent and school music-learning culture can be explained by the dichotomous assumptions they had about music inside and outside of school. Mya revealed this discrepancy when I asked her to describe the relationship between music studied in school and the music that permeates the “real world.”

I’m guessing the purpose for learning music here – in school – I guess is probably get an appreciation of the classic, or the like non-lyrical stuff, like the classical, like jazz and the symphonic and all that. And then, once you get out into the real world – I guess you could call it – um, you listen to just like stuff on the radio, um, *ugh!* That’s a good question.

Although Mya did not specify what she meant by “stuff on the radio,” she clearly articulated an assumption that music in school is distinct from the music outside of school. Data gathered from interviews, music mixes, and observations support that teachers and adolescents alike shared Mya’s assumption that music inside school had little to do with music outside of school. Mr. Owens commented, “I don’t see a connection with the way rap is today with what they are putting out with jazz. I could be missing something, but I don’t think I am.” Tiffany’s music mix did not include any music she performed in the school chorus and when I observed William’s and Eric’s garage bands, they exclusively worked within contemporary popular music styles and genres – primarily rock and blues. Even though Eric could play violin and guitar, he only played violin in school with the orchestra and only played guitar in his garage band. Eric

was able to maintain a bifurcated musical life because, as he told me in an interview, “It’s just a completely different, uh, set of skills. It’s completely different musical styles.”

This distinction between music inside school and outside of school may appear to be primarily contingent on choices of musical repertoire (i.e., “classical” music is performed in school whereas “popular” music is performed outside of school). However, observational data from both settings suggest that adolescents’ also experience this dichotomy in terms of their level of engagement with the music itself. In Tiffany’s church choir, I witnessed members almost completely immersed in the music, which resulted in high levels of engagement.

*The pastor asks them to “keep singing it until it’s tight” and then stops playing the keyboard so they can focus on their ensemble skills. At this point, many of them turn and look into their sections – apparently trying to focus on their pitch accuracy and phrasing. There is a lot of swaying and moving as they sing. He asks them to “sing it bright!” They all seem to really enjoy this experience – the music and each other. Many of them are closing their eyes or looking upward – apparently in total flow.*

I often witnessed Eric and his band mates in a similar state of flow during his garage band rehearsals. Tiffany and Eric were also involved in their school’s music ensembles, chorus and orchestra respectively. However, I did not observe this same level of engagement from the members of those school ensembles. Although Eric mentioned that he liked the music performed in orchestra, and often downloaded it, he was more often than not one of the many students in the class who appeared disengaged from rehearsal. Thus, he appreciates the music performed in both settings, elects to participate in both settings, yet perceives them as “completely different” and accordingly exhibits “completely different” levels of engagement. Thus, the dichotomy between the school

music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescent may be perceived in terms of musical content, yet manifests itself in dichotomous behaviors.

Returning to Mya's quandary about the purpose of learning music in school, an interview with James indicated that the disparity between school music and the musical lives of adolescents may also be related to the assumptions they make about the realistic and accessible musical careers available to practicing musicians.

They don't think that it's, you know, a popular thing to get into 'cause the [City] Symphony Orchestra is like, all you, you know, it's like all you can reach for and if, like other than that, they don't see anything, they don't see in-betweens... But *anybody* can break through in a band, 'cause you only need three, four guys.

James's assumption that "anybody can break through in a band" was validated by my conversations with William, Eric, and Marcus – all of whom were members of small, informal music groups outside of school. When I interviewed Marcus, he had just completed his first "project" (i.e., a recording of original music) with his group and I observed William and his friend Jimmy put the finishing touches on their demo CD recording. Eric's music mix included a song from a friend's band that had signed a contract with a local record label; thus deeming the band, "relatively successful."

By comparison, James assumed that the only type of career that can result from the training received in a school music program is a position with a professional orchestra. Further, James seems to suggest that many people his age do not "see in-betweens" or connections between the types of music experiences, and possibly careers, that would evolve from participation in school music classes versus those associated with the more informal music experiences that occur outside of school. James seems to be grappling, perhaps subconsciously, with the question of how relevant the conducted

large-ensemble experience, as it occurs at CCHS, may be to the wider world of the musical lives of adolescents.

Teachers similarly could not perceive a relationship between music studied in school and outside of school. For Mr. Klippen, this dichotomy manifested itself in the repertoire choices he made in the orchestra and the guitar class. In orchestra, he emphasized classical music (his priority value), while in guitar class he allowed students to study largely contemporary popular music (their priority values). These choices were based on the assumptions Mr. Klippen made about the type of student who enrolled for each class and when I questioned him about this apparent negotiation of musical preferences and values, he was quick to acknowledge the dichotomy it implied.

Yeah, that does seem a dichotomy. Um, the (he sighs, and there is a long pause). Part of the reason a kid takes guitar is because they like guitar, you know? I mean, they do that. Part of the reason a kid takes orchestra is because they like orchestra. I *assume* they like orchestra because they like the kinds of music that we are playing in there. If they don't, then they wind up dropping out, you know. And so, I'm thinking that it's kind of the same thing.... I love playing classical guitar and anybody who wants to learn to play classical guitar – I'll find music and give it to them. But, um, I can't make those kids that want to play electric guitar and rock and roll, I can't make them value classical guitar.

Mr. Klippen believes that the gap between his musical value system and the one his students currently espouse manifests itself in the choices they make either to assimilate into the orchestra program or to “drop out.” When confronted with my observation of an apparently opposing perspective in the guitar class, he seemed to suggest that students' choice to elect guitar class evolves from a desire to play “electric guitar or rock and roll.” Mr. Klippen assumes that students' make choices based on the available options, and that those choices reflect the music they “like” or value. In orchestra, his music values and their values, at least as far as he assumes, are the same. In

guitar class, he makes a different assumption. In both cases, however, it is his assumptions about student values and preferences in relation to his own that are driving his curricular decisions. Further, he assumes that his students consciously acknowledged this bifurcated system, and that their choices reflect an acceptance of the content of each class.

Mr. Klippen makes a valid argument that students enroll in orchestra because they “like the kinds of music” he selects; therefore, there are multiple types of students, like Eric, in his orchestra. However, Mr. Klippen’s perspective may be slightly skewed by his choice to invest in the small, select group of students who share his musical values (i.e., the ‘interested few’). The interested few are the ones who sit at the edge of their chairs during rehearsal, are always ready to play, practice their music during breaks and on independent study days. However, as previously discussed, a majority of the class often appeared disengaged from rehearsal. Thus, the experienced dichotomy between school music and the musical lives of adolescents has less to do with whether his students “like” orchestral repertoire and more to do with how they engage in the musical experience. Those few students who resonate with the school music-learning culture enjoy the music that is performed in school, while others, like Eric, participate in the school music program, but have two very different musical experiences inside and outside of school.

*Musical limitations.* Another indicator of the dichotomy between the music inside and outside of school was how participants perceived the limits or limitations of the music commonly found in each setting. As reported in chapter six, adolescents in this study perceived their musical lives as diverse, progressive, evolving, and oriented toward new artists and styles. In other words, their musical worlds were essentially *limitless*. In

contrast, they perceived the school music-learning culture as restricted, static, and oriented toward music of the past. Thus, they perceived the school music-learning culture as severely *limited*. Mya likened this perception to a box.

Like there's a certain box and like you're kind of limited to it in a way, by the music your director [chooses], like picks, and if he likes a certain type of music, he probably won't go outside that box.... So, it's like you have, it's like, in high school you have either a bigger box or you get no box at all.

Mya touched on an important opinion that although the repertoire in the high school music program is limited, it may be the only option for those students who want to be involved in music learning opportunities at school. Marcus also recognized the limitations of school music programs as a possible reason more students were not involved.

I think it is because of a lack of choice and I would say the, you're um, restricted either to the orchestra or the band at my school. And so, or music theory, I want to take that. And so, it's uh, I guess it kind of repels people some way. If you're in the band, I guess, you think that's associated with like marching band and so if you don't want to do that and you want to be in orchestra. And the orchestra, I guess it's more like theory based, I guess. And so, that kind of repels people I think.

By using words and phrases such as, “lack of choice... restricted... [and] repels people” to describe the school music program, Marcus sends a clear message that the perceived limited scope of the school music repertoire does not necessarily resonate with other people his age. Marcus’s assumption that students are repelled by the “theory-based” music performed in the orchestra stands in stark contrast to Mr. Klippen’s assumption that students enroll in orchestra because they value the music he selects.

Moving beyond his contemporaries’ superficial assessments of the limited scope of repertoire studied in school, William portrayed an assumption that the traditional



performing ensembles of school music programs are limited in terms of instrumentation, repertoire, and *function*.

They are still playing the same instruments they were playing 50 years ago. Classical snare drum and brass and violins and cellos – so it's all very much the same... I mean, classical music and brass, it doesn't, it never gets old, I mean it's good music, songs that have stood the test of time because people really love and appreciate, I mean I can appreciate it myself. But, um, at the same time I think that there needs to be open, more room to the new, what music has become. Uh, yeah. I mean music is, after all, is always about being, expressing yourself and I think by limiting, by just having the traditional programs in schools, you're limiting the ability to express yourself.

What is most striking about William's comments is that he implies "classical" music does not afford opportunities for expression. He is not averse to classical music. In fact, he notes that "classical" instruments and music have "stood the test of time," that people love classical music, and that he appreciates it as well. But, like Tiffany and Marcus, he yearns to have more options to express himself musically. Thus, as I observed in his garage bands and experienced first hand during our music elicitation interview, he uses guitar, singing, and technology to explore his emotional palette through music.

In comparison to adolescent participants' perceptions that school music was limited or limiting in some way, Mr. Owens portrayed an assumption that the music adolescents enjoy outside of school was limited in terms of musical quality. The following discussion about the hip-hop music he arranges for the marching band provides valuable insight into his judgments of musical quality and his assumptions about the limited musical perspectives of his students.

Mr. Owens: The songs that I have to – oh my goodness (he rolls his eyes and shakes his head) – they are elementary.

Todd: Do you think the kids see that – that it is elementary compared to the other stuff? Or do you think that they don't...

Mr. Owens: They don't, they are so into the hip-hop. They're so into it, there's no, it would take a brain surgeon to switch their thoughts around (I laugh) and put some jazz or classical music in there (he laughs). Oh, gosh!

Mr. Owens may be basing his assessment of the musical quality of hip-hop songs against his advanced and developed music knowledge and skills. However, evidence from the music mixes I collected suggests that while the musical elements used to construct hip-hop songs are “elementary,” adolescents’ perceived some hip-hop songs as meaningful and mature. One of the primary reasons Krista enjoyed the music of Kanye West (a popular hip-hop artist at the time) was because she felt he confronted important issues through his music.

People might just look at it as just entertainment, but it's actually, you know, saying something. And just a lot of social issues that a lot of people know about, but don't really talk about and he's not afraid to like, talk about issues that are serious and not, you know, he's not afraid to speak his mind.

These examples highlight the perceived dichotomy between the assumptions of Mr. Owens and the adolescents of this study in that he assumes his students have narrow musical interests just as they assume music teachers offer narrow musical choices in school. As he says, “it would take a brain surgeon to switch their thoughts” to get them to appreciate jazz and classical music whereas the young people in this study perceive these same music genres as unfamiliar and limited in comparison the music they commonly experience outside of school.

#### *Dichotomous Musical Practices*

Other indicators of the portrayed and experienced dichotomy between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents were the practices by which music was learned, shared, and created inside and outside of school. Hallmarks of the

school music-learning culture included an emphasis on reading music notation and teacher-centered instruction. The process of learning and making music outside of school involved an emphasis on aural transmission of musical ideas, a collaborative approach to music learning, and creating original music. The musical lives of adolescents outside of school were also infused with a sense of musical independence.

*Musical notation and aural transmission.* One of the most striking differences between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture was how music was learned. In school, music teachers and students relied almost exclusively on written notation when learning and sharing music. Outside of school, alone or in their small informal music groups, adolescents learned and shared music predominantly through aural transmission. Regardless of how music was learned or shared, Eric portrayed a common assumption that each approach was idiomatic to the genre being studied.

Sheet music, it's, I mean, it was originally written down to be played by a large group, whereas a lot of the [popular] music I'm learning on guitar, it was, I mean, it wasn't actually written down, they just played it. Uh, so then other people were trying to interpret how to play it rather than actual artists uh, writing down how to play it. So, the orchestra music, it's, I mean, they're playing what the original composer intended to be played.

Eric cogently observes that each context of music learning may warrant a different process in which music may be encountered, learned, and shared. Such a view would not be surprising given the emphasis on learning music notation as a central component of the school music program. In fact, Mr. Owens considers teaching notation to be one of his biggest priorities.

A lot of them come and they can't read simple quarter notes and eighth notes. So I spend a lot of time with that. But that's my biggest thing is trying to teach them how to read and appreciate music.

Like the words of a book, the notes and rhythms printed in the musical score provide the storyline for musicians to follow. In most of my observations of school music classes, teachers emphasized the importance of performing music accurately based on the printed score. These field notes from the concert band are typical of a notation-centric music class.

*Mr. Owens says, "Get out First Noel." He hands out music to students who need it as well as fingering charts for the few students who asked for one. When there is not enough music, the students crowd around the stand to read off one part – like the trombones are now. After all the music is passed out, he says, "From the top!," and they begin to play. Immediately after they play the first few notes, he says, "Shhh – piano!" They respond accordingly, apparently missing the dynamic marking in the music, and continue to play. Everyone in the band is staring into the music on their stands, occasionally looking up to make sure they are keeping with Mr. Owens's tempo. He is focused on his music as well – looking down at the score more than at his students.*

Outside of school, adolescents involved in informal music learning relied on communicating ideas aurally and orally rather than through notation. I did not investigate whether this use of aural transmission was necessary because members of the group were unable to read music or because, as Eric pointed out, it was authentic to the practice of learning and sharing popular music. I observed how aural transmission was utilized in learning a song in Eric's four-person garage band.

*Eric plays the opening lick of Song 2 by Blur, but William doesn't think it sounds right. The drummer gets frustrated and yells at William, "Just teach him how it goes!" William says he will, but wants to hear it on his iPod first to make sure he has it right. He begins to listen and play along and repeats it a few times. Eric asks him to play it again as he watches and listens. He eventually begins to play along and finally masters the lick. The band decides to start over, but now the drummer is listening – he wants to check his work as well.*

Instead of a printed score, these young musicians relied on listening to recordings to realize the music accurately. Communicating through sound, rather than notation, was particularly important when the band members were rehearsing original music they had created. On this same occasion, members of Eric's band intuitively used a mix of non-verbal, directly musical communication and brief verbal affirmations that allowed them to more keenly focus on the music they were attempting to recreate.

*William starts to vamp on his guitar and the drummer apparently instinctively knows when to enter. Eric is the last to join in the performance. I never heard them call out a tune, but the music itself seems to clue them in to what to do. Soon they begin to fall apart as everyone struggles to remember the work they did last week. They constantly communicate musical ideas via singing and playing and affirming each others' memory – "No, I think it was like this (and William plays a lick). Yeah, then we did this four times (the bass player plays the vamp). Hey, then can you play a little thing here like this (Eric adds his contribution on the guitar).*

Understanding key differences between school music-learning culture and the musical experiences of adolescents outside of school begins with an examination of how musical information is initially shared and processed. The music classes at CHHS relied heavily on written notation. Outside of school, informal music groups, such as William's and Eric's bands, relied almost exclusively on their ears to decipher musical information; thus, they consulted recordings and listened to each other, rather than adhering to printed scores, to assess the accuracy of their efforts. The fact that Eric (who plays guitar) could read music notation but chose not to use it in his garage band speaks to the dichotomous experiences and views embodied in the two music learning environments and the distinct practices and procedures adopted in each context.

*Who's the boss? Teacher-centered and collaborative music making.* Another clear distinction between the music cultures inside and outside of school was who determined

and controlled the musical experience. Music classes at CHHS functioned on a teacher-centered learning model. That is, the music teachers determined what music was performed, how it was practiced, and how the overall performance was to be shaped. When adolescents gathered to rehearse music outside of school, the process was marked by collaboration and shared ownership. Without the aid of an adult, they made group decisions about what to play and how to play it. Eric aptly described the differences in these two approaches.

With orchestra, everything is already presented to you and you just have to play it and you have to stick together, that's where Mr. Klippen comes in – just keeping everyone together. Whereas in a [garage] band, you don't really have that, you kind of, you have to be listening to each other.

The key difference between these contexts was not only the presence of a teacher, but also how the members of each ensemble functioned in relation to each other. Eric noted that Mr. Klippen “just [keeps] everyone together,” whereas in his band, they “have to be listening to each other.” Thus, the managerial function of the teacher seems to compromise the overall collaborative musical experience. The engaged experience Eric described, and that I witnessed in observations of his band, were drastically different from the disengaged behavior he exhibited in the orchestra when Mr. Klippen was leading rehearsal. Thus, the dichotomy that Eric experienced in school and out of school reaches beyond simple accounts of whether he was playing classical or rock music, violin or guitar, to a more pertinent discussion of whether he was, or was not, engaged in the musical experience.

In teacher-centered classrooms, such as the large performance ensembles at CHHS, students had little choice but to do what the teacher asked. Although this process

was never malicious, it did require a level of conformist behavior in order for rehearsals to run smoothly. This familiar scene in the concert band exemplifies the point:

*Mr. Owens raises his hands to begin and few students follow suit. He tells them, "Let's get in the habit of 'when I am ready, you're ready.' This means your eyes are forward, you are sitting up, and your horns are up." He practices the transition from resting to playing position a couple of times before allowing them to play.*

Mr. Owens personified the procedural expectations typified in the school band culture, where orderliness among large groups is a necessity. In music ensembles, this often manifests itself in various rituals to assure teamwork and management of behavior, classroom processes, and group performance of music. William clearly understood the conformist expectations required of the professional performance model on which the school music ensembles were based and was able to articulate his understanding during one of our discussions.

*'Cause I think when you go into [the orchestral world], you understand that you're not gonna be at the front row and you're not going to be leading everybody and uh, it's gonna be an entirety thing that I think that's something that's projected into your mind when you start doing orchestra stuff.*

Although William was never involved in a school orchestra program, he perceived that conformity was central to how music was produced in those ensembles. As he said, it is "something that is projected into your mind." A sociologist might suggest that it is an enculturated norm. More importantly, he implied that people who chose to associate themselves with performing in large ensembles willingly accepted these conditions as necessary for membership.

Within teacher-centered classrooms, I also observed that music teachers perceived a responsibility to keep students working toward similar musical goals. Like the foreman

at a construction site, Mr. Owens could become frustrated in having his students complete the musical “job” to his satisfaction.

*The developmental section of the music is ‘rough.’ Many students aren’t playing the correct notes or rhythms and the ensemble is having trouble staying together. Mr. Owens tells them, “This section is too sloppy folks – this part needs to be clean.” He seems somewhat frustrated. They continue to rehearse. He looks down at the score as he conducts. As they continue to rehearse, the tone of his voice suggests that his frustration is mounting. He yells out, “Come on low brass!” They apparently are not meeting his performance expectations during this particular section.*

When the teacher is at the center of the learning experience, there may be limited opportunity for individual student input. Marcus recognized this trait of school music classes during his time in the CHHS orchestra and commented, “you have to do what the conductor says.” Teachers and students in my study did not view the teacher-centered classroom in a negative way. Rather, they accepted it as the standard for LGPEs; maybe, as William noted, it was “something projected into [their] minds” when they first enrolled in the class.

As is the case with members of school performance ensembles, the members of small, informal music groups outside of school must conform to a single, unified interpretation of the music if they are to perform successfully as a group. However, in contrast to the teacher-centered music classrooms in schools, collaboration, peer teaching, and musical interaction were an integral part of these informal settings, compelling members of the group to rely on, and interact with, one another and their musical inclinations, rather than a single authority, to perfect their performance. When observing Eric’s band, I documented the importance of collaboration, and the power of ‘we’ versus ‘I.’



*Eric asks, "What are we going to do first?" Everyone in the band contributes to the discussion, but the drummer seems to lead the direction of the rehearsal. The drummer wants to talk about what they need to do and in what order, but William just wants to play. They eventually come to a consensus on the order of the first three songs and then collectively decide, "we will take it from there." After the three-song set, they begin a new song – maybe it is one of their originals – there are two guitar solos in it. They stop and discuss what needs to be practiced based on what each member can remember – this is particularly problematic for the bass player. Eric asks them what kind of effect to have on his guitar for the intro. They check one more time to make sure everyone knows what they are playing and what each of them need to do. They start over at the top of the song.*

Although the drummer initially determined the pace and direction of the rehearsal, no one leader made ultimate decisions for the group. Rather, all members expressed a voice in what should be performed, how, and when. This resulted in a sense of shared ownership over their work, as made evident by Eric, who said, "we usually all contribute to how we think the song should be."

For William, the creative process transcended mere collaboration to become a "powerful" experience.

We have this really, really sort of symbiotic relationship where he would maybe write something and I'll take it, go home with, and work with it and uh, maybe I'll write something and he will work with it and add parts to it, then we sort of mesh it all together and it becomes really, really powerful. I think it's the energy between these people that makes bands great.

William's account of this "symbiotic relationship" captures a mature collaboration that he believes elevates the quality of particular bands. Unwittingly, he also offers a rich metaphor for the impact of "energy between people." The result reaches beyond the music that is created to a deeply shared human experience that music both embodies and facilitates.

The process of learning and making music inside and outside of school was perceived as two distinct enterprises. In school, music was learned and performed with the aid of written notation; accordingly, teachers promoted the development of music notation reading skills and relied heavily on the printed score for music teaching. Outside of school, adolescents engaged with music through aural means, trusting their ears to guide the music learning and production process. Teacher-centered classrooms also typified school music. In these classrooms, teachers controlled the musical experience and fostered an atmosphere of conformity in an effort to ensure that all students might achieve the musical goals teachers established. Informal music rehearsals outside of school exhibited high levels of group collaboration and shared ownership of musical decisions and creations. Teachers and adolescents in this study did not perceive either system or process of music making as superior over the other; however, they did accept them as two completely dichotomous ways of learning and sharing music.

*Musical creativity.* An integral part of these adolescents' musical lives outside of school was creating original music. The reasons participants engaged in creative musical activities were addressed in chapter six. Now, I will explore the processes through which these young people created original music.

An essential step in the creative process was experimenting in and through various sounds and music styles. William noted the importance of experimentation in creating original music and believed it to be the fundamental process by which much of the music he listens to was created.

I think that's mostly how music is created nowadays, especially in the rock world. It's just, you know, the guys get together and then some guy starts playing an E chord and then maybe a D chord, then an A chord, then "Oh, this sounds good – I'm gonna add a bass line to that."

William epitomized the experimental spirit every time I observed him working in one of his garage bands. It was while he was experimenting that he appeared the most excited and engaged.

*William picks up his guitar and begins messing around with settings and knobs and then gets really excited about the sound he has produced. "Do you hear that Jimmy?!" Jimmy then adjusts the treble on the amp until he feels it achieves the desired effect. They continue to experiment with effects to get the sound they want. William goes off on a tangent and shows Jimmy what the extreme of each effect would sound like. After hearing a few, they decide it will be cool to write a song using those sounds later once they are done with the demo recording they are currently producing.*

As was the case with William and his friend Jimmy, experimentation often provided the spark that was needed to develop an entire song or composition. When I asked Tiffany about her process for writing original music, she mentioned the importance of "messing around."

I'm usually just sitting, messing around on my keyboard and I'll get a good sound or I'll just be messing around and then I'll hear a chord and it's like, "Hey, I can keep going with that!" And then I'll bring something in that I heard, and I'll be like, "Hmm, I could do this with it. And then I can do this." And then sometimes, if I play it long enough, then I actually come up with lyrics to it 'cause I'm sitting in there playing and then I think of something that I've been thinking about.

Both examples make evident the intrigue and excitement these adolescents felt when engaged in creating music. Further, the process consistently led toward a feeling of autonomy over the musical product.

Tiffany, Marcus, and William enjoyed capitalizing on the diversity of music available to them by blending, or mixing, various musical styles and elements together to create their own original music. When Tiffany was given the space and time to

experiment with musical ideas, it not only influenced her musical creativity, but also her broader perspective on music in general.

[The pastor would] give us like a jam session in the middle of service. And everybody, we'd just go at it and just start playing.... And that really opened me up to wanting to try new things with the classical and the jazz music and the kind of, giving the drummer the beat and saying, "Ok, this is what we're gonna do here. When I put my hand up like this, then you're gonna do *padapadapurdida*." And then, that would be from the jazz, but I mix the jazz and the classical together.

This process was also important to Marcus because it allowed him to create the type of music he appreciated most: "I'd say [my music] was, it is a blend between hip-hop and like rock elements. And basically I just make music that I would like to hear. So, it's a lot of blending." Like Tiffany, Marcus did not perceive an artificial barrier between distinct music styles and found it appropriate to blend them to achieve a sound he enjoyed. These experiences afforded participants the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships among various styles of music in ways that transcended the disparity between musical styles that is often imposed in school music when specific classes study specific genres of music.

I include this discussion on musical creativity because it was an important dimension of these adolescents' musical lives; however, it was largely absent from the school music-learning culture. Through the creative act, these young people engaged in invigorating, collaborative experiences that allowed them to connect with music and other people on a deep, meaningful, and enjoyable level. Further, creating original music provided an opportunity to expand their perceived boundaries between music styles and genres in ways not always promoted in school programs. Thus, participants' experiences

in the creative process serve as further indicators of the disparity between adolescents' musical lives and the school music-learning culture.

*Attempting to Reconcile the Dichotomy*

I asked all of my participants what an ideal high school music program would look like. Despite the perceived dichotomy between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents, all participants agreed that the current school music-learning culture should be enriched with the musical experiences found beyond school. Adolescents spoke of integrating musical content and practices they experienced outside of school into the school curriculum. However, when teachers spoke about integrating contemporary music practices that may resonate more closely with the musical lives of adolescents, they imposed school music-learning practices on those visions.

*Incorporating contemporary practices.* Beyond simply playing more contemporary popular music in class, adolescent participants desired to learn more about music in ways that would build on the familiar experiences they have outside of school. These ranged from small garage band ensembles to having a recording studio in CHHS. Eric envisioned a school music program that allowed him the time and space to make music with his friends the way he does in his garage band.

I've always thought of this, either a club or something. Just get people who wanted to, in a band, and just like group people into, with a drummer, guitars, any kind of instrument, keyboard whatever. Uh, group them up into bands, help coach them. I don't know, bring a class like that, where people, more individualized class too. Just, bring out the individual guitar, individual instrumentalist, uh, work on their skills and then help them as a band I guess.

Eric expressed a desire for someone to "coach" the group and individual players. This implies that he would appreciate the assistance of a more knowledgeable other, beyond

what his friends can provide, in developing his and his band mates' ensemble skills.

Although the informal small ensembles worked with contemporary popular music and practices, the goals Eric articulated would be very similar to those of a music teacher who supports the inclusion of solo and chamber music study in a school music program. Both approaches could be used to develop individual musicianship and teach students how to communicate and perform independently as a group.

Realizing that many people his age have stronger connections to popular music than to the music typically studied in school, Marcus felt it important to use that connection to broaden adolescents' understanding of how music could function in their lives.

I would probably bring in popular musicians if I could to, uh, have them talk about the importance of music in schools and the importance of music in people's lives. Like, even if you don't have aspirations to be a big star, you can still enjoy music, you can still also, it is also a career, so, you can show how, you can have like music business classes if you wanted to. Um, you could show how the business aspects of music I guess. It's a lot of different things that people don't associate with music, they don't see, that it's not just like, you don't have to just be in the band or you don't have to be in orchestra, there's a lot of different things you can do with music.

Here Marcus speaks to the implicit limited scope of school music programs that emerged from the data discussed earlier in this chapter. Diverse repertoire, diverse performing ensembles, music business, recording and engineering are but a few of the many components associated with the music profession at large and with adolescents' out-of-school experiences; yet, school music maintains a focus on performance within traditional large ensembles. Marcus felt that incorporating and integrating traditional and contemporary music cultures may help more people his age realize the importance of

music in their lives and potentially help them identify ways they may engage in music activities beyond what school music currently provides.

Although Tiffany did not mention making changes to course offerings at school, she intuitively bridged a classical/popular music divide in suggesting that adolescents might improvise on the music of Bach.

I truly believe if an artist or, you know, like Bach heard some of his songs today that – how people play it – and it's like, "Wow, you have 15-year-olds playing what I would play and I was 40! (she laughs) You can change that!" I don't think they would mind you changing the beat a little bit (she laughs) to make it a little bit more cool! (she laughs) But, you know, that's just my opinion. But, I always think, um, it's ok to change sheet music – I mean, after you learn it, learn it how it's written, um, so you can feel the heart of the artist, but um – after that, change it up!

Tiffany's proposal is at odds with the notation-based approach at CHHS, yet she, like her counterparts, is urging more flexibility, creativity, and freedom in music learning.

Intuitively, she seeks to bring together what she views as valued "classical" content with practices that are consistent with adolescents' contemporary music needs and preferences.

The music teachers at CHHS also advocated an integrated music program. However, practical and/or pedagogical constraints tended to limit their visions of how a comprehensive music program would operate. Mr. Owens got excited about the possibility of introducing the use of music notation software to his students, but quickly noted that his emphasis, as at present, would still be on reinforcing basic music knowledge rather than creative process.

I would set up a day for students or whatever to show them certain programs about arranging – *Finale* – that's what I'm pretty used to, show them how to get started with that. And then let them arrange some songs or compose songs and they have to learn about um, key signatures, time signatures, everything else, and they have to know how to count rhythmically. And then they want to hear what they put out – so that

would be a lot of fun for a lot of the kids. A lot of them have talents, hidden talents.

Arranging music for various ensembles was a large part of Mr. Owens's personal and professional life. He did most of the arrangements of the popular songs played by the marching band as well as an occasional gospel or jazz selection for his chorus, jazz band, or church choir. He seemed eager to share this talent and skill with his students and give them the opportunity to engage in these creative activities to discover their own talents. However, he was quick to frame those creative ventures within a formal knowledge of music notation (i.e., key signatures, time signatures, and proper reading of rhythms). Ultimately, his vision was limited less by the absence of funding for technology than by a perspective on teaching that emanated from his own knowledge and comfort than from a desire to understand his students.

Mr. Klippen was also excited about the potential to offer his students musical experiences beyond those that currently exist at CHHS. Thinking in more grandiose terms, he was excited by the idea of having a recording studio in the school. Yet again, he felt compelled to limit his vision when considering practical matters. He offered this response when I asked what he thought his students would do with a recording studio.

Produce their own CDs and sell them to the school, their friends, whatever! Um, now at the same time, when you have a recording technology class, or music technology, (he sighs) you have to have people who can play instruments in there as well. Um, you know, because you can't record nothing – So class size would be limited to say the least. I couldn't have, you know, 40 kids in the same class with that. Thirty maximum, and that leaves five kids running the boards and 25 out there to perform and that can't happen either if you're doing music 'nowadays' because of the guitars and keyboards and stuff. And so if I were given that, I would probably have to have auditions to get in because of the quality of the equipment and what I would want to accomplish with that. And that class would stay full all the time – every single semester.



Although Mr. Klippen acknowledged that a recording studio class might be popular among students, established assumptions of school music culture limited his vision for the program. In this case, he wished to hold auditions in order to restrict access to the recording studio and protect the equipment. He understood how adolescents perceive the musical world outside of school (e.g., “produce their own CDs”), yet he immediately placed this ‘outside’ perspective within the restrictive traditions of the school music-learning culture.

Regardless of the teachers’ considerations to expand practices in the school music curriculum, they continued to perceive learning and making music largely within the exclusive, performance-based ethos that tends to characterize the music-learning culture at CHHS. Their perspectives thus remained generally at odds with the kinds of inclusive, collaborative, relevant, and creative music participation and learning opportunities that resonated with the musical lives of adolescents.

*A comprehensive curriculum.* None of my participants advocated a complete restructuring of the current school music program. Rather, the ideal music program was thought to be comprehensive in scope, accommodating multiple levels of traditional ensembles *and* providing access to skills and knowledge consistent with the musical lives of adolescents outside of school. However, the dichotomy between the musical lives of adolescents inside and outside of school is evident in how adolescents and teachers articulate their visions of a comprehensive music program.

For example, William based his ideal music program on the experiences with which he was most familiar (i.e., contemporary rock music and technology), then made concessions for the current school music offerings.

I would make a uh, music technology class where you can learn about more electronic stuff that's coming out - how it's built and how to make it more a little bit more integrated.... Which would be amazing - where they build what modern-day music is made from – keyboards and guitar facts, whatnot. And then I'd of course do the classic three triad of choir, and band, and orchestra. And I would make certain levels of how advanced you would be within those.

William's enthusiasm for the trends in music production and the use of technology was clear. Although he did not participate in the CHHS music ensembles, he valued them. He advocated a more "integrated" approach to move the school music program toward the study of more "modern-day" music. Marcus's ideas accommodated traditional music classes, such as music theory, but he recommended that programs be designed with the learners' interests in mind.

I would have a lot of different uh, I would basically do the classes based on what the students want to learn. I would have music theory – like strict theory. I would have like people like me that play by ear and would, I would try to have a way to help just anybody be able to learn music. 'Cause it kind of seems like, I know if anybody would try to jump into the orchestra program at my school now, it'd probably be hard for them to just begin playing because everybody's advanced. So I would try to have different levels of uh, of difficulty to play. And also I would have, I would try to have different genres, but also I would um, probably blend most genres together in every class. But, I guess if people want to learn how to make, like rock music, I would have different classes for that. And so, I guess we would have a lot of teachers for that. But um, yeah, I just think it would be, it would just be, I would have more choices I guess.

Marcus's recommendation to begin designing curricula based on the needs and interests of learners seems almost contradictory to the current status of school music-learning culture at CHHS. Yet, he still saw some potential for existing ensembles and "strict theory" to further musical development and accommodate students' musical interests if these classes were "based on what the students want to learn." Beyond offering a variety of classes, Marcus imagined a music program that blends styles and genres in ways he

does with his own music group. William and Marcus also noted the importance of providing ensembles grouped by varying levels of ability so that students felt comfortable performing music that matched their current skill level.

Teachers also envisioned a more comprehensive school music program. As was the case with William and Marcus, their thinking evidenced the perceived dichotomy between ‘musical life’ and music learning in schools. Mr. Klippen started with the current structure of the school music program and added contemporary practices.

I do want an orchestra, separate room. I want three practice rooms for the orchestra and I want an office and a library. I want the same thing for the chorus, I want the same thing for the band and then I want a recording/technology, or music technology and keyboard – probably totally separate, and I want a guitar class. I want those five things I think for the future. If we don’t do that, then we are going to keep losing, we will keep losing. Now, I can see guitar and music recording technology taking over and having fewer kids in those other areas because they want to do these two, you know. So, we would have to be able to balance that.

Mr. Klippen recognized that guitar class and a recording studio would potentially attract more students than LGPEs, yet he felt it would be important to “balance that” phenomenon. Although he did not mention how this might be accomplished, his views about auditioning the recording studio class indicate that he might impose a musically selective mindset on the class. What is evident is that Mr. Klippen was willing to accommodate adolescent-centered music learning opportunities, but not at the expense of the traditional school music-learning model.

Mr. Owens’s vision for a comprehensive music program was somewhat more traditional. When I posed the question of what he would do with large enrollments, a flexible schedule, and abundant resources, Mr. Owens remarked he’d “have beginning, intermediate, advanced, jazz, and um. So many things come out of that - those numbers. I

could have a woodwind ensemble, a brass quintet and so many others. Um, flute trio. Um, it would be magnificent.” As was the case with Mr. Klippen, Mr. Owens’s vision of an ideal music program was limited by his narrow understanding of the multiple ways in which adolescents come to know, learn, and appreciate music.

When envisioning an ideal high school music program, the teachers and adolescents of this study concurred that many informal music practices found outside of school should be integrated into the current school music curriculum. Participants also agreed that a high school music program should offer a broader range of classes and topics that reflect the diverse music interest and capabilities of students. Although these teachers advocated a more comprehensive school music program, they were still limited by the established traditions and practices of the formal performance culture. Thus, the dichotomy between musical assumptions and practices inside and outside of school continued to prevail in teachers’ thinking. Regardless, these visions for a more integrated school music-learning culture speak to participants’ desires to increase the interplay and interaction among teachers, students, music genres, and ways of knowing and learning music that better align with the musical lives of adolescents.

### *Theme Summary*

The participants in this study portrayed and experienced relationships between musical life and school music-learning culture largely as a dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school assumptions and practices. This dichotomy manifested itself in participants’ assumptions about the function and relevance of the music studied in school versus the music outside of school as well as teachers’ and adolescents’ choices regarding curricular decisions and musical participation. This dichotomy also manifested itself in

distinct musical practices observed inside and outside of school. In school, music was learned and performed with the aid of written notation, and teachers largely controlled the learning environment. Learning music outside of school involved communicating musical ideas aurally, collaborating to make decisions and rehearse music, and creating original music by experimenting and blending musical elements, styles, and genres.

In an attempt to reconcile the perceived disparity between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents, participants agreed that the informal music experiences found outside of school should be integrated into the school music curriculum. Although these teachers advocated a more comprehensive school music program that would accommodate the needs and interests of their students, they would still impose the established traditions of school music-learning culture on such classes and activities.

Adolescent and teacher participants recognized the disparities between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents and accepted them as the given dichotomy between music inside and outside of school. That is, adolescents and teachers agreed that learning music in school involved accepting the prescribed norms and traditions of the school music-learning culture and rejecting the ways in which adolescents commonly experience music outside of school. Thus, the teachers in this study maintained these norms and traditions and assumed the adolescents in their classes were there because they appreciated the ways in which music was studied in school. Those adolescents who enrolled in music classes at school were willing to maintain bifurcated musical lives – one as students functioning within the school music-learning

culture and the other as musicians independently functioning in the music world outside of school.

### Sharing Musical Capital

Although participants perceived and experienced a dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school assumptions and practices, limited interactions were observed when *musical capital was shared* between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents. Within the school setting, musical capital was shared when teachers engaged students in musical experiences that resonated with adolescents' genuine affinity for music. Musical capital was also shared when these adolescents' lives were enriched by the knowledge and skills they acquired at school. Finally, the guitar class and marching band evidence how the musical lives of adolescents influenced the curricular choices teachers made in school.

### *Resonating with Adolescents*

High levels of student interest and engagement in music class appeared to coincide with musical experiences and activities in which teachers may have inadvertently tapped into adolescents' genuine affinity for music. I return to an observation described in chapter four where the students in the chorus became immediately engaged with Mr. Owens when he passionately played along with the gospel song they sang during warm ups.

*The next exercise (He is Him) sounds more like a gospel tune than a warm up and the southern harmonies light a spark in Mr. Owens. He leans forward over the keyboard, sinks his fingers into the keys, and sways with the feel of the music. The students stop fidgeting and focus their attention on his playing and their singing, which results in a fuller and richer sound. He improvises a brief gospel/blues tag at the end of the piece, and the students smile and applaud his performance. For the first time, a majority of the class is engaged in making music with Mr. Owens. The*

*moment is intimate and endearing, but quickly fades as he transitions from the warm up to rehearsal.*

I could conjecture that students were responding to the familiar sounds of gospel music, that the melody intrigued them, that the difficulty of the music matched their capabilities as singers, or that they were inspired by Mr. Owens's performance on the keyboard. However, it is difficult to identify exactly what attributes of this experience connected with the students' affinity for music. Regardless, the change in their behaviors and their appreciation of Mr. Owens's willingness to perform at the keyboard indicate that this experience resonated with them in ways other parts of the warm up and rehearsal did not.

Although the students in the concert band were generally more attentive in class than the chorus students, I still observed many occasions when they became disenchanted with the rehearsal process. However, as this excerpt makes evident, their enjoyment and engagement in rehearsal was piqued when they performed music that aroused their senses and captivated them in a visceral experience.

*Mr. Owens asks them to get out Celtic Carol. This is a fast and rhythmic piece based on the melody of Greensleeves and the clarinets and saxophones have a difficult part to play. A steady and driving rhythmic pulse underlines the piece. The low brass parts are short, punchy, and repetitive – much like their parts in the music the marching band plays. They seem to enjoy playing this piece – many of them dance in their seats as the percussion plays a soli section. Most of the low brass section has smiles on their faces. At the end of the song, some of the students chant, “And Down!,” just like they would in marching band.*

As with the example from the chorus, the higher level of student engagement appears to be related to potent connections students made with the music itself and the ways Mr. Owens facilitated rehearsal of that music. These students' reactions to the music were similar to William's and James's musical responses during their music elicitation interviews. Both young men felt compelled to move to the music or tap the drum parts on

their legs. In each of the above cases, I was reminded of the power of music to enthrall and captivate people in ways that cannot necessarily be described with words.

Higher levels of engagement were also observed when students were invited to contribute in the musical decision making process. Much like a garage band rehearsal, Mr. Klippen encouraged experimentation and collaboration in the intermediate orchestra in order to provide incidental music for a story they were scheduled to perform at a local elementary school. Again, I return to an excerpt of the intermediate orchestra described in chapter four.

*Mr. Klippen reads through the story again. Music from the Telemann Viola Concerto is used for the next section and features the only violist in the class. I later realize the viola represents the main character. Mr. Klippen stops rehearsal and says, "Now we have come to a point in the story that needs sound effects." Mr. Klippen dictates some of the effects, but also asks for input from the students. "What would a hole in the sky sound like? What could we do for falling water?" At one point, he demonstrates the sounds he wants on a student's bass. The class seems very focused and interested in putting this piece together. They sit at the edge of their chairs, look and listen intensely, and are smiling and contributing to the conversation about the music. He gets to a stopping point and asks the students how much longer they want to play, and they want to keep going. So, he continues with the story and asks them to find a sound to represent a crash of thunder.*

There are many reasons Mr. Klippen's efforts may have resonated with his students' genuine affinity for music. First, this class was much smaller than the advanced orchestra and each member of the ensemble may have felt their contributions mattered more in the overall performance. For instance, the violist represented the main character of the story; thus, her solo line was essential. Second, these students were encouraged to experiment and identify sounds and motifs that helped tell the story. Thus, they were not just recreating notes from a page, but engaging in problem-solving and critical thinking about how music could reference non-musical events and expressions. Finally, they were



working collaboratively with Mr. Klippen within a musical context instead of being lead by him through rehearsal. As was apparent by their unwillingness to stop rehearsing, these students enjoyed the musical experience they were sharing with Mr. Klippen.

What is unmistakable in these examples is that students responded positively and energetically to musical stimuli when it resonated with their genuine affinity for music – and not because it was necessarily the music they listen to outside of school. Instead, these positive responses to music resulted from students and teachers connecting to the inherent and delineated meanings of the music itself and teachers choosing to involve students in the decision-making process rather than lead them through rehearsal. Regardless, when these teachers shared musical capital that was valued and appreciated by their students, a meaningful interaction between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents was established.

#### *Influencing the Musical Lives of Adolescents*

An expected interaction between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents was how the school music program enriched these adolescents musical lives by further developing their music knowledge and skills. First, school music broadened students' appreciation for musical genres and styles. Second, school music aided in the development of knowledge and skills these adolescents valued and applied to their musical experiences outside of school.

*Broadening horizons.* I often heard participants say that the school music program increased their appreciation for music they might otherwise have never encountered outside of school. Krista experienced this in the guitar class, and noted that students in other classes may similarly be influenced: “Guitar class is broadening horizons for me

like band or orchestra can broaden horizons for somebody else and like introduce them to something that they never thought that they might like.”

Despite the limited range of music genres and styles these adolescents perceived as being studied in school, the repertoire of the school music program was different from the music they commonly encountered on a daily basis. Thus, exposure to this music in school provided opportunities to expand their musical interests. Eric mentioned that he often downloaded the music he played in orchestra and Mya was extremely excited to tell me about the “beautiful piece” she played in the concert band last year. In fact, Mya’s experiences in band influenced her listening preferences, as was evident by her inclusion of symphonic music on her music mix. During her music elicitation interview, she explained the connection:

This soundtrack is really, really good. I have that one and, on my iPod, I have this one called *Life’s Incredible Again* and it’s like this really cool jazzy ballad which is really nice.... I mean, it’s just *music* – that’s the thing. There’s no lyrics and I can, sometimes I can pick out like, what instrument’s playing what – which kind of makes you feel good. Be like, “Yea, I’m learning stuff!”

Tiffany described that school music served a vital function in broadening her musical horizons and making her a well-rounded musician.

The importance to me is um, [school music] widens your horizons. It helps you think out of your box, out of your shell. It makes you get out there and hear others people’s stuff, ‘cause it’s really easy to get stuck.... If I didn’t branch out and listen to other music, I probably would just be in gospel. But, because I felt there was more to life than just listening to gospel all the time or more than just listening to jazz or more than just listening to R&B – and you can listen to classical – you know? Um, it widens your horizons greatly.

This evidence confirms that adolescents appreciate diversity in music and discovering new music to add to their listening libraries. Although most participants

mentioned family and friends as primary influencers of their music tastes and preferences, involvement in the school music program can also affect music preferences. Thus, exposure to the music studied in school was seen as a beneficial interaction between these adolescents' musical lives and the school music-learning culture.

*Developing skills.* The school music-learning culture also influenced these adolescents' musical lives outside of school by contributing to their musical skill development. Providing music instruction for free, or at reduced prices, in school was seen as a tremendous advantage to those adolescents who wished to learn an instrument. Eric reminded me "most people get started on an instrument at school rather than private lessons." Although James was not enrolled in the guitar class, he recognized the benefits of offering the class at CHHS.

And schools provide education that you don't have to pay for. So if like they gave me that opportunity, you know, I mean, like still, I'd like to take the guitar class so I could learn how to play some guitar songs, you know, so I could be that guy who picks up a guitar and plays and people like, "Hey, it's a guitar!" you know, and just get that attention from people.

Because guitar was so prominent in James's view of contemporary adolescent culture, he saw the value of learning guitar at school. Even though William was already an accomplished guitar player, he enrolled in the guitar class at school to increase his knowledge and skills. One benefit of that decision was that Mr. Klippen encouraged William to learn to read music notation: "[Learning to read music] will give me the ability to really expand my musical um, learning range. It will make it a lot easier for me to learn classical stuff." Like a key that unlocks a door, William saw the potential of reading skills to broaden the range of the music he could learn and appreciate. Tiffany also recognized that being able to read music allowed her to function within multiple

musical contexts. Tiffany commented that she “can play, go and play with the orchestra at the same time [she] can also sit down and blow you away just by using [her] ears.”

The musical lives of adolescents are influenced by the school music culture when their appreciation for different music genres is expanded in school and when they recognize the usefulness of the music skills they learn in school. In both cases, adolescents acknowledge the benefits of participation in the school music program and value how their musical lives are enriched by the experience.

### *Influencing the School Music-Learning Culture*

While adolescent participants recognized the ways in which the school music-learning culture influenced their lives, the teachers also recognized the ways in which the musical lives of adolescents influenced the school music-learning culture. In this way, teachers placed value in the musical capital adolescents brought to school and found ways to incorporate that capital into the music curriculum. This transaction, or interaction, between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents was most prominent in the guitar class and the marching band.

Unlike the other music classes at CHHS, the guitar class accommodated a varying range of abilities and interests. It was the only music course at CHHS that was “self-directed,” and students were allowed to select the musical material they wished to learn. Although Mr. Klippen taught his students to read notation and tablature, I observed many students listening to their mp3 players repetitively as they attempted to master musical phrases of their favorite music. While the ‘laissez faire’ atmosphere of the class encouraged students to talk more than practice, students eventually returned to their instruments and the music. A rich description of the guitar class was previously presented

in chapter four; however, this observation excerpt captures the way in which the design of the class afforded students an opportunity to engage in a musical experience they valued.

*One of the more accomplished guitar players asks a friend, “How does this go?” He is looking at the book and trying to figure out how to play Arkansas Traveler from tablature. He states in frustration, “I can’t purposefully do stuff slow!” then laughs it off. He tries to play while looking at the tab for about a minute, then begins to play some other tune from memory. It is much more complex than Arkansas Traveler and requires more skill and technique. He bends a lot of pitches, picks quickly, and adds vibrato at the appropriate moments. He eventually stops and joins the conversation ensuing among the other members in his circle. I overhear students in the center group ask each other for help on how to read the music and follow the repeats. The more experienced players help the ones who ask.*

Although Mr. Klippen allowed students to practice self-selected music, he did not necessarily integrate the music fully into his teaching. Rather, students would consult him when they needed help. Thus, while the guitar class provided a space and time for students to incorporate outside music knowledge and skills, the class was limited in how that musical capital was used to develop meaningful and rich music learning experiences.

Making authentic connections to the musical lives of adolescents was also a central component of CHHS marching band. Mr. Owens admitted he did not know much about the contemporary R&B and rap music that was popular with his students; however, he did realize they enjoyed helping him select music that was relevant, entertaining, and appropriate for the marching band. Mya expressed a sense of ownership in this responsibility.

He doesn’t really know about the rap world, so it’s kind of, it’s kind of our duty or our job to like, make these tapes and be like, “This is a good song for the band to play – trust me, a lot of people know this so when you play, you’ll get a lot of reaction.”

Although Mr. Owens did not particularly enjoy the process, he arranged popular songs submitted by his students at the beginning of every season because he knew his students, and students at other schools in the county, valued them. Further, this opportunity allowed his students to contribute to the musical content of the marching band and affirmed their ways of knowing and experiencing music outside of school.

The evidence from the guitar class and the marching band highlights how the musical lives of adolescents influenced the school music-learning culture. By making connections with their students' musical lives outside of school, these teachers accepted the musical capital their students brought into the school music-learning culture. However, this musical capital was not necessarily used to develop meaningful and authentic educational experiences for students. While teachers were acknowledging their students' musical lives outside of school, they failed to capitalize on the connections they could make between the knowledge and skills they wanted their students to acquire and their students' genuine affinity for music.

### *Theme Summary*

Despite the perceived dichotomy between school music and the musical lives of adolescents, limited interactions did exist between the music inside and outside of school. I describe these interactions as a *sharing of musical capital* between teachers and students. At the most intimate level, students had positive, visceral reactions to musical experiences in school when those experiences resonated with their genuine affinity for music. This may be defined by the inherent and delineated meanings referenced by the music itself or by the ways in which these teachers invited students to collaborate in the music making process. Involvement in the school music program also broadened these

adolescents' appreciation for music they may not commonly experience outside of school and provided them advanced knowledge and skills they valued and could utilize as independent musicians. The musical lives of adolescents also influenced the school music-learning culture when these teachers accepted the musical capital their students brought to school as valued ways of knowing and experiencing music. This phenomenon was evident in students' choice to self-select musical material in the guitar class and the performance of contemporary popular music in the marching band.

When adolescents intuitively responded to the music being rehearsed in class, it was evident that potent connections were being made between students, teacher, and music. The result of these connections was an increased level of awareness, enjoyment, and ultimately engagement, as students and teacher shared the musical experience. This was an interaction of the strongest kind and arguably nourished these teachers' and students' motivations to continue their involvement with music. Unfortunately, when teachers invited adolescents to import the music they valued outside of school into the classroom, they did little to develop meaningful and authentic learning experiences that could capitalize on their students' genuine affinity for music. Rather, teachers dismissed these opportunities as dimensions of their jobs they did not necessarily value, but endured because they knew their students valued the experience.

### Chapter Summary

The findings of this study indicate that there were limited interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture because participants portrayed and experienced a dichotomy between the musical assumptions and practices inside and outside of school. Two themes describe this phenomenon. First, adolescents

and music teachers alike portrayed and experienced relationships between musical life and school music-learning culture largely as a *dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school musical assumptions and practices*. Second, the limited interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture resulted from a process of *sharing musical capital* that overcame segmentation among music-learning, out-of-school experience, and elective participation in secondary school music programs.

The adolescents and teachers of this study perceived the music learning experience in school as distinct from the informal musical experiences adolescents encounter outside of school. This dichotomy resulted, in part, from the assumptions adolescents and teachers had about the music inside and outside of school as being distinct in terms of style and function. However, evidence from observational data suggests that the dichotomy experienced between music in school and outside of school is more a result of differing levels of musical engagement rather than style. That is, even when adolescents' appreciate musical repertoire and experiences in both settings, their differing levels of musical engagement indicate they are responding to the musical experience in completely different ways. When adolescents engage in musical activities and/or behaviors inside or outside of school that resonate with their genuine affinities for music, they appear to be highly invested in the musical experience. This was observed both inside and outside of school and with classical and contemporary popular music. Thus, the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture have less to do with the label of the musical repertoire (e.g., classical, rock, rap, jazz) and more to do with the quality and appropriateness of the musical activity.



The dichotomy also manifested itself in the distinct musical practices found inside and outside of school. When adolescents chose to learn music outside of school, the experience was infused with aural transmission, collaboration, and the opportunity to create original music. These attributes were observed because they were indicative of adolescents' natural music-learning process. However, learning music in school evidenced a reliance on musical notation, teacher-centered instruction, and an apparent lack of creative music activities. Adolescents and teachers alike recognized these different approaches to learning music as dichotomous and thus did not identify any relationships between them.

In an attempt to reconcile the perceived disparity between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents, participants concurred that the informal music experiences found outside of school should be integrated into the school music curriculum. Although these teachers advocated a more comprehensive school music program that would accommodate adolescents' genuine affinity for music, they would still impose the established traditions and norms of the school music-learning culture on these classes and activities. Thus, teachers were unable to overcome the perceived dichotomy between music outside and inside of school and felt it best to assimilate outside music practices into those that dominate the school music-learning culture.

What can be gleaned from these findings is that the teachers and young people in this study agreed that learning music in school involved accepting the prescribed norms and traditions of the school music-learning culture exclusively. The teachers in this study maintained these norms and traditions and assumed the adolescents in their classes

elected to be there because they appreciated the ways in which music was studied in school. Thus, adolescents who enrolled in music classes at school were willing to maintain bifurcated musical lives – one as students functioning within the school music-learning culture and the other as musicians independently functioning in the music world outside of school.

Although not as strong as the perceived disparity between music inside and outside of school, there was evidence that suggested participants experienced meaningful interactions between school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents by *sharing musical capital*. Regardless of the setting, it was possible for teachers and adolescents to share visceral and captivating reactions to the inherent and delineated meanings within music. Although difficult to describe in words, these reactions were clear to me when I observed them happen and indicated a strong interaction between teacher, students, and the music itself. Music experiences in school also influenced these adolescents' lives outside of school by broadening their appreciation for unfamiliar musics and developing skills they could apply to independent music ventures. The musical lives of adolescents influenced the school music-learning culture by impacting the structure and content of the guitar class and marching band. While teachers were willing to invite music outside of school into the classroom, they did not capitalize on the opportunity to develop meaningful and authentic music learning experiences that might resonate with their students' genuine affinity for music. Collectively, these data speak to the limited, although important, interactions between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents.

The findings of this study suggest that the limited interactions between the school music-learning culture and the musical lives of adolescents are ultimately a result of how teachers design and deliver music instruction in school. As described in chapter six, adolescents make deep and meaningful associations with music and are intrigued by music learning experiences when they emerge organically from their interactions with music commonly experienced outside of school. Nothing seems to impede this phenomenon, yet it can be enriched by the knowledge, skills, and experiences adolescents acquire in school music classes. When teachers make pedagogical choices that resonate with adolescents' genuine affinity for music, students respond with higher levels of engagement and satisfaction, the breadth of their appreciation for music flourishes, and they advance toward musical independence.

However, teachers more readily choose to maintain the established norms, standards, and traditions of the school culture that adolescents perceive as largely unfamiliar, inaccessible, and dichotomous to their musical lives outside of school. The result is a perceived and experienced discrepancy between the programs teachers maintain and the genuine musical intrigue their students exhibit. Thus, adolescents who are willing to accept how music is learned in school benefit from the knowledge, skills, and experiences of the school music-learning culture and apply those sets of skills to their musical lives outside of school. However, the adolescents who cannot overcome this perceived disparity might never find their ways into music classrooms. These trends speak to the importance of how teachers design and deliver music instruction in school and the subsequent perceptions adolescents have about the relevance and place of school music-learning culture in their lives.

## CHAPTER 8

### CODA/“OUTRO”

#### Discussion

##### *Dichotomous Musical Worlds*

Adolescents and music teachers alike portrayed and experienced relationships between musical life and school music-learning culture largely as a *dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school musical assumptions and practices*. The findings of this study indicate that the perceived and experienced dichotomy that characterized the relationship between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture may be more complex than previously researched discrepancies in music preference (e.g., “classical” versus “rock” music) and performance contexts (e.g., large-group performance ensembles versus garage bands). Rather, the dichotomy represented sharp differences between the assumptions and practices of music inside and outside of school as well as a disparity between adolescents' in-school and out-of-school levels of music engagement.

At a superficial level, the distinction between the music adolescents experienced outside of school and the music that was studied in school was drawn along stylistic lines. However, adolescents' levels of musical engagement substantiated that their dichotomous assumptions were based more on how they reacted to and interacted with the music than stylistic labels or learning contexts. This assertion is made evident by

adolescents' intense critical-listening behaviors, their engrossing informal music rehearsals, and the ways in which they did, or did not, embrace the music performed in school.

Another facet of this dichotomy was the differing practices associated with making and learning music inside and outside of school. It was *how*, rather than *where*, music was learned, shared, and created that influenced the disparity. Music in school focused predominantly on written musical notation and responding to teacher-centered instruction, whereas out-of-school experiences featured aural transmission, collaborative problem solving and decision making, and opportunities to create original music. Observed and reported levels of engagement indicated that adolescents were more fully invested in informal musical experiences outside of school, where they relied on interdependence of each others' musical skills and feedback to navigate a musical performance rather than on teacher interpretations and directives.

Observational data from this study suggest the dearth of creative music activities in school was another aspect of the dichotomy between music practices inside and outside of school. The opportunity to create original music was especially important to the more musically advanced participants in this study because they perceived music as a fluid, dynamic, and expressive art form that both shaped and corresponded with their personal, social, and developmental needs. By creating original music outside of school, these young people were able to express themselves as individuals and communicate their intimate and meaningful connections with music to the world at large.

Consistent with Strand's (2006) research on Indiana music educators' use of composition in the classroom, teachers in my study rarely found time to include creative

activities such as arranging or composing in their classrooms. The only time I observed such activity was in the intermediate orchestra. Not surprisingly, students were completely engaged in this musical experience and eager to continue, even when Mr. Klippen was apparently ready to stop. These findings support the growth of the “do-it-yourself ethos” and indicate that incorporating creative music opportunities in the classroom may more fully accommodate adolescents’ broader affiliations with music as an expressive and captivating art form (Tepper & Gao, 2008, p. 41).

Despite the dichotomy between in-school and out-of-school assumptions and practices, some limited interactions did occur between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture. Adolescents’ musical horizons were broadened by exposure to music in school they might not otherwise have encountered, and they were able to apply the music knowledge and skills they learned in school to their musical pursuits beyond the school walls. Conversely, teachers made a few pedagogical choices in their classrooms that helped accommodate students’ expressed musical interests. For example, Mr. Owens arranged hip-hop music for the marching band to play and Mr. Klippen allowed students to select the music they wanted to study in guitar class.

In this study, adolescents’ comments and actions suggest that they accepted and appreciated the school music-learning culture for what it offered them and other students. However, they also portrayed a desire to engage in rich and expansive music experiences that connected with an organic process of learning and reflected the more authentic music practices they experienced outside of school.

Evidence from music mixes, interviews, and observations revealed that meaningful learning in music occurred in relation to the inherent and delineated meanings

adolescents associate with music, whether in or out of school. Findings indicated that the prevailing norms, traditions, and expectations of the school music-learning culture, based primarily on large-group performance ensembles, reinforced teachers' perspectives on music participation and learning that were at odds with the primary ways adolescents experienced genuine and meaningful connections with music and learning. When adolescents realize that these connections are not accommodated in school, they may turn away from the school music-learning culture to fulfill their music learning needs. These findings corroborate Davis's (2005) assertion that sometimes the rigid and limited structure of school music alienates adolescents, whereas informal, collaborative music making with friends outside of school is marked with a shared sense of relevance, passion, and ownership of the musical experience.

The relevant question for school music programs and educators that emerges from this study is how teachers within the school music-learning culture may overcome the kind of dichotomy I have documented and find a balance between rigorous standards of music learning and the broader musical lives of adolescents. My findings suggest that the conversation must move beyond superficial discussions about whether or not to include a pop song on the next concert, or whether there should be "garage band" classes. It must undertake more critical analysis of adolescents' fundamental affinity for music and consider how music educators' assumptions and practices may foster continuing intrigue and inquiry that nurture young people's deep and fulfilling passion for music participation and learning.

Findings reported by Finney (2003) suggest that a perceived and experienced dichotomy may be alleviated when teachers "make a classroom musical culture that can

be adapted and harmonise with [students'] musical learning beyond the school gates" (p. 16). The music teacher Finney portrayed was able to re-conceptualize the assumptions and practices of learning music in school in ways that validated the musical knowledge, skills, and interests his students brought with them to the classroom. My study confirms Finney's finding that music in school may become more relevant, meaningful, and valuable among adolescents if teachers re-think both *what* music is taught in school and *how* it is taught.

Returning to Green (2008), I am not implying that music educators should abandon their efforts to provide rigorous music education that enlightens students beyond their existing levels of knowledge and experience, or that LGPEs should be excised from the school music-learning culture. Rather, I propose that music educators thoughtfully consider how incorporating adolescents' musical values and their natural music learning practices might enrich and expand the current assumptions and practices of school music.

#### *Resonating with the Musical Lives of Adolescents*

The musical lives of young people are at the heart of this investigation. The adolescents in this study possess an understanding of music, close personal relationships with music, and affinities for music that are richer and more informed than measures of preference or popularity tend to suggest. Concurrent with research conducted by Larson (1995), my findings indicate that young people value music and music experiences that connect with them across multiple emotional and intellectual strata and 'speak to them' in relevant, meaningful ways that adults, including music teachers, may not completely recognize, understand, or validate. With this knowledge, it is possible to look beyond labels of rock, hip-hop, jazz, and classical music that have limited previous research



(Hakanen & Wells, 1993) toward a more informed perspective of how and why *music* – its elements, design, cultural contexts, and diverse expressions – may or may not captivate the minds and hearts of adolescents both inside and outside of school.

More importantly, these findings affirm earlier research showing that adolescents develop intimate relationships with music *regardless* of whether they learn music in school (North, Hargreaves, & O'Neill, 2000). That is to say, young people form close relationships with music and satisfy musical curiosities when they want, in ways they feel are most appropriate for their levels of interest, and through means they find familiar and accessible. When adolescents' relationships with music induce music learning, the process develops organically out of their genuine affinity for music and their individual developmental learning needs. Professional music educators advance the belief that the path to musical development is aided by formal instruction, such as that typically found in schools or in private music lessons. However, evoking Green (2008), viewing music learning from the perspective of the *learner* and how he or she wishes to *learn* music may be quite different from how *teachers* wish to *teach* music.

### *Negotiating Musical Values*

In designing and delivering instruction, teachers inevitably experience a dynamic tension between established programmatic assumptions and the developmental learning needs of students. In the case of music, resolving this tension might logically involve teachers' efforts to understand and incorporate the self-expressed musical needs and interests of students into the curriculum. However, findings of this study suggest that teachers may choose, or feel obligated, to maintain norms, practices, and traditions of the

formal performance culture without fully understanding how this culture could more adequately relate to students' autonomous interests and needs.

Consistent with Bouij's (1998) research on Swedish music educators, teachers in my study were largely content-centered and became frustrated when students' capacities could not fulfill the teachers' performance aspirations for their ensembles or when students did not exhibit the dedication and passion for music (as experienced in school) that teachers were hoping to instill. As a result, they invested heavily in those few students who shared or accepted their values and approaches and lived up to their performance expectations. Assimilating the remaining students into the prevailing culture became a continuously frustrating experience, both for teachers and students. By contrast, when teachers connected with their students' genuine affinity for music, as was evident during the *He is Him* warm-up in chorus, teacher and student engagement and enjoyment of the musical experience was elevated, and the potential for learning was enhanced.

Teachers never mentioned these shared musical experiences as highlights of their jobs or recognized them as heightened states of student engagement. Rather, on a somewhat superficial level, they attempted to validate students' musical lives and values by allowing students to select musical content they wanted to perform. However, the richest and most meaningful connections I observed between musical life and the school music culture occurred in the kinds of musically engaging experiences referenced above.

When teachers choose to persist with a programmatic model of in-school music learning that, intentionally or unintentionally, disregards students' musical lives and interests, students are less apt to engage and therefore less apt to learn. The consequences of such choices on the part of music teachers are that students may feel disenfranchised

or become disenchanted with the school music experience, or that they may disassociate themselves from the school music-learning culture completely.

## Implications

### *Implications for Further Research*

This study was designed to examine the interactions between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture. Findings are limited to themes that emerged relative to data regarding the two teachers and seven adolescent participants of the study; thus, findings may not be representative of other music teachers and adolescents in other communities and schools.

Further research should be conducted in high school music programs that offer different music learning opportunities from those found at CHHS. Similar to the findings reported by Finney (2003), researchers may learn a great deal from investigating the ‘best practices’ of teachers who have identified ways to connect music learning in school with the musical lives of adolescents outside of school. In addition, research should be conducted with more adolescents like James, who chose not to participate in the school music program. Such young people’s perspectives on music and the relevance of school music programs may illuminate more facets of the perceived and experienced dichotomy between adolescents’ musical lives and school music-learning culture. Findings from this, and similar studies, could also be used to develop quantitative research instruments that sample a broader population of students and teachers from diverse settings such as urban, rural, and larger suburban schools.

Although not the primary aim of my study, the findings suggest there is a wealth of information to be gleaned from researching how adolescents learn music and develop

musical understanding and skill both inside and outside of school. Research on music learning and development is largely reserved for young children and assumes that the process of musical development ends around the age of 15 (Hargreaves, 1996). However, adolescents continue to explore and learn music well beyond this age. This tendency toward a focus on the childhood years does not accommodate individuals like Krista, who decide to pursue music learning after the age of 15. Understanding how older beginners develop music knowledge and skills could dramatically influence how music is taught at the secondary level.

Researchers should also consider using music mixes and music elicitation interviews in subsequent research studies. I found this strategy particularly helpful in gaining a deeper understanding of my participants' intimate connections with music. As William noted, sometimes words are not enough to capture human emotion or to describe the ways in which music affects us. This strategy enabled participants and me to move beyond these limitations and elicit rich and meaningful understandings of music's importance in their lives.

I recommend that future researchers continue to give voice to adolescents' perspectives. Much of the research in the field of music teaching and learning is focused on the practices and procedures of music teachers and on how those practices may influence student performance and achievement. Rarely do researchers consider the adolescent perspective on music participation and learning, and rarely do researchers consider how music teaching and learning are perceived and experienced outside the classroom. Findings of this study indicate that adolescents have rich and informed, even sophisticated, understandings of music and the ways they experience it inside and outside

of school. The field of music education would benefit from research that provides a glimpse into students' experiences in the music classroom and beyond as an avenue to address the disparity between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture.

### *Implications for Music Learning Facilitators*

This study speaks to the importance of listening to adolescents and validating their perspectives on music participation and learning. Mr. Klippen assumed that students enroll in music class because they are interested in the types of music studied in school and the processes by which music is learned. This mentality may result in teachers' approaching students as though they are devoid of any previous or external music knowledge beyond what may have learned in other formal music settings. However, findings of this study indicate that adolescents have a wealth of musical knowledge and strong personal feelings and views about music regardless of their musical experiences in school. Thus, one of the most important steps teachers can take in reconciling the dichotomy between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture is accounting for learners' current knowledge and perspectives on music and how music functions in their lives.

*Music mixes.* One useful way of gaining a better understanding of students' musical lives outside of school may be to employ the strategy I used in this study: encouraging students to share their favorite music selections with teachers through music mixes, music mix descriptions, and dialogue. At a fundamental level, this activity sends a message to students that teachers (1) acknowledge their musical lives outside of the music classroom, and (2) are *interested* to know how music functions in their lives.

Through this process, teachers may get to know more about their students' personal and social connections with music and also discover trends in how their students perceive music, understand music terminology, assess musical skill, or think about the compositional process. From these insights, teachers may be able to develop learning experiences that derive from their students' genuine affinities for music and integrate them with the types of formal knowledge and skills consistent with sequential school music programs.

For example, teachers may extract melodic, rhythmic, or harmonic structures found in their students' favorite music to develop their aural skills or to illuminate similar structures found in the music they are studying in school. Students could be encouraged to analyze their favorite songs through critical listening skills then recreate them on their instruments in small groups while teachers provide help and guidance with formal music knowledge when students require assistance. Musical material extracted from music mixes could also serve as content and parameters for improvisation or be used to develop original student compositions. Findings from descriptions of music mixes could also be used to engage students in meaningful dialogue about historical, cultural, or social issues addressed through music or to encourage discussions about how artists use music to provide commentary on these issues.

*Informal music making and learning.* A major finding of this study was that adolescents' active musical experiences outside of school, such as playing in a garage band, were markedly different from those inside of school. Another way in which teachers might reconcile this dichotomy is to immerse *themselves* in informal learning experiences, such as learning an instrument by ear or playing in a garage band. These

experiences may reconnect teachers with what it means to be a “beginner” again, and also inform them of the musical challenges and solutions shared between informal music-learning environments and school music ensemble rehearsals. Experiences in these largely aural-based, collaborative, and experimentally-driven informal music settings may also provide teachers with ideas and activities that could be used to balance the largely notation-based, teacher-centered, replication-driven model of school music. Through these experiences, teachers may observe and recognize possible connections between the music knowledge and skills they wish to emphasize in the classroom and those utilized in informal settings. Likewise, they may identify ways to validate informal music-learning practices as part of a more comprehensive music-learning program.

*Third space music-learning environments.* Possibilities for bridging the gap between adolescents’ musical lives outside of school and the musical opportunities available to them in school may be realized in the development of *third space* music-learning environments (Hargreaves, Marshall, and North, 2003). Researchers in language literacy education define third space curricula as those that incorporate students’ personal experiences outside of school into formal classroom activities (Cook, 2005; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Turner, 1997). Though students’ interests and experiences form the core of third space curricula and activities, it is the relevance of this material to young people’s personal lives that impacts learning. Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejada (1999) note that third space learning environments allow students to “share [their] text and to move from the periphery to the center by making [their] private ruminations available to the larger community” (p. 299). Given the parallels between language and music (e.g., the use of symbols to represent sound, the structure and rules of composition,

and the communicative function of both mediums), adapting third space language literacy curricula for the music classroom may also afford students the opportunity to move their musical lives from the “periphery” to the center of the music learning experience in school.

Third space literacy curricula involve taking students through a three-stage process (Cook, 2005). First, students bring real-life experiences into the classroom and share them with the other students and the teacher. Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992) describe these experiences and knowledge as cultural *funds of knowledge* that are “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning” (p. 133). Second, all classroom participants engage in the re-creation of the real-life experience through role-playing sessions. During these sessions, the teacher is encouraged to assume equal or inferior roles to those of the students. This allows students control over many of the interchanges and exchanges of information in the re-creation. Finally, the teacher introduces a challenge or relevant problem that can be solved through some form of text generation (e.g., writing letters to parents urging them to immunize their children). The experience results in students incorporating their cultural funds of knowledge acquired outside of school with the formal knowledge and structures teachers can provide in school.

Taking direction from Cook’s (2005) literacy model, third space music learning environments could utilize adolescents’ musical funds of knowledge to create original musical works in the classroom. Student and adult musicians could bring their various music knowledge and experiences into one space and share them with the rest of the members of an ensemble. During this process, members would negotiate musical roles



and experiment with musical material, styles, forms, and creative ideas. Once all the participants are comfortable with their roles and responsibilities, an experienced music learning facilitator (i.e., a *music teacher*) would introduce a challenge or problem for the participants to resolve collectively. This problem could involve questions of musical form, composition, accommodating for various musical abilities, or ensemble leadership. Further discussions or sessions could address the challenges of recording, improvising, developing or incorporating a notation system, and eventually presenting the piece to the public.

Third space music learning environments would be distinct from informal music settings, such as garage bands, because they would involve a more knowledgeable other and the planned, structured introduction of a musical challenge or problem that elicits musical growth and development. Another distinction is that the more knowledgeable other would be cognizant of sequential instruction in music and would utilize repeated experiences over a given time frame to continually develop students' music knowledge and skills. In addition to validating students' musical lives inside the school setting and engaging students and teachers in a collaborative musical experience, third space curricula would also provide an opportunity for students to express themselves through creating original music.

*Innovative practice.* Developing effective, relevant, and meaningful music-learning environments in schools will be challenging and will call for a re-conceptualization of how musicians and music teachers are trained. However, music educators in the United States may look toward the work of *Musical Futures* (Green,

2008) and the Guildhall School of Music and Drama's *CONNECT* program in the United Kingdom as exemplars of third space adaptations for music.

The fundamental premise of the *Musical Futures* program is to dialogue with students about what they want to know and be able to do with music. Thus, each program is 'site specific' and tailored to the musical interests of each school's student population. From this initial dialogue, teachers formulate learning opportunities and sequences of instruction that accommodate students' musical interests and the knowledge and skills teachers believe their students need to be successful musicians. This process usually manifests itself in students learning largely contemporary popular music in garage band-like ensembles in school. The innovation of this program is that teachers and students work together to develop music curricula instead of teachers delivering music instruction they assume their students' value. The program has been successful in positively changing students' and teachers' attitudes toward music instruction in school and demonstrates that the disparity between the musical lives of adolescents and school music-learning culture can be overcome when teachers validate their students' musical knowledge and experiences (Green, 2008).

Changing music teachers' mindsets regarding how music should be learned and experienced in school must begin with how they are trained in colleges and universities. Again, I return to the United Kingdom for an example of an innovative way to train musicians to function in the twenty-first century. According to the Guildhall School's website (2005), *CONNECT* "aims to break down the boundaries between musical genres, arts disciplines, 'specialists' and 'non-specialists', and open up an exploration of new musical languages and alternative mechanisms for instrumental teaching and learning"

(¶ 3). Students from diverse musical backgrounds are encouraged to work collaboratively in informal settings to arrange familiar songs, experiment and improvise, and create original music that moves beyond the stylistic limits of their specializations. They are also trained to share their musical expertise with elementary and secondary school students as they work collaboratively to create original music. The *CONNECT* program provides an alternative perspective on how musicians are trained and function in the twenty-first century and evokes the diverse, fluid, and evolutionary spirit of music the young people in this study portrayed.

### Conclusions

The contexts of music-making are critical in determining its authenticity for learners; we need to go beyond the idea that ‘music in schools’ involves learning, the teachers’ agenda, and ‘serious’ genres, whereas ‘music out of school’ involves enjoyment, setting one’s own agenda, and more popular genres. (Hargreaves, 2005, p. 7)

The findings of this study confirm Hargreaves’s assertion that the perceived dichotomy between music inside school and music outside of school limits the vision of a more comprehensive system for music participation and learning that is resonant, or even synonymous, with adolescents’ musical lives. Adolescents are naturally drawn to and intrigued by music and respond to music learning experiences that reflect their genuine affinity for music – regardless of the context. As music education became increasingly specialized and professionalized during the twentieth century, music educators seemingly divorced themselves from the ways music is commonly experienced and expressed in the lives of students and increasingly focused on a limited scope of repertoire, music literacy, and technical performance proficiency. Even as more diverse, multi-cultural repertoire entered the curriculum in the latter half of the century, the basic thrust of music in

secondary schools continued to revolve around literacy through hierarchical, conducted performance ensembles. The irony is that evidence suggests there is insufficient literacy development and motivation within this traditional model for high school graduates to continue independent music making and learning as adults (Arasi, 2007).

For select individuals who conform to the prevailing literacy and large-ensemble assumptions and practices maintained by teachers within the secondary school music-learning culture, benefits and rewards may abound. However, the repertoire and established pedagogical practices of secondary school music instruction may not always embrace adolescents' musical lives outside of school, as suggested by the fact that fewer than 22% of high school students choose to participate in school music programs (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008). The findings of my study suggest that the perceived and experienced dichotomy between the musical lives of adolescents and the school music-learning culture may possibly explain this low-participation phenomenon. Moreover, the data on limited participation indicate that this dichotomy may affect large numbers of adolescents.

Although music is an integral part of Western society and a valued dimension of Western culture, music educators often struggle to justify the relevance and value of their programs to students, parents, administrators, and governing bodies. If there are disagreements among these various stakeholders regarding the role of music and music learning in school, this struggle will continue to be a perennial concern. Therefore, it is imperative to better comprehend adolescents' and teachers' perspectives on the place of music in students' lives and their beliefs and choices regarding music participation and learning.

My study suggests that music educators and students alike may profit from dialogue concerning these issues, as well as critical examination of why certain musical assumptions and practices are upheld in preference to a wide array of more student-centered alternatives. Such critical analysis may assist the music education profession at-large in adopting a more comprehensive, learner-centered, and learner-valued vision of music teaching and learning. I hope that my study may help music educators become more attuned to the musical lives of their students and to develop curricula and approaches that better align with the diverse and rich knowledge and experience adolescents bring to their music studies in school settings. As a result, I would hope for school music programs that vividly demonstrate the relevance and value of music participation and learning in school and, potentially, in society.

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## APPENDIXES

### APPENDIX A

#### Participation Recruitment Letter to Music Teachers

Hello,

My name is Todd Snead and I am a Ph.D. student in music education at Georgia State University. I am conducting research on the interactions between the musical lives of teenagers and high school music programs. I believe your school would be an excellent site for my research because of its location, demographic diversity, and music programs. The county music supervisor suggested I contact you to see whether you would be willing to cooperate with my study during the 2008-2009 school year.

My research will include:

- Multiple observations of music classes and rehearsals
- Two-three conversational interviews with approximately 6-10 students
- One-two conversational interviews with each music teacher
- Review of district and school music program documents (e.g. curricula, handbooks, class syllabi, etc.)

All interviews (with students and teachers) would be arranged for times and places that are most convenient for participants and would not interfere with students' class time or teachers' responsibilities. Likewise, my observations of music classes will be "minimally invasive" as I do not wish to disturb the classroom environment. Most of the data collection for this study would take place between August 2008 and January 2009.

I am in the process of seeking approval for this research through the proper channels at the district office and Georgia State University and would not begin my study until I have received that approval. Further information and details about the study will follow if you are willing to participate in this study. Please reply if you are interested in participating in this study.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and for considering this research opportunity. Please feel free to call or write me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Todd Snead

Doctoral Candidate, Ph.D. in Teaching and Learning in Music Education  
Georgia State University

APPENDIX B

Adolescent Participant Information Sheet

**PLEASE PRINT**

**name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Grade level:** 9      10      11      12

**Instrument(s)/voice:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What music class(es) are you in? Will you be in a music class next semester?**

**Please list any musical activities you do outside of school (e.g., garage band, church choir, etc.).**

**What kind(s) of music do you most like to listen to and/or perform?**

**What do you want to do with music, if anything, after high school?**

Participating in this study would involve 2 or 3 interviews about your musical interests and views on music classes at school. The interviews will be audio recorded, but your name will never appear in print. You would also receive a \$15 gift card to a national music store upon completion of the study.

**Would you be interested in participating in this study? YES NO**

If you are interested in this study, I will contact you to get your and your parents' official permission to participate **BEFORE** any interviews.

## APPENDIX C

### Adolescent Interview Questions

#### *Context/Tour:*

- Tell me a little bit about yourself, the kinds of music you like, and your music activities.
- How you were first introduced to or how did you first get involved with music?
- What kinds of music do you like currently?
- In what ways do you interact with music? Do you listen to it, play it, compose it, dance to it, etc.?
- Approximately how much time do you spend listening to or making music a day or week?
- How do you hear about or find new music or artists now?

#### *Relevance and impact:*

- What role(s) does music play or how does music function(s) in your everyday life? When do you listen to it – do you have different music for different moods, occasions or events?
- What do you like about music? What is meaningful to you about music? What is interesting about it? How does it make you feel?
- What do you think your life would be like without music?
- How do your interests in music influence your choices and decisions about music activities inside and/or outside of school?

#### *School Music:*

- What music classes are you currently taking/did you take in school?
- What kinds of music do/did you learn about and what kinds of activities do/did you do in music class?
- What do you think your music teacher wants/wanted you to do and learn in music class? - **OR** - What would make you want to take a music class?
- What do you like or dislike about the music classes at your school?
- If you could have learned or done anything in music class, what would it be?

#### *Closing:*

- Is there anything you would like to add about your musical life or your experiences in school music?

## APPENDIX D

### Music Mix Instructions

I am interested in the music you think is most important to you and why. Please create an iTunes playlist or “mix CD/tape” of your favorite five (5) musical selections. These can be any music style or genre – whatever is most important to you **as long as they have been legally accessed**.

In addition to this mix, please write a short description of the music you selected. Please include:

- Name or title of each selection
- Name of the artist or composer who wrote/performed each selection
- How you were introduced to each selection (when/where you first heard/played it, who first played it for you, etc.)
- Why you included each selection in your “top five” – why is each selection meaningful to you
- What you think is most interesting about the music itself (sonic properties)
- Any additional information you think I should know about your music choices

I would prefer you type these descriptions in a word processing program. That way, it is easier to read and you can email it to me.

**\*\*If there is a song/piece that you want to include, but cannot find a recording of – write down what you can about it and we will discuss it later.**

Once you have finished the mix and written the descriptions, I will listen to and read what you have prepared. I may contact you for a follow up interview if I have any further questions for you.

Contact me if you have any questions and/or when you finished the project.

Thanks for your participation!

Todd Snead  
tsnead1@gsu.edu

## APPENDIX E

### Adolescent Music Elicitation Interview Questions

#### *Music Mix follow-up:*

- How did you go about putting this mix together?
  - How did you decide which five selections to put in the mix?
  - What factors did you consider when making choices?
- How did you decide the order of the mix? Did it matter to you?
- How hard was it to put the mix together?
- What do you like about this music? What is it about the music (the sonic properties) that speaks to you or is meaningful? (follow up on individual selections and interesting observations)
- How do you think these musicians learned their music skills? Do you think or know if they took music classes in and/or outside school?
- In what ways would you have changed the assignment to best represent your personal relationship with music?

#### *Music inside/outside of school:*

- What would you like to learn about the music in your mix? Would you want to study it in school?
- How is the music you put in your mix related, or not, to the music studied in school?
- How do your school music experiences influence your choices about music in everyday life and/or *visa versa*? – **OR** – Do you see them as separate musical experiences?
- Do you think your music, or any other adolescent's music, should be studied in school? What are some of your reasons?
- What kinds of music classes would you like to see offered at your school? What should music teachers be teaching?
- Why do you think schools offer music classes? - **OR** – Why do you think it is important to have music classes in school?
- Is there anything you would like to add about your music mix or school music programs?

## APPENDIX F

### Music Teacher Interview Questions

#### *Musical Background/Context*

- Tell me about your musical background.
- Where did you receive your music teacher training?
- What made you want to be a music teacher?
- How long have you been teaching music? How long have you been at this school?

#### *Teaching Philosophy and Beliefs*

- What is your overall teaching philosophy?
- What do you want your students to do/learn in your classes?
- What do you expect of your students musically?
- What do you think your students gain from being in your classes?
- How do you hope your students will be involved with music once they leave your school?
- What kinds of musical opportunities do you want to provide your students?
- How does this school's culture facilitate or hinder the opportunities you want to provide?
- How do the expectations and demands of your job impact your teaching and/or the opportunities you provide students?

#### *Adolescents and Ideals*

- What do you know about your students' musical lives outside of school?
- What do you think about the musical lives of those students who are not in your classes?
- How could students' personal interests in music be accommodated in the music classroom?
- What is the purpose of having music in our schools?
- What would it take to get more students involved in school music programs?
- What would your ideal music program look/sound like?

## APPENDIX G

### Observation Data

Concert Band	Advanced Orchestra
10/16/08	10/14/08
10/27/08	10/23/08
11/10/08	11/5/08
11/17/08	11/11/08
11/24/08	12/3/08
12/1/08	1/15/09
12/3/08	2/11/09
12/19/08	
1/15/09	Intermediate Orchestra
2/17/09	10/23/08
	11/5/08
Marching/Jazz Band	11/18/08
10/27/08	
10/30/08	Guitar
10/31/08	10/21/08
11/3/08	10/27/08
2/9/09	10/30/08
	11/10/08
Chorus	11/24/08
10/20/08	12/3/08
10/28/08	
11/6/08	AP Music Theory
11/11/08	2/18/08
12/1/08	2/25/08
Percussion	CHHS Performances or Concerts
10/30/08	12/4/08
11/18/08	3/14/09
Adolescents' Informal Music Groups	
12/05/08	
2/15/09	
2/24/09	
3/3/09	



## APPENDIX H

### Interview and Music Mix Data

Eric (interviews: 11/20/08 & 12/15/08)

*Satisfaction:*

The Rolling Stones

*All Along the Watchtower:*

Jimi Hendrix

*Gone Going:*

The Black Eyed Peas

*Living with War:*

Neil Young

*Set Me Free:*

Highway

James (interviews: 2/15/09 & 2/28/09)

*Monkey Wrench:*

Foo Fighters

*Animals:*

Nickleback

*Under the Bridge:*

Red Hot Chili Peppers

*Bleed It Out:*

Linkin Park

*Freebird:*

Lynyrd Skynyrd

Krista (interviews: 11/17/08 & 12/17/08)

*Everyone Falls in Love:*

Devonte and Tanto

*Big Girls Don't Cry:*

Fergie

*Sweet Escape:*

Gwen Stefani

*He Love Me:*

Jill Scott

*I Wonder:*

Kanye West

*Just Friends:*

Musiq Soulchild

Marcus (interview: 1/11/09)

Mya (interviews: 11/24/08 & 2/18/09)

*Don't Let Me Get Me:*

Pink

*La Vie en Rose:*

Louis Armstrong

*Good Ole Fashioned Lover Boy:*

Queen

*That's What You Get:*

Paramore

*The Incredits:*

Michael Giacchino

Tiffany (interviews: 12/5/08 & 12/17/08)

*Moving Forward:*

Richardo Sanchez

*New Orleans Girl:*

PJ Morton

*Live Your Life:*

T.I. featuring Rhianna

*My Kind of Town:*

Frank Sinatra

*No Sweeter Name:*

Kari Jobe

William (interviews: 1/21/09 & 2/9/09)

*Save Me from Myself:*

Carpark North

*Nightmares in the Daytime:*

D:A:D

*Snowman:*

Kashmir

*Cigarettes and Alcohol:*

Oasis

*All or None:*

Pearl Jam

Mr. Klippen (3/6/09 & 5/19/09)

Mr. Owens (3/5/09, 5/6/09, & 5/20/09)

## APPENDIX I

### Document Data

College Heights High School Music Department Philosophy

College Heights High School Course Descriptions for Music (2008-2009)

College Heights High School Orchestra Course Syllabus (Fall 2008)

College Heights High School Guitar Course Syllabus (Fall 2008)

College Heights High School AP Music Theory Course Syllabus (Spring 2009)

College Heights High School Marching Band Student Handbook (2008-2009)

College Heights High School Music Department Winter Concert Program (12/4/08)

Georgia Department of Education (2002) *Quality Core Curriculum Standards for Fine Arts*

Georgia Music Educators Association 2008-2009 Large Group Performance Evaluation  
Music List

## APPENDIX J

### Condensed Research Audit Trail Timeline

7/3/2008	Informal agreement from music teachers to participate
7/15/2008	Written agreement from principal to participate
7/17/2008	Research proposal submitted to school district office
9/10/2008	Research proposal approved by school district office
9/17/2008	Research proposal submitted to Georgia State IRB
9/19/2008	Met with music teachers to explain study
10/8/2008	Research proposal approved by Georgia State University IRB
10/14/2008	Consent forms signed by music teachers/field observations began
10/29/2008	Identified potential adolescent participants in music classes
11/3/2008	Contacted potential band and guitar student participants via email
11/6/2008	Contacted potential orchestra and chorus participants via email
11/7/2008	Informed teachers of potential participant selections and provided copies of assent forms
11/17/2008	Adolescent participant interviews began/transcriptions emailed to participants for member checking once completed
3/14/2009	Final field observation conducted
3/5/2009	Music teacher interviews began
3/26/2009	Coding of data began
5/20/2009	Final music teacher interview conducted
8/15/2009	Theme descriptions sent out for peer review
8/30/2009	Theme descriptions emailed to participants for member checking
9/12/2009	Participants approved theme descriptions